

Entrepreneurs: Successful trajectories in the technology capital of Brazil

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ABSTRACT

Currently, the topic of entrepreneurship has been increasingly discussed in society, whether in the business or academic environment, amplifying interest on factors such as the current economic scenario, legislative changes, among others, to enable and encourage entrepreneurs to have their own business. A point worth highlighting in this area of knowledge is the profile of those who undertake. Entrepreneurs are commonly recognized for showing some characteristics, such as: forward-looking manner, unshakable confidence in themselves, the ability to transform ideas into projects, and persistence, among other attributes that allow them to write their own rules and achieve success by putting them in practice. This random, exploratory and descriptive research with a qualitative character, aimed to investigate the way in which entrepreneurs develop their trajectory and their acting circumstances as a way of deepening the theme. It is possible, through a bibliographic review and a multiple case study with 10 entrepreneurs from the city of São Carlos, to present the results that show the characteristics of the entrepreneurial profile.

KEYWORDS;-Entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial Trajectories. Entrepreneurial profile.

Date of Submission: 04-12-2022

Date of Acceptance: 16-12-2022

I. INTRODUCTION

Studies on entrepreneurship have been increasingly explored in various researches due to the role played in the economy and in regional and country development (SCHMIDT, & BOHNENBERGER, 2009). This subject has attracted great interest, not only because of its pro-innovation bias, but also as a solution to the lack of formal jobs, further accelerated by COVID-19 pandemic (TREVELIN et.al. 2020). The term entrepreneurship is often linked to job creation, business opening, innovation and socioeconomic acceleration (AIUB, 2017; SCHAEFER & MINELLO, 2016; HUQ & DAVID, 2017; MARSHALL; GIGLIOTTI, 2018).

It appears that themes involving entrepreneurship, innovation, strengthening of micro and small companies, cooperativism and various forms of association, local productive arrangements, among other related topics, have been the main axes of discussions in the most diverse spheres of society (DAMIÃO, SANTOS & OLIVEIRA 2013). Changes in the economy and society bring new configurations to the world of work at all times, transforming the relationships between organizations and people as they modify organizational behaviors.

These transformations in the global capitalist system stem from several factors, but mainly from the technological revolution and increased competitiveness (RIES, 2012). Companies are pressured to reduce their costs and their structure while increasing the level of demand regarding their employees.

Thus, the current scenario shows a world of uncertainties and a decrease in vacancies in already consolidated organizations, which generate the need to rethink the perspective of career construction (BRANCHER, et al. (2012) .; BLANCH, 2003; RYES, MC; CAMARGO, JM 2005; CORSEUIL, CHL; FOGUEL, MN 2011 According to the traditional view, an individual used to join a company and climb hierarchical levels until reaching the top through numerous promotions offered by the organization itself in a stable and predictable environment, but the current panorama is different. With low wages or no job offers, with the flexibilization of the CLT (work laws) and with new ways of hiring, people take responsibility for their careers and begin to seek new, more independent and flexible forms of occupation (HALL, 2002; ARTHUR, 1994).

Given this new context, owning business has become a recurring option for many people, but it should be noted that creating such business in itself does not mean being an entrepreneur. It can be said that people sustain themselves and are satisfied in their performance, not beyond the level I of Maslow's hierarchy of physiological needs (1954), given the criticality of the market situation. Schumpeter (1934) points out that anyone can create an organization as long as they have resources, but there are people who are driven by a

performer and innovator potential and who can boost the economy through entrepreneurial activity. These people are called entrepreneurs and were the focus of this study.

The study of entrepreneurship has also attracted a growing interest in recent years, in comingtitude of its strong relationship with regional development. Governments, educational institutions and the likes have joined efforts in investment and financial resources in order to promote entrepreneurial behavior. The effort needed to develop an entrepreneurial profile, with a focus on the individual, is a topic of great importance to be studied. (SCHMIDT, S., & BOHNENBERGER, MC 2009).

It is understood that entrepreneurs are recognized for having some characteristics, such as: forward-looking manner, unshakable confidence in themselves, the ability to turn ideas into projects, and persistence, among other attributes that allow them to write their own rules and achieve success by practicing them (FILION 2004; CASSON, 1982; DORNELAS, 2005).

