Contribution of Entrepreneurship Training Services Used in Non-Academic Settings on Promoting Entrepreneurship among Students

Abstract

Purpose
This study examined the contribution of different entrepreneurship training services in non-academic settings that were offered to students who expressed an interest in entrepreneurship.

Design/methodology/approach
The sample comprised 247 students at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, from all departments and degree programs, who expressed an interest in entrepreneurship and received an initial consultation between June 2009 and June 2010 at the Center for Entrepreneurship. Students were also entitled to the following additional services: (1) meetings dedicated to lectures and workshops on two subjects - business plan and other issues related to starting and managing a business, (2) guidance on how to write a business plan, and (3) individual business consulting divided into one-time consulting with an expert consultant and business mentoring. Four aspects were defined in the study as success criteria, all of which are related to improving skills and opportunities in the labor market - (1) Expectation to start a business in different timeframes (up to five years), (2) contribution to the level of knowledge and understanding of issues related to entrepreneurship, (3) contribution to perception of entrepreneurship as an occupational option, and (4) contribution to skills in work as a salaried employee.

The support framework was not part of the student's academic obligations, and they were free to choose whether they wanted to continue using the services offered by the Entrepreneurship Center. The study was conducted through questionnaires the participants completed at the end of the investigated year. The varying use of the services by the students made it possible to examine the effectiveness of the individual services themselves.

Findings
The findings of the study indicate that the services contributed to promoting entrepreneurship in all respects. It was found that each service had a different effect on promotion of entrepreneurship and on the various aspects examined. The service that presented a significant contribution in all four respects was the guidance on writing a business plan. The business consulting had a contribution to perception of entrepreneurship as an occupational option, and the meetings dedicated to lectures and workshops led to increased improvement in the participants' understanding and general knowledge. The data was further analyzed in terms of the impact of the subject of the lectures and
workshops. The meetings dedicated to business plans had a contribution to knowledge in the field of marketing, and the meetings dedicated to issues involved in starting and managing a business contributed to knowledge in the fields of financing and finance as well as to the probability of starting a business. The findings further show that the use of several services leads to an increase in the probability of promoting entrepreneurship.

**Practical implications**
The study found that providing services that assist in training for entrepreneurship at universities in non-academic settings contributed to improving the work skills of students, either as salaried employees or self-employed. Each service, however, has different characteristics and a different contribution. Therefore, programs for promotion of entrepreneurship in non-academic settings must have clear goals and offer services with characteristics that can lead to achievement of said goals. The guidance on writing a business plan is an effective service that may lead to a significant contribution to the success of the program to promote entrepreneurship, as it provides an opportunity for participants to actively use the knowledge and tools received as part of the program.

**Originality/value**
The uniqueness of this study is that it examines the contribution of several services to promote entrepreneurship in several ways to measure promotion of entrepreneurship on a single sample group. This makes it possible to assess the services required to achieve the goals of the program. It further makes it possible to rank the relative contribution of each service for each option of examining promotion of entrepreneurship. By examining the contribution of the various characteristics of the services, the study offers principles for characterizing services and programs designed to promote entrepreneurship in non-academic settings at institutions of higher learning.

**Keywords**
Enterprise training, entrepreneurship centers at universities, entrepreneurship at universities, promotion of entrepreneurship, business plan, student entrepreneurship.