
Creativity and the Entrepreneur's Potential: A Case Study Based on the Opinion of Students

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Abstract:

Purpose: The article attempts to analyze and describe the relationship between the notions of creativity, innovation and relate them to the term entrepreneurship. Questions to be answered: Is creativity related to entrepreneurship understood as a founding initiative? Does the creative mindset allow you to find yourself in risky conditions more easily? Regardless of whether the reference point is entrepreneurship (as a founding activity) or intrapreneurship of employees - appropriate use of creativity resources lead to economic growth, which is the justification for the research.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Empirical research was conducted in the first quarter of 2021 among students of a private university with an economic profile (Poznań, Poland).

Findings: In the surveyed group, as many as 48.8% of respondents planned to start their own enterprise. The results of the research carried out show, unfortunately, that creativity is not a competence appreciated in the studied group of students at the economic university in Poznań. Even among people declaring the intention to start their own enterprise, the usefulness of a creative attitude in their professional work is not noticed.

Practical Implications: The presented research results did not confirm a significant relationship between a creative attitude and the ease of coping with the risk of running a business.

Originality/Value: It is therefore worth introducing changes to the educational policy in the field of entrepreneurship aimed at enhancing creativity. This may significantly contribute to the development of innovative enterprises in the SME sector.

Keywords: Creativity, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship potential.

JEL Classification: M2, M13.

Paper Type: Research article.

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is an important economic category, but it is difficult to create one single theory. Linking the concept of entrepreneurship only with small businesses, self-employment and the SME sector is a significant narrowing. Entrepreneurship also applies to employed and large companies (Sudoł 2008; Wach 2015). Common to each of these categories are the terms: creativity, innovation, dynamism, coping with risk, expansiveness.

In addition, one can meet with thinking about entrepreneurship as a competence. Entrepreneurship has been recognized by the European Commission as one of the eight key competences in the lifelong learning process. Emphasizing its importance results from the belief that contemporary technological growth and work automation require resilience and the ability to adapt to changes. In this process, social and civic competences as well as entrepreneurship are to help. According to the recommendation of the European Commission, entrepreneurial competences mean, "the ability to seize opportunities and ideas and transform them into value for other people", moreover, creativity, critical thinking, initiative, perseverance, and the ability to cooperate (Kopyciński, 2019).

Corporate entrepreneurship "is a set of actions aimed at increasing the corporate capacity to innovate, take risks, and take advantage of opportunities" (Zahra, 1993). Intrapreneurship is a process taking place inside an existing enterprise, which leads not only to business ventures, but also to other innovative solutions, and is an important element of organizational and economic development (Pinchot, 1985).

Intrapreneurs create new products or new knowledge, improving the competitive and financial position of the company. Intrapreneurship should be treated as a key aspect of development, and even a condition for the survival of modern corporations (Nowacka *et al.*, 2020).

2. Entrepreneurship and Related Features

The concept of entrepreneurship with innovation was linked by Schumpeter (Schumpeter, 1934). This author argued that innovative activity may lead to the implementation of intentions so far unattainable, but also constitute a form of an innovative method of achieving a known goal (Siemieniak and Łuczka, 2016). According to Schumpeter, the entrepreneur-innovator played a key role in economic development (Hébert and Link 2006), introducing innovation in the form of new products or production technologies.

Entrepreneurship as an attitude is associated with specific features of individuals, which are to enable the effective implementation of plans and facilitate taking the initiative in the field of creating and developing an enterprise (Shefiu and Raheem, 2019).

Among the key features that are an indicator of undertaking effective entrepreneurial behavior, five can be found, the ability to take risks, creativity, high need for achievement, high need for autonomy, internal locus of control (Caird, 1991).

Based on the research, the properties most often associated with entrepreneurship were distinguished: the ability to predict and calculate risk, willingness to look for new solutions, adaptation to changing conditions, hitness and creativity (Bernat, Kopysa, and Kunasz, 2008). The hidden entrepreneurial potential, i.e., the features predisposing to the effective running of the company, consists of such characteristics as, high need for achievements, belief in having control over her life that prompts her to take action, the ability to act in an innovative way, the ability to lead others and rely on intuition in situations of uncertainty and instability of the environment (Althayde, 2009). The presence of the above-mentioned features seems to be an important determinant of behavior. However, the emergence of entrepreneurial activities must be preceded by the intention to become an entrepreneur (Siemieniak and Łuczka, 2016).