Filion (2004) points out that more than a thousand publications appear annually in the field of entrepreneurship, in addition to areas of specialization that have been created in considerable numbers, including innovation and creativity, business creation and start-up, new ventures, opening and closing of companies, business growth, intrapreneurship, franchising, female entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship at the best age, as well as the various dimensions of entrepreneurs, such as: behaviors, activity systems, entrepreneurial processes, among others, which demonstrates the relevance of the topic.

This way, the academic interest turns to the exploration of the entrepreneurial profile in critically worsened conditions to justify the present study. Today, more than in the past, there is an increase in the interest in subjects related to entrepreneurship in courses. Researching, interviewing and writing about successful entrepreneurs, seeking to understand the strength of free enterprise and entrepreneurial spirit, becomes crucial in a country with a subaltern economy (especially in a growing region with cultural and institutional potential to foster the innovation process), in which business activity tends to be hindered and which is undergoing enormous Asian strategic pressure. In search of deeper understanding of the theme, this research aimed to investigate the way in which entrepreneurs develop their trajectory and their operating circumstances.

II. METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

Specifically for this work, the most appropriate research procedure began with a Bibliographic Review of the state of the art, to allow the domain of knowledge already available, in order to establish a Basic Theoretical Reference on the subject, accompanied by a field research carried out through a case study. Multiple cases result in more robust conclusions than single ones, because the propositions are based on deeper and more varied empirical evidence (EISENHARDT and GRAEBNER, 2007).

Even though case studies do not have an ideal number, a number between 4 and 10 cases has been proven to result in good relevance (EISENHARDT, 1989). This research was carried out with 10 career entrepreneurs from the city of São Carlos, considered the technology capital of the state of São Paulo. A career is understood to be the set of work-related activities of a person over time. Random, exploratory and descriptive research was developed, with a qualitative approach, that is, when the researcher intends to explore a complex social phenomenon in depth, not through numbers, but through direct involvement with the individuals who are subjects of the research and their personal experiences, capturing these experiences in the language of the individuals themselves (SAMPIERI et al; 2006). The data collection instrument developed was a semi-structured survey, which corresponded to the use of a previously prepared script. This script was used to direct the interview, and changes could take place as it was carried out, giving the interviewee the possibility to talk about a certain subject investigated and the interviewer to ask other questions. (MARCONI AND LAKATOS, 1999). In addition to the research method, this research also used the life story method, in which interviewees narrated their trajectory. According to Sampieri et.al. (2006), this method makes it possible to get in touch with the feelings and emotions of individuals, who report their motivations and experiences from their point of view. The interviews were previously scheduled, recorded and later transcribed. Participants were selected and took part in this research only after completing the authorization for data disclosure.

The following phases were the comparative study with the theoretical reference, and the analysis of results and the accomplishment of activities to encourage entrepreneurship

III. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

At the end of the recording of each valuable individual story of people who believed in themselves, sensed unmissable opportunities, went to battle and built their own businesses, it is worth highlighting that the prestige of free enterprise and the prospective vision undoubtedly represent the common link between all the narratives presented in this work. The structuring of the methodological approach was based on the understanding of what each entrepreneur received from their experiences. A first contact was made by phone or email and each participant was invited individually to participate in the research, relating their experience as entrepreneurs. At the meeting, they received information about the goals and procedures of the research and

agreed to take part in the Study (Consent Term). Interviews were then carried out with each participant on a scheduled date and lasted approximately 1 hour.

Among the various topics addressed, the interviews focused on: i) life trajectory and its influence on the decision and motivation to undertake; ii) vision of entrepreneurship and biggest challenges; iii) Self-analysis on characteristics and entrepreneurial profile, advice for those who want to undertake; iv) skills needed to undertake and succeed in business; v) main challenges encountered in business.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed under content analysis (Baldin, 1970).

First, the data that characterize the profile of the entrepreneurs object of this study were organized, and then the results obtained by the data analysis were presented.

The outcoming personal profile of the interviewed entrepreneurs was that of a man who started the business with little or no resources, middle or low class, mostly without higher education and highly dedicated to the business, working more than 8 hours a day on average.

