



**THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY (ESE) IN STUDENTS OF
THE SCHOOL OF ACCOUNTING AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE
AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF SAN LUIS POTOSI**

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial intention models describe the behavioral tendency of an individual to do business, analyzing each of the constructs involved in this professional decision, recognizing those who are at an optimum level and developing those who are weak in the person. From the results of this study one of the most important variables of entrepreneurial intention is described: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy of students of the Accounting and Administration Faculty (Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí). The approach of this investigation is quantitative. The selection of the sample was random stratified and included business administration, accounting and public administration students enrolled in the semester January to June 2012. The instrument used is a self-administered questionnaire. One of the main findings of this research is the description of the capabilities of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the differences in the level of this when they have taken some subjects of the entrepreneurial program.

Keywords: Entrepreneur program, self-efficacy, entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

Introduction

During the year 2010 we witnessed public demonstrations by young people against their rulers for the lack of employment. This happened in countries like France, Spain, the United States of America, Greece among others. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), in its press release in 2010, 78 million young people were unemployed in the world.

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, in Spanish), at the end of June 2013, in Mexico there were 990,155 people with college degrees without employment. In other words, four of every ten unemployed Mexicans had a higher education. If we consider that labor is the only alternative that people have for acquiring the necessary, we can understand the phenomenon of the discouraged as this human tidal wave coming to threaten cultural, political, economic and social stability of countries in the world. In view of such circumstances, Martínez Rodríguez (2008) proposes the following to counteract unemployment:

“The development of the entrepreneurial culture as a strategy to strike a balance between economic growth, social justice and respect for nature. It seems appropriate to promote, at a time of economic uncertainty, of serious environmental and ecological problems, and serious social imbalances, the creation of a system of ethical and entrepreneurial values”.

(p. 93)

As well, Raposo (2011) mentioned that education provides individuals a sense of independence and autonomy, self-confidence, makes them become aware of the career options available, expands their horizons, which develops in them the ability to perceive opportunities and finally, provides them with the knowledge that can be used for the development of new businesses.

In this sense, the idea of integrating education within the company-life starts from the 70's years at private universities, assuming a special interest until the decade of the 90's subverting public education in several fields of the world. The Programme for Educational Modernization 1989-1994 was adopted in Mexico and the Proposal of Guidelines for the Evaluation of Higher Education presented by ANUIES in 1990, where it was established a Strategy of Modernization for Higher Education in terms of its diversification, as well as close links with society and industry.

On the other hand, the UASLP (UASLP, 2003) through the Liaison Division and its department of Business Development, sets aims to develop in students the entrepreneurial spirit

through three main aspects: development of entrepreneurial attitudes in students, counseling and training to SMEs, and the creation of a business incubator.

The role played by education in bringing down unemployment is forceful, however, it has not been enough generating plans and study programmes in higher education institutions that promote entrepreneurial spirit; or offering subjects whose objective is to develop and foster entrepreneurial capabilities. Then how does a student – entrepreneur germinate?

Krueger and Brazael (1994) claim that the entrepreneurial spirit, emerges from the intention of planned behavior and therefore, it is necessary to initiate the investigation with the representation of formal models that measure this. Firstly, intentions serve to focus attention in terms of decision-making, on objective behavior and systematically become the best elements to predict behavior. At the same time, certain attitudes or strong beliefs of the person are keys to predict them. Secondly, key intentions and attitudes are based on perception. Therefore they can be learned and necessarily vary between individuals and situations.

Summing up the previous concept, factors in the decision to create a business or business model are: attitudes and strong beliefs that form the perception of individuals to make it possible. In this regard, Bandura (1977, 1986 and 2001) mentions that self-efficacy is a significant motivator that influences individual decisions, objectives, emotional reactions and the effort to cope with different situations, referring to the convictions of individuals about their abilities, and therefore to an important set of knowledge and beliefs about the ability to act on designated levels.

To accurately describe capabilities required in an entrepreneur, these can be found with Mueller and Goic (2003), who defined the business tasks in a *process model* that separates these tasks into four steps or phases.

