

Entrepreneurship Education, New Skills and Covid-19 Pandemic Crisis

Educación empresarial, nuevas competencias y crisis de la pandemia de Covid-19

Educação empresarial, novas habilidades e crise pandêmica da Covid-19

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The covid-19 pandemic has changed the lives of people, community, companies and organizations in general, on a global scale (Ratten, 2020). Covid-19 has driven disruptive changes in the world of work and companies, with shocks in the economies of countries and unprecedented catastrophic losses since the crisis of the second world war (ILO, 2020).

Studies carried out by academia and practitioners on the implications and impacts of the covid-19 crisis demonstrate that companies will have to adopt initiatives to accelerate the innovation capacity of their employees to develop innovative solutions in times of crisis. Several company initiatives are related to design and implementation of skilling, upskilling and reskilling programs of employees, to adapt to new skills, new roles and new market scenarios (Agrawal et al., 2020; ILO, 2021).

In 2020, the Accenture company published the report entitled creating shared workforce resilience with a plan comprising five topics to cre-

ate lasting shared resilience (Accenture, 2020). The five topics mentioned in the Accenture plan are: a) Forecast and demand changes with new tools. The unprecedented quick changes resulting from the covid-19 pandemic make demand forecasting methods and models obsolete; b) Assess the skill profile; c) Connect employees on a large scale; d) Accelerate the learning of new skills; e) Foster shared resilience. Accenture's plan is one of the answers to deal with the covid-19 crisis that has been impacting employees in companies and organizations.

There are three interesting points for our reflection that are observed in the Accenture company (Accenture, 2020) and in the initiatives of other companies to develop skilling, upskilling and reskilling programs of employees to face covid-19 (Agrawal et al., 2020). First, company initiatives have strong elements that lead employees to pursue behavior, attitude, skills, cognition entrepreneurial and entrepreneurial ways of life, although the initiatives do not explicitly

terms from the field of entrepreneurship (Baron, 1998; Gibb, 2002; Grégoire et al., 2011).

Second, company initiatives adopt an underlying logic of developing employees, intrapreneurs within the company (Somers, 2018). While entrepreneurs work with their own business, intrapreneurs work in the company to develop innovative solutions and create value. Third, company initiatives are closely linked to entrepreneurship education (Fayolle, 2013). This close connection is highlighted through the entrepreneurial metamodel (Filion, 1991), entrepreneurial cognition (Baron, 1998; Grégoire et al., 2011), entrepreneurial opportunity (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) and entrepreneurial ways of life (Gibb, 2002). I will provide an overview of the close connection.

More than thirty years ago Louis Filion published the paper on the visionary process, a set of essential entrepreneurial skills for the development of people in companies, to guide action and entrepreneurial strategic thinking (Filion, 1991). The visionary process gathered through the entrepreneurial metamodel has five elements: *weltanschauung* (W), vision, leadership, energy and relationship. According to Filion (1991) the four components have the same effect in supporting vision, however, the system of relationships plays a more important role than the others in the evolution of vision. The system of relationships involves relationships with people at the primary, tertiary

and secondary levels who contribute to development and implementation of the vision.

Weltanschauung is a German word that means cosmovision, filter or the prism in which the individual sees and observes the world. Values, behavior, attitudes, mood, intentions, formal and informal education, relationships with people, perception and knowledge of objects and things that exist in the real world are some examples that integrate the *weltanschauungs* (Ws). The individual can have either negative or positive Ws. The entrepreneur always has the positive Ws because he is able to mitigate observation, recognition of the existence, discovery and exploration of entrepreneurial opportunities, from catastrophic problems such as the covid-19 crisis (Baron, 1998).

Ws can be better understood through cognitive science. The cognitive approach perspective helps to broaden the understanding of the role of cognitive processes in the field of entrepreneurship (Grégoire et al., 2011). The role of cognitive processes, particularly cognitive mechanisms, contributes to broadening the understanding of differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs, differences between individuals with negative Ws and positive Ws, and visionary and non-visionary individuals (Baron, 1998; Grégoire et al., 2011).