The data collected regarding item i) life trajectory and its influence on the decision and motivation to undertake, indicate that some interviewees had entrepreneurs in the family who influenced them, but the crucial factor for opening the business was the need for financial independence and the search for self-fulfillment. Most undertook the business out of necessity, some out of opportunity.

"... I sought independence since I was very young, my mother was a cleaner and we were in need, I wanted to work in order to help her..." (Interviewee 1). "...My father was an entrepreneur. He used to travel around Brazil, he had a business, but he couldn't make it work, so I decided to help him. We used to work in the backyard in precarious conditions, we decided to produce dog collars and today we have this huge factory you see..." (Interviewee 2). "... My father was an entrepreneur, he died young. As the eldest son, I had to take care of the family, we moved to São Carlos without any good financial conditions. I got a job, with the money from the termination I decided to open my own roast chicken business. Look at what it has become..." (Interviewee 3).

Regarding item ii) vision of entrepreneurship and the biggest challenges, entrepreneurs present the perception that they are led to assume extremely high workloads and dedicate themselves exhaustively to the business, without government support and the like. "... it's all about willingness and a lot of effort and dedication... (interviewee 4)". "...I don't have time for anything else. It is hard to reconcile tasks outside the company with those here... (Interviewee 5)". "...the idea of the business came up after the birth of my children, money was not enough... (Interviewee 6). I needed a job where I could combine my livelihood with something that would satisfy me..." (Interviewee 7).

About this item, the need to delegate and work as a team is pointed out, as everyone must sing the same tune, whether in the work environment or in personal life.

About item iii) Self-analysis on characteristics and entrepreneurial profile, advice for those who want to undertake: the interviewees pointed out that the company's guidelines and goals are formulated by the leader, and that this person needs to be willing to work with people, to be patient, to be a good listener, to solve problems and conflicts, which for them is very complex. The interviewed managers have a predominantly democratic profile - all of them called themselves democratic. "... we hold periodic meetings to discuss the planning and organization of work. The business must be transparent to the agents involved: customers, suppliers and partners... (Interviewee 8)". "...The organizational environment invites to relaxation, but the administration is rigid and structured, yet human at the same time... (Interviewee 9)". "... The company is a "community manager". Maintaining a cooperative spirit is essential. I don't see this company as being mine exclusively... if I win, everyone wins. There is a lack of cooperative culture in organizations... (Interviewee 10)". The interviewees gave advice to those who want to undertake: vision is fundamental, as well as knowing how to plan, developing leadership, being religious, always being open to learning. All of them claim that a leader on the front lines of organizations is necessary, for decision-making and an healthy organizational climate. Shane et al (2000) point out that all leadership is associated with the idea of power, which must be exercised sparingly and always aiming at common goals. Here, there is a need for training to delegate and decentralize decision-making. It is essential that the leader knows how to guide, set goals and control. Interviewee 5 pointed out the need to develop feedback techniques for employees to improve their performance and motivate themselves efficiently.

About item iv) necessary skills to undertake and succeed in business; Entrepreneurs point out that there are several skills that make their business successful, such as: "... a lot of work, effort, dedication. Sometimes people think they are going to be the boss and have free time, but experience says otherwise. Your brain doesn't shut off, it's 24 hours dedicated to the business. It is necessary to be transparent and involve all people in decisions. Financial organization is also necessary, along with discipline and idea management. Training for this is extremely important, essential... (Interviewee 10)". "...it is necessary to perform the functions of strict planning and organization, leadership, knowing how to deal with the diversity of people in the business, working as a team... (Interviewee 2)".

Regarding item v) main challenges encountered in business, respondents answered that: "...keeping the business going, hands-on, contacts. Another issue pointed out by this entrepreneur was: "...working with little money, with little return and yet believing that it will work. Persisting even without money... (Interviewee 5)". "...Reinvention is a daily necessity. Work hard and be committed. Giving up your personal life is a challenge. The path is arduous, we must believe in our ability... (Interviewee 9)". Covid 19 pandemic changed the entire technological structure, which became a great challenge for small businesses, but here we went... (Interviewee 7).