1. The first step consists of creative and innovative business opportunity identification and/or the development of an idea.
2. The second step is to turn this idea into a viable business plan, where the market size, the company's location, product specifications, implementation and operation costs, and identification of the necessary resources to sustain its growth are analyzed and assessed.
3. The third step involves the choice of resources to carry out the start-up or the company's start as capital, personnel, clients and suppliers.

4. The fourth step refers to the entrepreneur's performance as a executive-level manager, with activities such as strategic planning, management of various business relationships and the application of good management internal that allows to solve problems quickly and efficiently.

McGee, Peterson, Mueller and Sequiera (2009), mention that the entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy, ESE) is a construct that measures the confidence of a person in their ability to successfully launch an entrepreneurial risk (business). The study of education in entrepreneurship, especially at a college level, has been widely studied (Cox, Mueller and Moss, 2002; Karlsson and Moberg, 2013; Pihie and Bagheri, 2011; Setia-wan, 2014; Krekar and Coric 2013); besides that it is considered an important factor related to entrepreneurial intention (McGee, Perterson and Mueller, 2009;) Piperopoulos and Dimov, 2014; Shinnar, Hsu and Powell, 2014).

By identifying and describing this construct in FCA students would allow to obtain knowledge about students' confidence have to take as a life project being entrepreneurs. Despite being an exploratory study, it provides evidence to the institution about the presence of this construct in the students, allowing and recognizing capabilities that could be developed through the entrepreneur program.

Therefore the following questions arise: do students have entrepreneurial self-efficacy? Is there any difference of entrepreneurial self-efficacy according to gender employment status, age, marital status in FCA students? Is there any difference of self-efficacy entrepreneurial students who have taken the subjects marked by the Entrepreneur Programme curriculum?

General objective

The research objective is to describe one of the variables of entrepreneurial intention: the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of the students of the UASLP's Accounting and Administration Faculty.

Specific objectives

- Identify entrepreneurial self-efficacy capabilities present in students of the FCA

- Identify if there are differences in levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy by gender, employment status, age, marital status and having studied the subjects of the Entrepreneur Programme.

History of the Entrepreneur Programme at the FCA

At the UASLP's Accountancy and Administration Faculty (FCA), in 2006 it is created a new curricular model for the Bachelor's degree in Public Accounting, Advanced Technical Degree in Accounting, Bachelor's degree in Administration, Advanced Technical Degree in Management, Bachelor's degree in Public Administration and Advanced Technical Degree in Public Administration. This model is focused to introduce greater flexibility in the curricular organization of programmes, to generate greater involvement of students in their own learning and include teaching strategies problem solving oriented, to diversify learning contexts, and to transform assessment practices. All these transformations tend to strengthen the development of competences of future professionals; faculty graduates who are able of confronting new situations raised by their professional scope and their commitment to society. Expressed in other way, today it is required the knowledge and skills of professionals, to be more articulated to the requirements of the new work market based on innovation and technological change.

Within this new FCA's curricular model, it is incorporated the Entrepreneur Programme, whose goal is to "promote an entrepreneurial culture for the creation of new companies of products and services with creativity, innovation, marketing, and technology allowing the competitive development of the country". This program is offered for the Bachelor's degree in Administration and Bachelor's degree in Accounting. It is not imparted to the Bachelor's degree in Public Administration (Quevedo, 2007).

In the first cycle, from the fourth to sixth semester, students are offered a range of free, elective courses that allow them to complement their training, or develop their entrepreneurial capacity. Courses related to entrepreneurship development, are based on the faculty's entrepreneurial project, these courses extend to the second cycle of the Public Accountant and Administration degrees.

In the second cycle the student is offered a series of elective-free, deepening courses so that, in accordance to their interests and needs, the student further deepens in one or another area of their professional formation scope. One of the areas that are offered is that of Entrepreneurial Development.

The subjects that make up this Entrepreneurial Programme are: Genesis and Entrepreneurial Development, Legal Framework and Strategic Alliances, Electronic Commerce, Business and Sales Strategies, Franchise as business model, Business Simulator, Export and International Markets, Project Formulation and Evaluation, and Analysis and Financial Management.

