

# Innovative Entrepreneurial Initiatives Promoted at a Public University of Ciudad Juárez

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— *Abstract* —

Entrepreneurship has taken an upswing from several years ago through nowadays due to its importance for economic development in geographical regions. Thus, higher education is a proper period to impulse entrepreneurial spirit in students. The objective of this article is to acknowledge the entrepreneurship contest organized by Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez. The applied methods were observation and research about how this contest is conducted and who participates in it. Results show that there is great entrepreneurial activity by the university's students and that the performed projects have creativity and innovation.

**Keywords:**

*Entrepreneurship; Innovation; Education; Universities; Ciudad Juarez.*

Entrepreneurship is an important part of community development because it represents social and economic development. The creation of self-employment initiatives is a necessary and indispensable source to assist the well-being of society (Segura-Baron et al., 2019). Currently, the issue of entrepreneurship has taken off in Latin American countries, and different countries have expressed interest as a possible solution to the shortage of job offers, which has led to a high growth rate (Canales et al., 2017). This is because entrepreneurship represents an opportunity for regional economic growth due to the investment capital and the production of goods and services resulting from this process (Vargas & Uttermann, 2020).

According to Barba-Bayas and Viteri-Ojeda (2016) in recent years entrepreneurship has taken on importance, both in academic research and teaching. Therefore, universities have increased their entrepreneurship courses, increasing the student's chances of developing successful business initiatives. In this way, educational institutions implement strategies for the development of entrepreneurship skills, which allow students to undertake successful businesses by taking advantage of the opportunities in their environment (Castro, 2016). Among the main elements for the development of entrepreneurship projects, the motivation of the entrepreneur, the identification of a market idea, the existence of resources, and the skills and abilities acquired should be mentioned, which leads to the idea of the need for entrepreneurship education (Hidalgo, 2014).

Because education is a transcendental factor in social changes, entrepreneurship must be considered as a transversal attitude in various aspects, such as cultural, political, and business, which emphasizes the work of the entrepreneur as a creator of wealth and work for his community (Rodríguez, 2007).

Globalization and the need to adapt to these circumstances, in addition to continuous innovation, are some of the aspects that higher education institutions have considered for entrepreneurship. According to Valdivia-Velasco et al. (2019), in Mexico, private universities, due to their commercial nature, were pioneers in the development of entrepreneurship skills in their students, unlike public universities.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. *Entrepreneurship*

The entrepreneur is a pioneer, a different character due to his/her abilities to take risks, take advantage of crises, introduce new technology, and create opportunities for innovation (Canales et al., 2017). Other researchers in economic theory deduce that entrepreneurship comes from the word *entrepreneur* and refers to adventurers, due to the role it plays in this activity,

such as product development, taking risks, seeking financing, being creative, and finding opportunities (Jiménez-Silva et al., 2019.) In this way, these people identified their characteristics when they undertook the construction of large works. This concept is associated then with the concept of the company, identified as that particular economic activity, on the production of a good or service and its equivalent in money (García-García, 2015).

For Farayibi (2015), entrepreneurship is an opportunity to create new products and services, being an important process for economic growth. It is also necessary to consider entrepreneurship as a set of skills that a person possesses to manage, organize, innovate, and take risks (Vargas & Uttermann, 2020). However, Torres-Vázquez et al. (2020) say that entrepreneurship should be considered to begin at home since there is a great influence of the environment in which it takes place, strengthening those skills for entrepreneurship.

Currently, entrepreneurs who become competent move quickly creating strategic advantages over their competitors in the economy, creating opportunities for their companies to become innovative and better face those external pressures that arise, leaving their routines and comfort zones to become creative problem solvers and thus solidify their entrepreneurial spirit along the way (Alvarado et al., 2021). Likewise, there is the influence of society where entrepreneurs see various needs reflected that, to satisfy them promptly, provoke the innovative management of business ideas. From this, the concept of entrepreneurship emerges that "alludes to communities in which the population can generate innovative initiatives and projects in different spaces of action and to flexibly adapt to changes in an increasingly uncertain world" (Kantis, 2017, p. 121).