Undertaking is expressed in a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, actions. This set is characterized as a process – and not as a finished product – that needs to respond to the changes, to some faster than to others, that characterize contemporary time-space. This process is based on the manager's continuous learning about himself, about others and about the environment.

IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although the topic of entrepreneurship is presently widely explored in several researches due to the role it plays in the economy and in the regional and national development of countries, it is understood, more than ever, that the creation of new businesses by entrepreneurial subjects, directly related to the reduction of poverty and the generation of employment and income, and possibly with taxation, has an impact on greater well-being for the community, from different perspectives. Additionally, entrepreneurship is an object of multi and interdisciplinary study since it is under the eyes of Administration, Sociology, Psychology, Culture, History and especially Education and Training for Innovation.

Considering the importance of entrepreneurship, both in developed and developing countries such as Brazil, there is an effort to encourage campaigns and programs to value the entrepreneur (Klofstein et al, 2019). Increasing the number of entrepreneurs has been a global challenge, as it has been seen in countries such as Indonesia, Spain, China, Kazakhstan, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Tunisia, Turkey, Abu Dhabi, United States, Malaysia, United Kingdom, South Africa, Scotland, Pakistan, among others. It is, in fact, a preponderant chapter of the concern of the ILO-International Labor Organization.

It is understood through research that the innovation process is the result of a disciplined and persistent action, more than the result of brilliant minds that arise with the snap of a finger, as is so well characterized by the figure of Prof. Sparrow. It can be said that this is the base of the relevance of the educational process in the configuration of the entrepreneur: that is, entrepreneurship can be taught and learned, it is theory put in practice.

This phenomenon has generated enormous interest from researchers and academic institutions in order to learn about real-world entrepreneurs' stories to gather data and information that stimulate the entrepreneurial mindset of students so that they can create their own businesses.

Several studies indicate that the entrepreneurial intention of students increases after participating in activities aimed at entrepreneurship. Numerous scholars (Bandura, 2001; Ajzem, 1991; Pfeifer & Salirja, 2010) find empirical evidence through research of the strong influence of entrepreneurial education and the learning environment on the formation of entrepreneurial intention in students; otherwordly, entrepreneurial education has a strong impact on entrepreneurial culture as well as the learning environment in which students develop entrepreneurial skills.

There is no magic formula to turn someone into a successful entrepreneur. The influence of professors, academic training, the development of the entrepreneurial spirit can influence the accumulation of experiences and the relationship networking, that is, in the interaction with the organizational environment.

Through the interviews carried out, it was possible to notice that being closely connected with what you do, working hard and seizing opportunities are more important ingredients to become a successful entrepreneur than just believing in luck or thinking that entrepreneurs would work less than their collaborators.

It can be said that the common trait of these entrepreneurs is entrepreneurial self-efficacy, that is, believing that the business will work, in addition to the ability to sense opportunities and make them happen. Fontenele et al (2011) believe that the norms and attitudes of the social group have a stronger impact on entrepreneurial behavior than the individual's personal attitudes and perception of self-efficacy.

There are entrepreneurs who have peculiar characteristics, apparently different, but who started with little capital and with a huge desire to make things happen.

Through this field research, it was possible to understand the role of entrepreneurial attitudes, activities, conditions, characteristics and ambitions in entrepreneurship.

Several individual factors (personality traits and attitudes) and Institutional factors affect respondents' decisions to become entrepreneurs. The results point to some indicators: the willingness to take risks and the effort to become independent are considered extremely important individual factors and are corroborated by literature (Nassif et al 2009). Ability to solve problems and risk-taking are also highlighted by the interviewed entrepreneurs.

It is a consensus among academics and researchers that education and training provide the knowledge and skills essential to entrepreneurship. Particular entrepreneurial skills and knowledge can be taught and improved by effectively incorporating some subjects into the standard curriculum (business studies, marketing, etc.), while others can be developed by applying innovative teaching methodology (entrepreneurial thinking) (Laviere, 2010). Universities not only have teaching tasks and responsibilities, but also play a key role in forming opinions and building relationships.

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Ana Teresa C. Trevelin, et. al. "Entrepreneurs: Successful trajectories in the technology capital of Brazil." *The International Journal of Engineering and Science (IJES)*, 11(12), (2022): pp. 01-05.