According to Baron (1998) entrepreneurs have cognitive mechanisms with the following characteristics: a) counter-

factual thinking that represents the effects of imagining what could have been; b) affect infusion - the influence of current affective states on decisions and judgments; c) attributional style - tendencies of individuals to attribute various results to internal or external causes; d) the planning fallacy - strong tendencies to underestimate the amount of time needed to complete a given project or the amount of work that can be done in a given time; e) self-justification - the tendency to justify previous decisions, even if they result in negative results.

Cognitive mechanisms are the result of Ws. In turn, the Ws are the foundations of vision building. Vision is defined as a projection into the future of the product, service, process or technology that the entrepreneur wants to occupy in the market (Filion, 1991). Vision can also be characterized as a projection into the future of a solution that creates value for the organization (IBM, 2020). Energy is the time allocated for carrying out professional activities. However, Ws can affect the time that is dedicated and allocated in the execution of an activity. As for leadership, Filion (1991) mentions that it is a result of Ws, energy and system of relationships. Leadership is affected by the dedication of more time allocated to the execution of an activity, the breadth of the system of relationships and the Ws.

The visionary process gathered in the entrepreneurial metamodel mitigates the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunity (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000)

and triggers entrepreneurial ways of life (Gibb, 2002). Mainly Ws contains image, information and knowledge and together with the vision mitigate the observation, recognition, discovery and exploration of entrepreneurial opportunity. Entrepreneurial opportunity originates through the creation of new information that will generate new inventions and solutions or through the exploitation of market inefficiencies that result in information asymmetries (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

The way of life notion enables the recognition of the way that knowledge and entrepreneurial skills are understood by entrepreneurs (Gibb, 2002). The entrepreneur can only cope and enjoy an entrepreneurial way of life when he is able to put into action and practice the entrepreneurial skills, including W, vision, leadership, energy, relationship and discovery and exploration of entrepreneurial opportunity. Some topics of the entrepreneurial way of life are highlighted: greater freedom, greater control of what goes on, greater responsibility, greater vulnerability to the environment, greater integration between social and professional life, more learning by doing under pressure, more autonomy to make things happen, living day to day with greater uncertainty and greater resilience.

Taking into account the reflection carried out so far, the following question emerges: What are the practical contributions of entrepreneurship education to company employees who are facing the impacts of the covid-19 crisis? There

are at least two practical contributions: entrepreneurial action and entrepreneurship research. The first contribution of the entrepreneurship education is in the context of entrepreneurial action. The entrepreneurial metamodel is a tool for learning the visionary process that provides reflection and action (Filion, 1991). The visionary process offers a set of advantages that allow you to unify action and activities around a central idea and search for entrepreneurial opportunity.

Throughout the entrepreneurial training of new entrepreneurial skills, pedagogical strategies must be previously defined for employees who do not have entrepreneurial skills, including the cognitive mechanisms that distinguish non-entrepreneurial individuals from entrepreneurs. At the end of the process of developing new skills, the employees must be prepared to: a) have positive Ws; b) change the inclination of cognitive mechanisms from non-entrepreneurs to entrepreneurs; c) recognize and explore opportunities; d) develop innovative solutions able of creating value for the company.

The second contribution is about entrepreneurship research. There are unanswered questions involving entrepreneurship education and skilling, upskilling and reskilling programs of employees due the covid-19 crisis. For example, what are the main key-issues of the entrepreneurial skills development programs implemented in the company to face the covid-19 pandemic? What are the new skills and

new roles of the employees developed by the training programs in the company and what are new intrapreneurs that have emerged from training programs? What has changed in the employees in terms of cognitive mechanisms?

The two practical contributions, entrepreneurial action and entrepreneurship research, reveal that entrepreneurship education can be a great ally of the company and employees in dealing with the impacts and implications of the covid-19 crisis. It also reveals that entrepreneurship education can foster the development of intrapreneurs able of developing innovative solutions through co-creation of value for the company.

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