Jones et al. (2014) highlight certain qualities of entrepreneurs with the development of the company, which begin with the ability to recognize opportunities to develop the idea of the company, followed by the organizational aspects of the resources, and add that for the permanence of the business, aspects such as motivation, financing, and commitment must be considered. Canales et al. (2017) state that:

[...] the project begins with the identification and validation of a company idea, which subsequently needs to organize material and human factors; however, having resources and an innovative concept does not ensure the permanence of the business in the market, because it depends to a large extent on the motivation and commitment of the entrepreneur, coupled with the availability of financing and a healthy environment for business development. (p.5).

This is because the development of a business involves different factors of the entrepreneur's environment, they are related to their family, education,

and culture since they provide skills, experience, and knowledge. Therefore, entrepreneurship must be considered as an ability to structure projects to improve the quality of life of both the entrepreneur and his community (Rodríguez, 2007).

According to Canales et al. (2017), entrepreneurship can be considered in three phases:

- a) The *initial*, which is, on the one hand, the conception of the idea and can influence the individual from a positive perspective that includes the desire for realization; and on the other, a negative visualization that seeks entrepreneurship to face unemployment, frustration, and the need to survive.
- b) The *intermediate* includes the factors that make a person a potential entrepreneur, such as personal relationships and the family, cultural, social, and educational environment.
- c) The *last* one contemplates the actions and obtaining resources to develop the project.

Regarding the personal goals that cause individuals to become entrepreneurs, several can be considered; one of the most important is motivation, which can develop over time. Being surrounded by positive attitudes is one of the most important factors in the entrepreneurship process. "Motivation will be the engine that promotes the development of entrepreneurship since it will define why we give our effort and that of others" (Yépez et al., 2019, p. 28). Marulanda et al. (2014) point out other factors that should be considered: originality, moderate risk aversion, acceptance of responsibilities, perseverance, self-confidence, desire to learn, and long-term goal planning. One more important aspect, pointed out by Canales et al. (2017), is the motivation to undertake; a preponderant reason is income, economic independence, and personal satisfaction. Suarez et al. (2020) state in this regard: "Among the reasons for undertaking there is a predominance of those that acquire an intrinsic character, which has to do with self-actualization and personal-professional improvement and growth" (p. 181).

The entrepreneur will then show a satisfactory performance through the aforementioned motivators, which will be what will drive him to continue in the face of any obstacle; they will help him to carry out the activities so that, methodologically, he achieves the expected objective, in addition to putting his essence in the whole process, which will help him, even more, to be successful. "The attitudes that young people have about themselves are an important factor because they will determine their expectations, motivations, decision-making and, ultimately, their behavior" (Santos et al., 2015, p. 130).

## 2.2. *The University and Entrepreneurship*

Awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship is a task that must be addressed daily. In universities, it is a priority to highlight the fact that new companies promote the economic growth of a territory, due to the creation of new jobs and the increase in income from the payment of taxes, the increase in exports, and an increase in productivity, (Pérez & Solíz, 2020). "Entrepreneurship is an important vehicle for the growth and economic development of countries and young people are the ones who usually lead it" (Kantis, 2017, p.120).

For their part, Vargas and Uttermann (2020) point out the importance of education to boost the entrepreneurial spirit in young people to develop new entrepreneurs and, with it, boost economic growth and job creation. In turn, Aboobaker and Renjini (2020) allude that business education has a significant relationship with the development of positive attitudes for students to undertake. Likewise, Vélez et al. (2020) point out that business education helps the development of competencies, skills, attitudes, and values of the entrepreneurial spirit.

Berbetti (2015) reports that the lack of knowledge of the markets in which it is intended to venture, the insufficiency of training actions without permanent accompaniment and advice after the process has begun, coupled with budgetary restrictions and the difficulties in maintaining the financing required at the beginning of the experiences, appear as the factors that frequently hinder achievements and lead to the low survival of the ventures.

Today, society is more competitive and requires more entrepreneurs. Therefore, universities are essential for the training of professionals with cognitive skills who develop capacities for the implementation of innovative and sustainable ventures (Jiménez et al., 2019). García et al. (2018) argue that "business support and training services are essential in the creation of companies, however, the lack of access to such services leads the entrepreneur to imitate other people's ideas" (p. 92).