3. Creativity – Competence Sought in the Labor Market

Based on the results of the research, it has long been proven that a person's success is determined by a set of factors, including, personality traits, motives for action, experience, or behavioral traits. Competencies can also be divided into threshold competencies - which are the basic competencies required for a given position, and differentiating competencies, which make it possible to distinguish people with better results from those with worse results (Boyatzis, 1982).

Based on the opinions of HR managers, the World Economic Forum has created a ranking of skills that employers will be looking for in the coming years and these are (World Economic Forum, 2016):

- Comprehensive problem solving – first place in the ranking (the importance of this skill may decline in more automated sectors such as infrastructure and energy, but it will increase in services and IT);
- Critical thinking;
- Creativity;
- People management;
- Collaboration with others;
- Emotional intelligence;
- Reasoning and making decisions;
- Service orientation;
- Negotiations;
- Cognitive flexibility.

Creativity is therefore mentioned as one of the requirements of the labor market. It is included in the soft skills which, apart from technical or economic knowledge and skills, are an indicator of the employee's professionalism. The three components of creativity are (Harvard Business School, 2003):

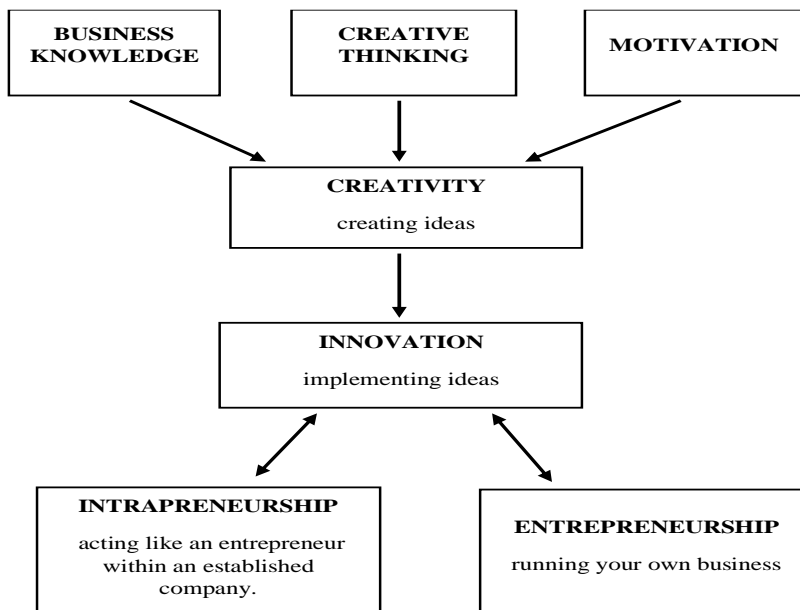
- Knowledge is technical knowledge, intellectual qualifications, and knowledge of procedures.
- The ability to think creatively is defined by ways of approaching problems, i.e., it explains how flexibly and with what imagination individuals (people, enterprise, environment) approach problems.
- Motivation is divided into two types: external and internal. Usually, external incentives are cash in the form of bonuses and promotions. On the other hand, internal motivation is driven by individual passion and interest, which has a greater impact on creativity than external motivation.

Creativity is the process of developing and presenting innovative ideas to meet needs or solve problems (Fazlagić, 2015).

4. Innovation in Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship in the classic sense – as finding and taking advantage of market opportunities – relates to creativity (Acar *et al.*, 2019; Kakouris, 2021). Although entrepreneurship as a set of activities can occur without innovation, innovation cannot exist without entrepreneurship. Innovations are both a tool for entrepreneurial activities and their effect. It is believed that knowledge-based entrepreneurship, using innovation and innovation, is a necessary factor for the company's success (Kopyciński, 2019). Thus, creativity and the ability to implement innovations is closely related to entrepreneurship (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The relationship between creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship



Source: Own work

Innovations reflect changes in the activities of enterprises and may concern (OECD 2008), products (new or significantly improved products or services), processes (new production and delivery methods), organization (changes in operation, workplace, relations with the environment), marketing.

