Entrepreneurial behaviour of academics within the context of education

This research investigates the entrepreneurial behaviour of academics. Nowadays, universities are expected to be organisations with open boundaries, allowing for the cooperation and interdependency among different actors in the society. Against this background, this research focuses on the engagement of academics on entrepreneurial activities with external actors, such as business, so as to introduce novelties in teaching to create value for the university.

Social capital theory on entrepreneurship explains how social structures facilitate and constrain opportunities, behaviours, and cognitions of social actors. However, we know less about the actions of individuals to organize their social network in the first place. This research contributes to this theory by focusing on the individual characteristics, such as networking practices of academics, as antecedents of social capital organisation.

Additionally, this research provides societal contribution by accomplishing a better understanding of the possible synergies between the three core tasks of the university (teaching, research and knowledge transfer).

This research follows a sequential mixed methods approach grounded in critical realism. Four studies are conducted to understand: How do the social interactions of academics affect their entrepreneurial behaviour within the context of education based on University-Business Cooperation (UBC), and (if any) with what effects on the education mission of the university?

On the basis of the overall results from this dissertation, it could be argued that the entrepreneurial behaviour of academics creates new learning environments for students through a learning network created by UBC-based teaching. In this contribution, the outcomes are not merely economic, but are also of a social nature creating value for the communities that are involved in this process, such as the students and the business. A UBC-based form of teaching, becomes a network of learning where different members of that network engage in a knowledge circulation process. From a social constructivist view on human cognition, the results indicate that learning also depends on social interactions, not only between instructors and classmates, but also among the actors in the learner’s socio-economic context, providing a source of expertise and experience from the world of work. The findings therefore support the notion that academic entrepreneurship is not merely an economic process but draws from the social and institutional contexts that shape entrepreneurial behaviours, processes and outcomes. In the same vein, the outcomes are not merely economic, but are also of a social nature creating value for the communities that are involved in this process.