

Culture, locality and entrepreneurship education: A comparative perspective from Qatar

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Introduction

This study insists on the importance of embeddedness and local context in the development of entrepreneurship. It argues that the nexus between entrepreneurship education, behaviors and experiences of entrepreneurs, and the moral bases of a society (the impact of cultural traits, norms, and values) have been understudied. Hence, the study will, first, explore the modalities, scope and gaps of entrepreneurship education within the Qatari ecosystem. Second, it aims to incorporate local social, moral, traditional, cultural and sustainability aspects of entrepreneurship in growing the next generation of entrepreneurs. The deliverables will be shared with education policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders to ensure the long-term, effective implementation of research findings in versatile ways. Efforts thus far suggest that encouraging entrepreneurship promotion and entrepreneurship education in Qatar will stimulate the mindsets and skills of students, school leavers, women, adult learners as well as those already engaged in entrepreneurship activities by helping them understand the real benefits and opportunities in entrepreneurship. Therefore, the growing interest in entrepreneurship can be harnessed as a catalyst for economic diversification efforts and its education.

Through our study, the growing interest and its impact will be analyzed in a locally sensitive and informed manner by highlighting the characteristics of entrepreneurial qualities and formations that work best in the Qatari and the Gulf context. By studying these qualities, we will be able to offer localized versions of entrepreneurship education that are provided in tandem with traditional/conventional ways. In order to pursue these goals, an initial step is to explore the qualities of entrepreneurship education and its practice that have been yielding fruitful results and the instances, in which the results have been negative.

In 2012, Gallup-Silatech's joint publication used an exciting title: 'Qatar's rising entrepreneurial spirit'. Indeed, the past few years have witnessed a fast paced rise and thickening of Qatar's entrepreneurship ecosystem. Qatar's dynamic entrepreneurial spirit has involved frequent events, training programs, and the participation of multiple actors collaborating in the goal of raising new Qatari entrepreneurs to the realization of Qatar National Vision 2030.

'Entrepreneurship Education' entered the mainstream literature decades ago and has captured the attention of policy-makers and members of the private sector in many countries. Starting with the comprehensive report of the UNESCO World Conference in 1998, entrepreneurship education has become a pillar of national economic development strategies (Green et al, 2014). Nonetheless, the existing literature suggests the lack of a global definition for entrepreneurship education, and its scope differs according to the needs and standards of each country, territory, or population it serves. In this sense, our proposal coins the terms "localizing entrepreneurship education" for the first time as a novel, creative and innovative contribution in a transformative manner. It is transformative because "localized" versions of entrepreneurship education would supplement "off the shelf" types of entrepreneurship education models and help different stakeholders, entrepreneurs and end users in the entrepreneurship ecosystem. The impact of culture on entrepreneurship has been a rather understudied area and existing studies often looked into the perceptions towards business, attitudes towards work and wealth, and leadership (Liñán et al, 2015; Chell and Karataş-Özkan, 2014). Our study will be illustrating an often-underestimated factor in defining the entrepreneurial nature of a society, which is culture and the ways within which economic behaviors are embedded in various cultural and social institutions, codes, scripts and structures. Entrepreneurship, viewed as one of the main dynamic economic factors in a country is affected

by cultural traits of the underlying societies. More importantly, this study will enhance the existing ways and pedagogies of delivering entrepreneurship education by diagnosing the specific scope and types of entrepreneurship education required for the Qatari ecosystem, shaped as it is by its unique culture and traditions. The findings will be shared with economic development and education policy-makers in Qatar and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that its findings are fully understood and utilized as part of Qatar's ambitions to understand and overcome structural barriers to economic transformation.

Our core premise is that entrepreneurship (and its education) is an embedded process, and that bringing "context" to entrepreneurship education is crucial. Although an entrepreneur is inherently an individual, entrepreneurship educators should be aware of the forms of sociality, spatiality, and community as well as the various unique conventions, codes, and symbols that a localized culture reflects and embraces.

Entrepreneurship as an Embedded Process

As a social process, entrepreneurship is embedded in this non-economic, cultural sphere. For instance, a common depiction of entrepreneurship rests on individual motivations and behavior. But is the individual the only agent involved in the entrepreneurship process? Of course, the entrepreneur is usually the individual seeking opportunities and identifying possibilities observed in the environment, and even in certain cases creating those opportunities. But the entrepreneurial process involves a mentally demanding preparatory stage that precedes putting ideas into action. Effective, culturally astute entrepreneurship evolves as the individual endeavor starts to connect with those other contexts and structures mentioned earlier. The transformative power of entrepreneurship emerges through its collective nature in this phase.

The collective nature of entrepreneurship refers to the role of historically established cultural characteristics of tribe, community, and society. Effective entrepreneurs need to be well-informed about the realities and dynamics of these social structures. Successful entrepreneurs should more actively embrace social objectives by mobilizing and linking social and economic resources. In pursuing a balance between social justice and economic profit, entrepreneurs can unleash more innovative and creative undertakings; community building and profit making can go hand in hand.

Implications for Qatar

Studying effective entrepreneurship education that is embedded in local cultural contexts supports Qatar's development goals. The Qatar National Vision 2030 aims at "transforming Qatar into an advanced country... capable of sustaining its own development and providing for a high standard of living for all of its people for generations to come" (QNV, 2008: 2). The human, social, environmental, and economic pillars of the QNV 2030 reflect the value and importance of a unique, embedded cultural context.

The QNV 2030 provides a unique roadmap for the nation's growth, and it can guide our study of entrepreneurship education policy in Qatar. The QNV 2030, for example, clearly states the need to balance modernization with tradition. Entrepreneurs, at their most individualistic, can play a key role in building private sector-led dynamism. But entrepreneurs need to embrace the social and cultural forces that can mediate purely economic objectives. As educators, we can seek a moral framework to support entrepreneurship that is responsive to these forces. Such a framework would explore the interaction of the global with the local, and of modernization with the traditional.

As Qatar's entrepreneurship ecosystem expands and deepens, identifying and examining these interactions is important in bridging the nation's transition to a diversified, knowledge-based, and globally competitive economy.

Conclusions

In Qatar educators and authorities from a range of fields are invited to discuss and debate the moral basis of entrepreneurship for a fairer world. Qatar's National Vision 2030 underscores the importance of the process. Our task is to conduct more applied research on how these processes can support entrepreneurship education and other pedagogies, and produce teaching materials. We need to remember that non-economic variables are embedded in economic behavior. This calls for a deconstructing and reconstructing of the relationship between moral values and the role of the community, social institutions, economy, markets, and entrepreneurship. We can start by focusing primarily on the importance of local context in supporting entrepreneurship.