The very concept of innovation is often associated with terms such as innovation, initiative, agility, resourcefulness, creativity, creativity. "[...] A creative product is one that is characterized by the conjunction of two features: novelty and value" The result of the creative process is a new product accepted as useful. In relation to a person characterized by the ability to produce new and valuable products, we speak of creativity. In the evaluation of creativity in the latter sense, i.e., as features or skills of a person, the following are used, *inter alia*, criteria according to J. Guilford, fluidity, flexibility, originality.

Fluency is the ease of generating ideas, determined by the number of them. Flexibility is the willingness to change the direction of your thinking. It is manifested by a variety of ideas, the number of categories into which these ideas can be included. Flexibility can be spontaneous or adaptive, that is, related to the need to adapt to the conditions of a task or circumstance. Originality, in turn, is the ability to manifest unusual, unusual, and unique reactions. Features of a product resulting from creative activities include accuracy, understood as the satisfaction of existing needs, freedom from imitation, unusualness (the rarity of occurrence), necessity (the inevitability of the appearance of a similar product), coherence (simplicity of the work) (Walat, 2011).

Dyer and Gregersen (2019) claimed that innovators have a common feature of asking provocative questions, inquisitiveness, searching for the effects of changes in the usual way of operating, building new and original associations.

5. Innovativeness of SMEs in Poland

The research shows that innovation in Poland is characterized by the following features (Kania *et al.*, 2019):

- it is primarily based on the imitative rather than creative innovation model,
- depends on the type of industry to which the enterprises belong,
- translates into better financial results and greater competitiveness,
- depends on the scope of organizational solutions and the type of cooperation with other entities,
- an internal barrier for undertaking innovative activities is the low awareness of the need for such activities.

It is estimated that in Poland in 2016-2018, an average of every third enterprise could be defined as innovative or actively innovative. The percentage of such companies was significantly correlated with the size of the enterprise. It was found that the larger the company, the more often it introduces innovative activities and invests funds in them.

The research of the entire sector of Polish enterprises shows that the activities that constitute the basis for creative innovation (consisting in the implementation of research and development works) are undertaken by a small percentage of the surveyed enterprises. It is worth paying attention to the diagnosis of the situation of the SME sector, in particular micro and small enterprises.

In large companies, the impact on the innovativeness of creative employees and R&D teams is much greater than in the remaining ones and amounts to 39% of the total number of innovative enterprises and 36% of this group. In micro and small companies, the role of creative workers and R&D teams is not that big. In these enterprises, the share of creative employees in stimulating innovative activities amounts to 22% – micro-enterprises and 26% – small enterprises.

The share of own R&D team is even smaller (11% - micro-companies and only 6% small companies), staying in the industry, winning orders, meeting customer needs). The resources of qualified personnel are the external conditions for the development of entrepreneurship, which are perceived as remaining outside the sphere of influence of public institutions. Among the barriers to the development of innovative entrepreneurship, one of the leading positions is occupied by the shortage of qualified employees with high competences (41%). The approach to innovation is determined by the attitude of the management / owner of the company towards it. This is the opinion of 71% of innovatively active companies (Kania *et al.*, 2019).

In Poland, the lack of ideas is not a problem, but the fact that they are not implemented and used commercially (Bąk and Kulywczuk, 2009). The measure of the innovativeness of the economy is the ability of entrepreneurs to create innovations and the motivation to use knowledge, create new ideas and inventions.

As Wach (2015) writes, small enterprises show less efficiency in coping with the implementation of high technology projects. Large enterprises are more efficient in activities related to the new skills required of them by technological development.

6. Own Research Results

Empirical research was conducted in the first quarter of 2021 among students at a private university with an economic profile (Poznań, Poland). The method of internet survey research was used. 170 students aged 19-49 participated in the study. The mean age in the study group was 25.3. Among the respondents, 62.9% were women, and 37.1% – men. Half of them studied in their first year of studies. The vast majority of the respondents worked for profit (79.4%). 5.3% of respondents declared a temporary lack of gainful activity for reasons related to Covid-19, and 5.9% of the respondents experienced a temporary lack of work for other reasons.