Knowledge is a fundamental part of entrepreneurship because it helps the transformation of ideas into products or services and these are promoted in a local, national, or international market (Pérez & Solíz, 2020). In addition, entrepreneurship involves processes and activities that are carried out to discover, define, and take advantage of the opportunities that generate wealth with the creation of innovative companies (Zahra et al., 2009). Meanwhile, Bravo et al. (2021) refer to entrepreneurship from a cognitive approach, because it understands intentions and perceptions. According to this approach, everything that is done involves a mental process that requires motivation, perception, and attitude.

For Osorio and Pereira (2011), a good educational practice for entrepreneurship is one that develops students' skills, attributes, and attitudes, not just an understanding of the principles, practices, and strategies of business. That is, learning must accompany the entrepreneur to observe their behavior through the environment. Therefore, the relationship between entrepreneurship and the University is preponderant, due to the causality of the application of this knowledge. That is, to the extent that knowledge is put into practice, it is how universities concretize their work in the social and economic development of communities (Segura-Barón et al., 2019).

In university education, the student's cognitive abilities must be strengthened to recognize opportunities. Therefore, according to Jiménez et al. (2019), those cognitive activities that should be given greater attention in the study of entrepreneurship are the identification and recognition of opportunities since these are the preamble of the entrepreneurship process.

In education, it is a priority to develop skills, which must be understood as knowledge within a given context, which implies the development of skills, capacities, and knowledge, to make use of them in the environment where they are developed (Rodríguez, 2007). For their part, Valdivia-Velasco et al. (2019) believe that entrepreneurial skills can be learned, so universities play an important role in teaching these characteristics and developing the entrepreneurial spirit.

Therefore, universities tend to promote projects or events where entrepreneurship skills are developed in young students. Torres (2015) mentions that "Young people are more likely to be entrepreneurs than non-young people because socio-cultural and psychological factors of self-confidence, reference models and social stigma to failure seem to affect young individuals less" (p. 138).

The university stage is one of the most important, it is the emergence of all the plans of young people, especially entrepreneurship, being the university a training body that guides young people to a better future, and not only to find a well-paid job, but to be their own boss and obtain their own income through a business idea (Espejo & Espíndola, 2015).

### *2.3. Entrepreneurship and economic and social development*

The opening of new companies involves characteristics aimed at taking advantage of the creativity and opportunities of the environment. The creation of companies seeks to boost employment, innovation, and growth (Fuentelsaz & González, 2015). Therefore, entrepreneurship is a process that takes place within a particular environment and is carried out by people with motivations and skills. According to Díaz (2017), this process takes place in three stages:

- a) The *first* is the conception of the potential entrepreneur, the search for opportunities and ideas.
- b) The *second* is that of the nascent entrepreneur with a business in training, to become a manager of his new business.
- c) The *third* consolidates the figure of the established entrepreneur.

To carry out successful ventures, it is desirable to have different skills, composed of personal, organizational, and technological aspects. These conform to attitudes, vision, values, resources, knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences. The formulation of these competencies occurs in conjunction with intellectual and human capital, and they help entrepreneurship to have a greater probability of success (Pérez & Solíz, 2020).

Due to the above, entrepreneurs who meet the real needs of the population profitably will be the ones most likely to thrive in the future. Therefore, entrepreneurship must be understood as a process of discovery, creation, and exploitation of opportunities, to offer products and services to obtain an economic benefit (Chirinos et al., 2018). In addition, entrepreneurship contains processes and activities to discover, define, and take advantage of opportunities to improve social wealth through the creation of companies (Zahra et al., 2009).

Marulanda and Morales (2016) point out that there are several factors for the creation of a company, the most important being the aspirations of the entrepreneur, his skills (knowing how), the resources he has, and the environment, which is the environment where he is going to develop. Although there are other factors for the company to have sustainability such as the market, size of the company, competition, level of growth, cost, and indebtedness (Sepúlveda & Gutiérrez, 2016).

In turn, entrepreneurship is related to innovation, so entrepreneurs must develop strategies and attitudes of risk, creativity, self-confidence, and vision. With the above and the needs of the environment, we seek to produce new things, under the premise of profitability and sustainability (Castro, 2016). For this reason, Barba-Bayas and Viteri-Ojeda (2016) point out that there are people who are born with an entrepreneurial capacity, since from an early age they demonstrate an ability to innovate and take risks.