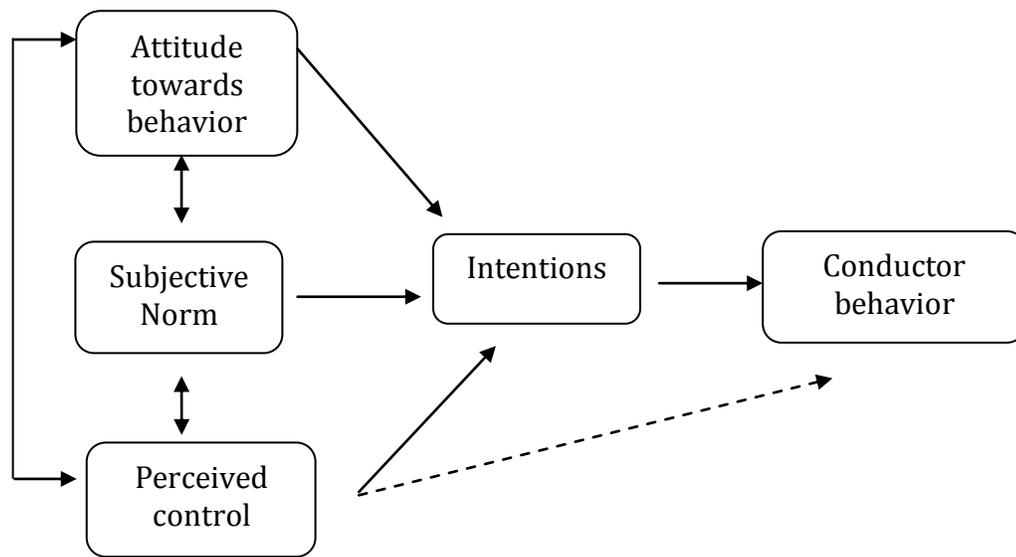
Krueger and Brazael's entrepreneurial intention model.

The Krueger and Brazael's (1994) model is one of the theoretical models that interpret the perceptions and intentions of the potentialities of future entrepreneurs. This model takes Ajzen's planned behavior theory (1991), which establishes that intentions convincingly predict and explain planned behavior. As shown in Figure 1, these acting intentions will be determined by their beliefs towards behavior, normative beliefs that form the basis of the determinants of subjective standards and the degree of perceived behavioral control. The action's success, the creation of a company, therefore depends on motivation (intention) and the capability (behavior control).

The perception of people behavior control refers to the ease or difficulty of carrying out an action of their interest. This construct has greater compatibility with the concept self-efficacy mentioned by Bandura (1977), which has to do with the judgment of how well an action can be carried out in order to face potential situations. Confidence in their ability to carry it out, in influence on the selection, preparation, effort made during the execution, as well as thought patterns and emotional reactions in a specific activity.

Another model in which the authors support their proposal is the one referring business intentions of Shapero and Sokol (1982). It should be noted that it does not consider individual traits of the entrepreneur, so it rather focuses on those aspects external to it, such as family, and social and cultural factors of the environment.

Figure 1. Theory of planned behavior.



Source: Ajzen (1991)

Below are described the components of Krueger and Brazael's model, (1994) shown in Figure 2.

- The perceived desire refers to social norms and attitudes allowed in the social environment and the perceived viability (self-efficacy) is the personal perception of one's capabilities available to perform an action, these are the elements that originate the process for the creation of a company.

- Credibility refers to the perception of the person to perform a behavior, which should be acceptable by society and by themselves. For example: when deciding on a career it is necessary that the profession is observed by their entourage, as family, friends, neighbors groups as "good" and also themselves feeling able to carry it out.

- The propensity to act can be considered as a stable feature of the individual's personality, this is a concept closely related to other constructs, as the internal locus of control; it is the attribution of oneself by one's successes and failures (Gallurt Plá, 2010). That is to say,