Participation in the research was anonymous and voluntary. The respondents were asked to respond to the statements made in the survey and to disclose their views on various elements of entrepreneurial attitudes, including creativity and risk perception in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study presented in the article is a fragment of

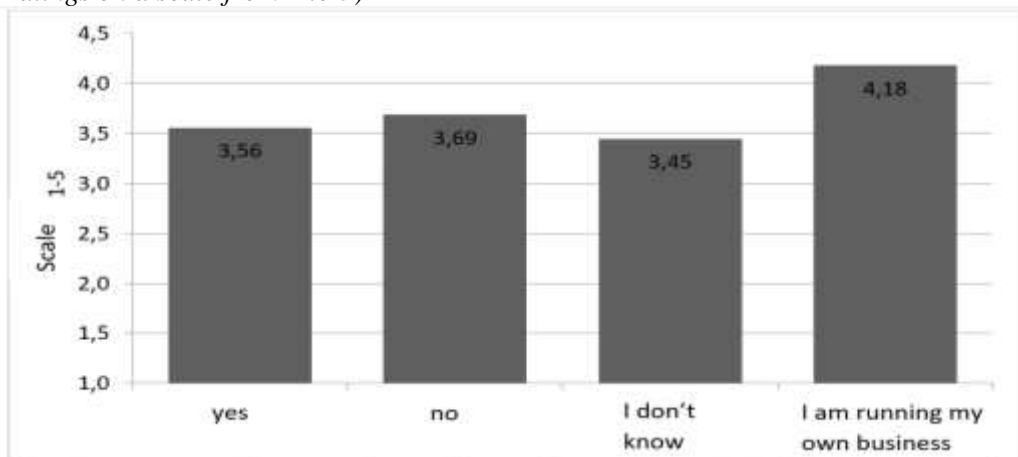
a wider research by the authors on student entrepreneurship in Polish universities, in the Greater Poland region.

The aim of the research was to determine whether creative attitudes are conducive to entrepreneurship. In the surveyed group, as many as 48.8% of respondents plan to start their own business, including 14.7% in the next three years, and 34.1% in the future.

The usefulness of a creative attitude in the current profession is most appreciated by people who run their own business (evaluation on a five-point scale). Respondents who want to start a business in the future appreciate creativity much less frequently. This may prove that only the real requirements related to running a business force people to seek and create new solutions. It can be speculated that the founding intention of the respondents will rarely be based on an interesting, innovative idea for the use of proven methods of operation. Such a situation would be undesirable from an innovation perspective.

This low rating may, however, result from the fact that their current profession does not satisfy them future entrepreneurs and that is why they plan to run their own business to be able to use their full creative potential.

Figure 2. Average opinions on the usefulness of a creative attitude in the current profession among respondents with different plans of starting their own enterprise (Ratings on a scale from 1 to 5)



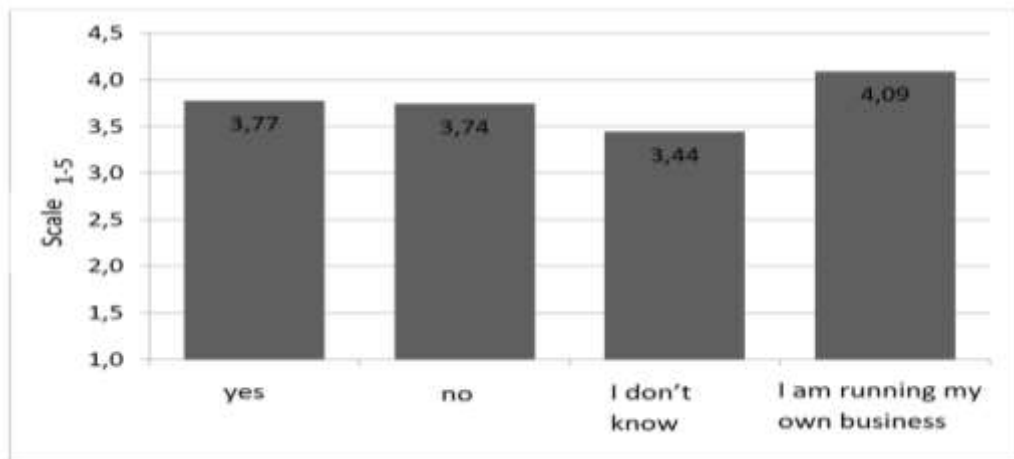
Source: Own study.