As noted by Vernanza et al. (2020), currently undertaking an innovative project is very likely to succeed, many entrepreneurs develop ventures with broad competitive advantages offered by technology. Therefore, innovation and entrepreneurship are related. That is, entrepreneurs see technology as a tool to be more competitive and achieve sustainability.

Díaz-Casero et al. (2013) point out that it is important to consider the region where entrepreneurship is to be implemented, as an important factor for the success of the company; because, in developed economies, it is more



viable to execute an entrepreneurship project and that it is successful, and on the contrary, in countries with emerging economies, viability is reduced. Likewise, Vargas and Uttermann (2020) affirm that in countries with strong economies, entrepreneurship is carried out relatively easily and entrepreneurs are considered visionary people, unlike in developing countries where entrepreneurship is very few and only carried out of necessity. Mendoza et al. (2020) point out that in developing countries, entrepreneurship is not carried out of conviction but out of necessity, due to the difficulties it represents, such as low levels of innovation, lack of money, scarce market, and the price/cost ratio.

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez has an instance called the Office of Business Development, which works with teachers who are part of the Transversal Academy of Entrepreneurship, with the task of implementing a contest called EMPRENDIZATE-UACJ, which takes place every semester. The purpose of this event is to promote the entrepreneurial culture within the students and to distinguish the innovative ideas and business projects that are worked on in different classes of the institution. This competition aims to promote the development of companies in the region. The participating projects are characterized by innovation, creativity, and sustainability. This event promotes the environment for students, entrepreneurs, and businessmen to coexist and exchange experiences as in the evaluation of a project, in the feedback on the weaknesses and strengths of each project. In addition, this meeting is held through a call addressed to all undergraduate students of the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, through the registration of their project within one of the three categories, as shown in Table 1.

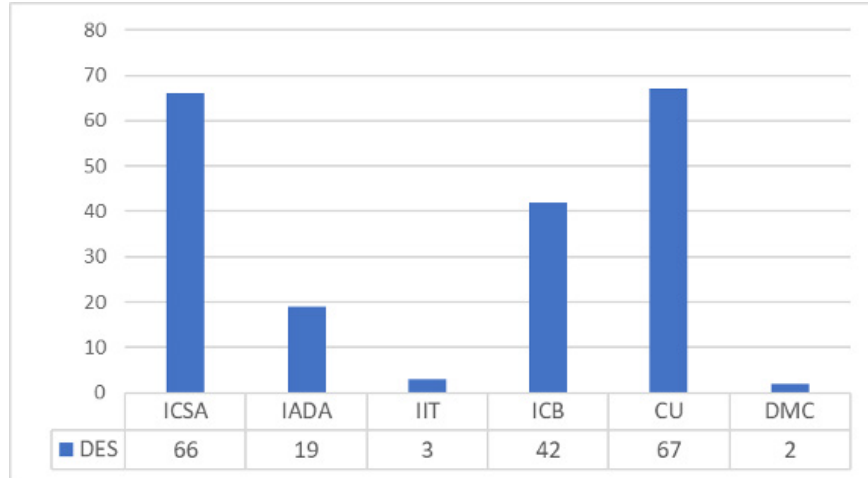
**Table 1**  
*Project Categories*

Category	Description
Traditional	These are projects whose objective is the marketing and distribution of a product or service.
Technological	This type of project is the creation, modification, or adaptation of a tangible product thanks to the use of technology.
Social	These are projects whose business model aims to improve, solve, or eliminate social problems or needs.
Artistic	This category aims to develop projects with tendencies to encourage, promote, develop, disseminate, and value artistic and cultural projects.

Note: Own elaboration.

In 2021, due to COVID-19, a virtual edition of EMPRENDÍZATE-UACJ was held. Through a call, students are invited to participate every semester. First, through teachers with the recognition of innovative ideas and business models developed by their students. When the call is launched, projects are submitted and those with greater innovation and relevance are selected. Projects may participate within one of the four categories mentioned in Table 1.