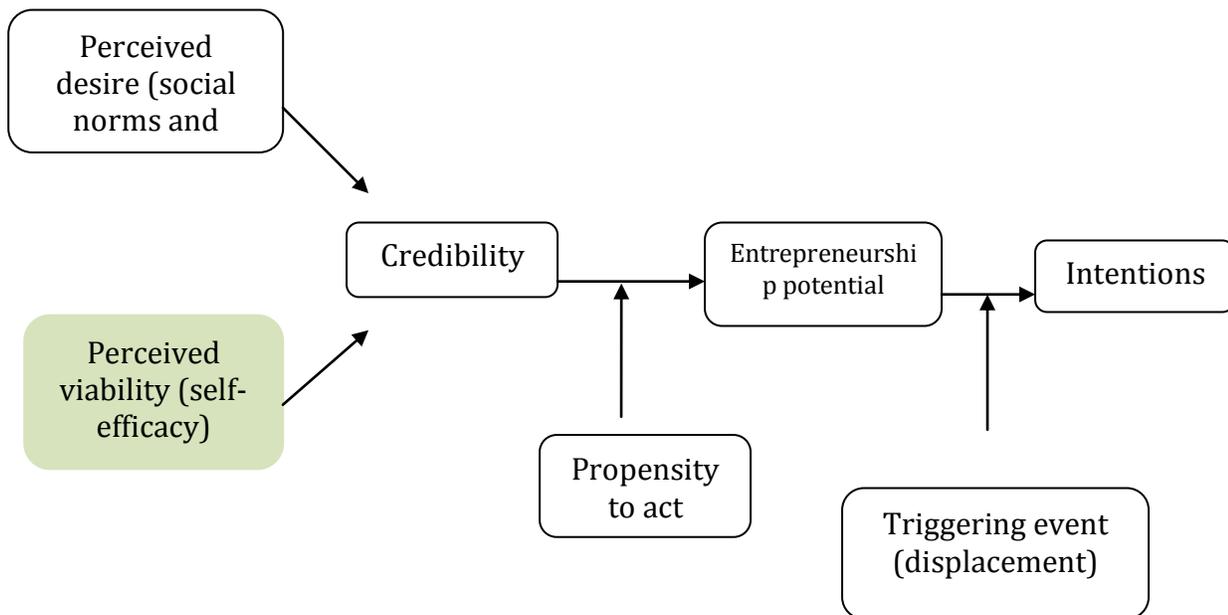
when the person evaluates internally their efforts, skills, attitudes, and knowledge to make that success or failure to happen.

- Entrepreneurial potential, talks about the pre-existing preparation to accept the opportunity that originates or precipitates the triggering event. This pre-existing preparation is the individual's knowledge and familiarity in the field of business.

- The triggering event is a latent, causal and temporally prior state to the intention. Forces act indirectly on a potential conduct by influencing some attitudes and intentions. This concept is equivalent to the precipitating event Shapero and Sokol (1982) defined as a change of direction that produces or motivates the possible birth of a new entrepreneur. This change in behavior may occur by positive displacement such as own financial support or the economy's proper function, or negative such as loss of employment, considered this as the main imposed external displacement. Among the positive *internal* can be mentioned finishing the career or reaching a certain age.

Krueger and Brazael (1994) suggest the existence of intent scales to form companies, which can vary depending on how intense or profound this is in the individual. Intentions worse formed or with less sustenance are more likely to change in the future. With this, they claim the nature of intentions is dynamic and not static.

Figure 2. Entrepreneurship potential model.



Source: Krueger and Brazael (1994)

The Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a significant motivator that influences individual decisions, objectives, emotional reactions and the effort to deal with different situations. It refers to individual's belief regarding their abilities, and therefore an important set of knowledge and beliefs about the ability to act on different designated levels (Bandura, 1977, 1986 and 2001).

Krueger and Brazael (1994) state that self-efficacy is linked to the persistence in the behavior of the person under uncertainty; for example, by setting higher goals, in the ability to reduce threats and the learning inflexibility. Without self-efficacy, there is no behavior. The individual's perception of opportunity or threat are driven by perceptions of the ability to control that one may have about a given situation and the uptake of the own self-efficacy. These strongly influence the response behaviour the person generates towards the risk situation. Therefore self-efficacy is linked with the rigidity of behavior, by reducing possible solutions to threats, it slows persistence and endurance in adverse times. If a certain behavior is perceived as beyond the capability of a person, he or she it won't act, even if there exists a social demand. Self-efficacy is acquired gradually through the development of a complex cognitive thinking, the social, linguistic and physical skills obtained through experience.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE)

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is one of the concepts most related to entrepreneurial intention. Carr and Sequeira (2007) have studied it together with other factors as one of the main triggers of entrepreneurial intention. Krekar and Coric (2013) designated it as one of the crucial constructs in entrepreneurship investigation, measuring this aspect at the end of the semester of entrepreneurial studies and 18 months later. Its findings indicate that this is a dynamic construct that changes through the entrepreneur's stages.