The Kruskal-Wallis test did not show a significant difference in the level of opinion on the usefulness of a creative attitude in the current profession between respondents with different plans to start their own enterprise ($p > 0.05$). In response to the next question, students commented on the professional requirements related to the creation of new ideas. More than half of people planning to set up an enterprise (58%) say that their work is related to the creation of new ideas and associations. As above, the requirement to create new ideas is most often indicated by the current person running the company (81.9%) (Table 1).

Table 1. The necessity to create new ideas in the professional practice of respondents with different entrepreneurial plans

Is your job at work to create new ideas and associations related to the existing ones?	Planning to start your own enterprise							
	Yes n = 69		No n = 35		I don't know n = 35		I am running my own business n = 11	
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	40	58,0	16	45,7	19	54,3	9	81,8
No	20	29,0	13	37,1	13	37,1	2	18,2
Hard to say	9	13,0	6	17,1	3	8,6	0	0,0
Total	69	100,0	35	100,0	35	100,0	11	100,0

Source: Own study.

Figure 2. "Do you ever check at work what would happen if you changed the usual way of doing things?" – average frequencies. Responses of the respondents about various plans of establishing their own enterprise; Yes – they plan to set up an enterprise, No – they do not plan to set up an enterprise, etc.

Source: Own study.

The next question revealed that the respondents who run their own business most often check at work what would happen if they changed some common behavior (Figure 2). However, the Kruskal-Wallis test did not show a significant difference in this respect between people with different career plans ($p = 0.3019$). The respondents were asked if it happens that they try to create associations in their professional work between things that nobody has tried to connect before. The analysis of the answers provided is presented below.

Table 2. Creating new associations. Answers of students with different plans

Opinion	Planning to start your own enterprise			
	Yes n = 71	No n = 35	I don't know n = 34	I am running my own business n = 11

	Av.	Std. dev.	Av.	Std. dev.	Av.	Std. dev.	Av.	Std. dev.
Does it happen that you try to create associations between things in your work that nobody has tried to combine before?	3,65	1,11	3,43	1,22	3,06	1,23	4,09	1,14

Source: Own work.

People running a business more often tried to create associations in their professional work between things that no one had tried to connect before (see Table 2). The average of answers given on a five-point scale was therefore the highest in people running their own business (4.09) and the lowest in people who did not know whether they would start their own business (3.06). The answers to this question show an innovative attitude that is associated with entrepreneurship.

Moreover, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed a significant difference in the level of frequency of creating innovative associations in professional work between respondents with different plans to start their own enterprise ($p = 0.0195$).

The reasons for using creative thinking in professional work differed among people with different career plans. Among those convinced of the influence of personality traits on the level of creative activity manifested at work, most people currently running their own enterprise (Table 3).

The survey sought to answer the question; How do those students who see the importance of a creative attitude perceive running their own business? Do they see them as interesting, profitable, risky, burdensome, challenging? The results indicate that people who perceived running a business as burdensome more often believed that a creative attitude was necessary. In addition, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed a significant difference in the level of opinion ($p = 0.0361$). This result is surprising because it suggests a negative motivation related to entrepreneurship, which forces (instead of offering opportunities) the creation of new solutions.

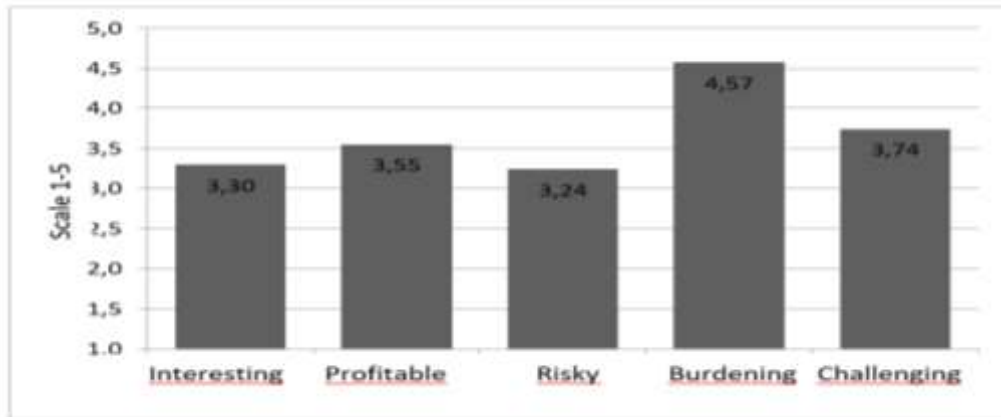
Table 3. *The use of creative thinking in respondents with different career plans*

