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## ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ON THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDES OF THE STUDENTS

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The propensity for entrepreneurship is associated with a set of characteristics that can be influenced by the educational programs, which include values, attitudes, personal goals, creativity and risk aversion. Several studies have reported the link between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions, and there is empirical evidence that the individuals who have had training in this area can be more successful in identifying opportunities and more likely to start a business.

The entrepreneurship education is related to the education for risk, since an entrepreneur should have a capacity to making risky decisions. Whenever possible, the activities in class should encourage the self-reflection and self-awareness of the entrepreneurial characteristics, and stimulate the creativity, innovation and teamwork in an environment of cooperation. The entrepreneurship education has been taking an increasing importance in the educational programs, emphasizing the role of the higher education institutions as promoters of the entrepreneurship. In today's society, where more and more young people see no other alternative but to create their own company, the inclusion of disciplines or of optional modules in the area of entrepreneurship would be an advantage for all university students.

In this work, which is based on the responses obtained through a survey conducted with a sample consisting of 305 students (36.2% males and 63.8% females) of the Azores University, enrolled in courses of different scientific areas, we aim to assess how, in the student's perspective, the university can stimulate the interest of their students in creating business. From hierarchical clustering methods we obtain a typology of variables linked to initiatives and activities that could be developed by the university. The main results obtained from some non-parametric hypothesis tests and from correspondence analysis, simple and multiple, are also presented. We concluded, for example, that the students of our sample have a low level of entrepreneurial propensity, and that, except for the management students, have little familiarity with the entrepreneurship. Moreover, some of the main difficulties in starting a new business, referred by the students, are related to their scientific areas. With regard to eventual initiatives and activities that can be dynamized by the university, in order to stimulate the acquisition or the development of entrepreneurial qualities, stands out the preference of the respondents by the creation and promotion of the access to networks of useful contacts for the creation of business, by placing entrepreneurial students in contact with each other, and by the organization of seminars and conferences. We believe that the obtained results might contribute to the development of academic initiatives that encourage the students to become entrepreneurs. The presence of a higher percentage of young people with an entrepreneurial profile could contribute to the regional economic development, either by creating companies, or through the intrapreneurship.

**keywords:** entrepreneurship education, non-parametric tests, ascendant hierarchical cluster analysis, correspondence analysis.