On the other part, Setiawan (2014) analyzed the ESE levels present in students of a University that adopted entrepreneurship education in their curricula. After four semesters of participation in this entrepreneurial program, results showed that the average level of this variable in students was high, it should be noted that it was only made a measurement of the construct, as it is the case in this study.

In 2009, McGee, Peterson, Mueller and Sequiera, refer to ESE as a construct that measures the confidence of a person in their ability to successfully launch an entrepreneurial risk (business). These authors suggest a validated scale in its context to measure this construct and

divide it into five dimensions: 1. - search, 2.-planning, 3.-authorized grouping, 4.-staff application, 5.-financial involvement. Below are explained each one of them.

1. The search stage involves the identification and development of a business opportunity. Creativity is one of the skills needed in this stage as well as the contact network.
2. The planning stage refers to the activities that convert the business plan into a project viable. The assessment goes in connection with terms of measuring of the market as well as the profitability criteria.
3. The authorized grouping stage involves the ability to raise capital, personnel, customers and suppliers resources necessary since without these the company may not exist or sustain.
4. The stage of staff application, mentions the tasks related to the leadership and management of the people who work in the business.
5. The stage of financial involvement refers to the tasks that generate a healthy and efficient management of the business's financial resources.

Since the object of study at the Accounting and Administration Faculty, is the study of all businesses related, supported at this stage with the Entrepreneur Programme, it is expected that the level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy in students to be high, thus arises the hypothesis:

H1: The entrepreneurial self-efficacy level in the UASLP's FCA students is high.

Research Methodology

Universe of the study

The UASLP's FCA student population for the January-June 2012 semester was 3408, distributed in the following careers: Bachelor's degree in Administration, 1845; Bachelor's degree in Public Administration 278; and Public Accountant, 1285.

Description and selection of sample.

A stratified random sample of 352 students was obtained. For the degree in Administration, 111 women and 78 men were considered, for the degree in Public

Administration, 14 women and 15 men and in the case of Public Accountant 78 men and 55 women. The size was determined considering a 95% of reliability and an accuracy of 3%.

Measuring tool.

The survey method for data collection was chosen, using a questionnaire that measures entrepreneurial self-efficacy, according to the scale of McGee et al. (2009), each student being asked to indicate their general information and courses taken of the Entrepreneur Programme.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is divided in 5 dimensions: search, planning, authorized grouping, staff application and financial involvement. It consists of 19 statements related to business activity, which should be evaluated by the respondent in a codification of scales that measures the level of trust they perceive of themselves to carry them out, these confidence levels are measured on a scale from 0 to 100. Zero indicates not having confidence in their abilities, the 50 indicates some confidence in their abilities and the 100 high confidence in their abilities.

Validity of the measuring instrument.

The reliability analysis presented a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.881. The items from 1 to 4 described activities of the search stage, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70; from 5 to 7 refer to planning, item no. 8 was eliminated to reach the minimum level recommended of 0.70; from 9 to 11 are about authorized grouping with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70; from 12 to 17 is staff application with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.80 and from 18 to 20 describe financial involvement with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.87. All coefficients are above the recommended level of 0.7.

To obtain the data and, once the questionnaire was validated with the pilot test, the students selected in the sample were gathered in the computer laboratories to answer the online questionnaire, through the SurveyMonkey website. The questionnaire was self-administered; the response rate was of 79%, because of 420 students, it was found that only 335 answered the questions completely. This was done during the months of April and May 2012.

Once the data was collected, it was processed in the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program, version 20, to carry out the descriptive and parametric analysis with techniques such as ANOVA (Analysis of Variance).

Results.

In the results obtained in the statistical description of the research, it is noted that the perception of these students with regard to entrepreneurial self-efficacy is:

- *The 50% of students claim to have a high level of confidence in their capability for carrying out entrepreneurial tasks.*

Thus, rejecting hypothesis 1, which stated the following: H1. The entrepreneurial self-efficacy level in the UASLP's FCA students is high.