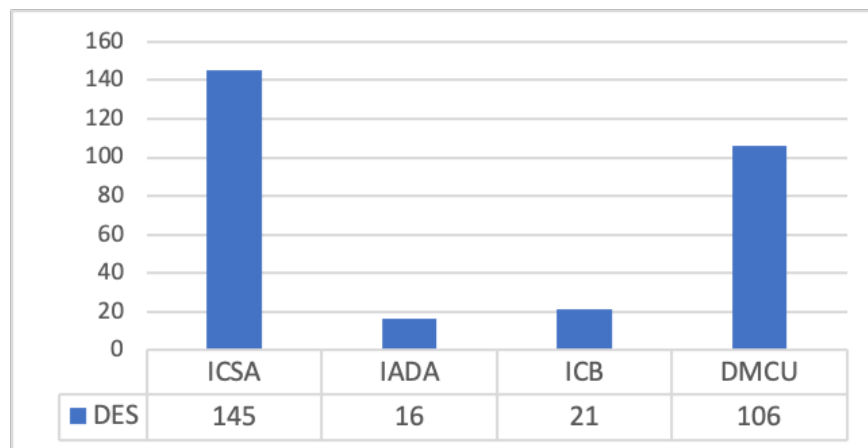
A total of 197 students participated in the 2021-1 semester (January-June) (see Figure 1).



Note. Own elaboration.

Figure 1. Student Participation, Semester 2021-1

A total of 288 students participated in the 2021-2 semester (August-December), as shown in Figure 2.



Note. Own elaboration.

Figure 2. Student Participation, Semester 2021-2

#### 4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

By the number of students who registered their projects for the competitions of both semesters, there is a great interest on their part to generate and develop a viable business, in addition to the influence of the embedded inertia of society, where these young university entrepreneurs see the possibilities projected, from a tangible perspective, to meet their various needs, provoking and encouraging the management of their business ideas. From this arises the concept of entrepreneurial society which "refers to communities in which the population can generate innovative initiatives and projects in different spaces of action and adapt flexibly to changes in an increasingly uncertain world" (Kantis, 2017, p. 121).

The numbers of university students interested in entering their projects to the competitions identify in them their entrepreneurial spirit, which can emerge and develop in an adequate environment that allows them to clearly see that it is the precise moment for the development of that idea and that, with the appropriate monitoring and accompaniment, all their objectives can be carried out. This corroborates what Canales et al. (2017, p. 5) explain:

[...] the project begins with the identification and validation of a company idea, which subsequently needs to organize material and human factors; however, having resources and an innovative concept does not ensure the permanence of the business in the market, because it depends to a large extent on the motivation and commitment of the entrepreneur, coupled with the availability of financing and a healthy environment for business development.

Throughout the development of these competitions, it has been possible to identify those factors that influence the desire for entrepreneurship of these young university students, among which it stands out that their project is developed in an environment of support and advice that, even though the current circumstances in the city may make it difficult, has all the opportunities to strengthen the business; to this must be paid another factor identified, which is the good attitude on the part of young entrepreneurial university students, which makes it the perfect mixture to have the expected growth and progress.

If these young university students are clear about the scope of how far they could go, they will develop the right motivation to create and generate a strong business, and that all their work and effort made during the time invested is worth it.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

One of the most important issues that are addressed about entrepreneurship is the economic development that triggers in the regions, through the sources of employment that it generates. However, for entrepreneurs to generate these sources of employment, their project must first be profitable and sustainable. Therefore, universities play an important role in the development of young entrepreneurs who can create these companies.

One of the priority issues is that universities should focus on transmitting the different types of entrepreneurship and the differences between entrepreneurship out of necessity or enthusiasm. Entrepreneurship that is developed by necessity is focused on a self-employment strategy and must have a base of understanding to guarantee the competitiveness and sustainability of the project. The second is developed based on attitudes, skills, and, above all, enthusiasm for entrepreneurship.

Another fundamental aspect of promoting entrepreneurship projects is that they are adequately monitored, that is, the proposed company is not only reflected on paper as a simple project. For this reason, entrepreneurship competitions, incubators, and business accelerators are vital for the development and sustainability of projects. As suggested by Barba-Bayas and Viteri-Ojeda (2016), a life project for entrepreneurial students is important so that they see themselves as future successful entrepreneurs and can overcome the phrase "you can't".

On the other hand, in the different entrepreneurship projects developed by university students, creativity and innovation can be observed and applied to the solution of various problems faced by the different entities. On the contrary, there is a shortage of publications by academics about entrepreneurship in Mexico, which opens a window of opportunity for future research.

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