What is the reason for the level of your use of creative thinking in your professional work?	Planning to start your own enterprise							
	Yes n = 71		No n = 35		I don't know n = 34		I am running my own business n = 11	
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Mainly the nature of the work performed	17	23,9	7	20,0	6	17,6	2	18,2
Mainly your personality traits	20	28,2	16	45,7	14	41,2	6	54,5

For both of the above reasons to an equal degree	23	32,4	8	22,9	10	29,4	3	27,3
Hard to say	11	15,5	4	11,4	4	11,8	0	0,0
Total	71	100,0	35	100,0	34	100,0	11	100,0

Source: Own work.

Figure 3. The perception of running your own business in people who appreciate the importance of a creative attitude



Source: Own work.

Next, answers were sought to the following questions: Does the creative attitude and / or experience in generating new ideas and associations significantly influence the perception of risk? Will people who are creative better deal with the risk of running a business? It would seem that the creative attitude of the company manager would mean greater flexibility and the possibility of a better adaptation of the company to changes.

In the conducted research, the Kruskal-Wallis test did not show a significant difference in the assessment of the level of riskiness of running one's own enterprise between respondents with different opinions on the creation of new ideas, associations related to the already existing ones ($p > 0.05$).

In addition, the significance test of the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient did not show a significant correlation between the respondents' opinion on the risk of running their own business and the frequency of checking at work, which would happen if the usual behavioral change ($p > 0.05$), as well as in the case of creating associations between things that hardly anyone has tried to connect before ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the resolution of the issues raised requires further research.

7. Summary

According to the presented literature studies, creativity is one of the features that favor undertaking entrepreneurial activity. In addition, it is one of the competences required in the modern labor market. Despite the fact that in small companies the influence of

creative employees is not as significant as in large ones, it undoubtedly determines the level of enterprise innovation. In addition, the shortage of suitably qualified staff is considered to be one of the main barriers to innovation in the SME sector.

The results of the research conducted show that creativity is not a competency appreciated in the studied group of students at the economic university in Poznań. Even among people declaring the intention to start their own enterprise, the usefulness of a creative attitude in professional work is not noticed. In the same group, only a little more than half of people see the need to create new ideas and associations in their professional work.

Such an attitude may result in maintaining a low level of innovativeness of newly created Polish enterprises. The requirement to create new ideas, test new ways of operating and create new, previously unheard-of ideas is most appreciated by respondents who currently run their own company. Moreover, they seem to reinforce the belief that creativity as a personality potential is conducive to undertaking entrepreneurial activities.

However, it does not seem to be a sufficient factor for them to appear. In this context, creativity seems to be a skill useful in solving organizational problems, fostering motivation and initiative in the field of entrepreneurship. However, the question of translating creativity into profitability and efficiency of the company's activities is wondering. Especially that the presented research results did not confirm a significant relationship between a creative attitude and the ease of coping with the risk of running a business.

The results of the conducted research confirm the hitherto characteristic of Polish innovation, and especially the low awareness of the need to undertake innovative activities. Creativity is rarely seen as a determinant of innovation in Polish enterprises. While creativity occurs in the ideas phase, innovation is essential in the implementation phase. Introducing innovations should be an essential element of the strategy of every enterprise, because it determines the increase in the attractiveness of goods and services and the development of the market.

As part of the recommendations for the creators of social and economic policy, it is necessary to emphasize activities that will strengthen the creative attitude of entrepreneurs (both current and potential) and employees. This is because it is a factor supporting innovation and strengthening the development of the Polish economy towards world standards. It also seems important to share knowledge about the possibilities of using creativity for the benefit of the enterprise. This is a requirement that should be set for centers educating future entrepreneurs.

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