At the search stage, the entrepreneurial activities that students designated with a high confidence level are the following:

Confidence level	Entrepreneurial activity	Number of students
69%	Share your ideas with others so that, among all, a new product or service idea arises.	231
51.8%	Propose by yourself a new product or service idea.	173

At the planning stage:

Confidence level	Entrepreneurial activity	Number of students
57.8%	Determining a competitive price for a new product or service	193
54.0%	Estimating the necessary funds quantity to start up a company and liquidity needs.	181

At the authorized grouping stage, with the capabilities of:

Confidence level	Entrepreneurial activity	Number of students
53.1%	Making others feel identified with mi business vision and plans for a new company.	178
57%	Making a contact network (contacting and interchanging information with others)	191
65%	Explaining my business ideas in a clear and concise way, whether verbally or in writing, and in colloquial terms.	220

At the staff application stage:

Confidence level	Entrepreneurial activity	Number of students
83%	Supervising employees.	279
64.5%	Recruiting and firing employees.	216
75.5%	Delegating tasks and responsibilities to employees.	253
71.9%	Facing daily problems and crisis situations in an effective way.	241
82.1%	Inspiring, stimulating, cheering and motivating employees.	275
71%	Forming my employees.	238

At the stage of financial involvement:

Confidence level	Entrepreneurial activity	Number of students
69.6%	Organizing and keeping up to date my company's accountability.	233
63.3%	Managing my company's financial assets.	212
63.9%	Reading and interpreting balances sheets and financial statements.	214

The capabilities in entrepreneurial activities in which more than 50% of the student population does not perceive themselves with a high level of confidence are the following:

Search stage:

Confidence level	Entrepreneurial activity	Number of students
49.3%	Identifying needs for new products or services.	165
44.2%	Designing a product or service which satisfies consumer's needs and expectations.	148

Planning stage:

Confidence level	Entrepreneurial activity	Number of students
40.3%	Estimating the demand for a new product or service.	135

When making the analysis with regards to students who attended the subjects offered in the Entrepreneur Programme, the following results were obtained: the electronic commerce, business and sales strategies, franchising as a business model, subjects increase entrepreneurial self-efficacy in the business activities of:

Search stage:

- Propose by yourself a new product or service idea.
- Designing a product or service that satisfies consumer's needs and expectations.

Planning stage:

- Estimating the demand for a new product or service
- Determining a competitive price for a new product or service
- Estimating the necessary funds quantity to start up a company and liquidity needs.

Authorized grouping stage:

- Making others feel identified with mi business vision and plans for a new company.
- Making a contact network

Staff application stage:

- Recruiting and firing employees.
- Delegating tasks and responsibilities to employees.
- Facing problems in an effective way.

Financial involvement stage:

- Managing my company's financial assets.

The courses of Genesis and entrepreneurial development, Legal Framework and Strategic Alliance, Business Simulator, Export and International Markets, Project Formulation and Evaluation, and Analysis and Financial Management seem to not increase the level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

Additionally, when comparing averages among different groups of students, significant differences were found in the following points: regarding gender, men presented more ESE than

women; employment status also affects the level of trust, students who reported being self-employed, working full or part time obtained greater confidence than those who do not work. Studying full time does not increase the confidence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

Conclusions and recommendations.

From the results obtained, the objectives of the research were managed to achieve by identifying that 50% of the students surveyed from the UASLP's FCA have a high level of confidence to take as choice of professional life, starting a business. It is necessary to emphasize that the FCA aims to train professionals with accounting and administrative skills, however there is talk of an option that is the being an entrepreneur rather than employee and thus contributing to decrease the unemployment rate.

It was also identified that the remaining 50% of the surveyed population claims having a middle and low level of confidence in entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

In this group of students is pertinent to highlight that the business activities in which they have lower trust are those related to creativity and innovation, as to identify needs for new products or services and to design a product or service that meets the needs and expectations of consumers. These activities belong to the search stage, which determines the difference between employee and entrepreneur. An entrepreneur sees a business opportunity, turns threats into opportunities, and is visionary. An employee executes orders, manages a business, and works on it.

With respect to gender analysis, it was found that men are more confident in the execution of business activities than women. Students who have an active employment status have greater confidence than those who do not work. Full-time students do not increase their confidence in ESE.

In terms of the objective of identifying capabilities of the entrepreneurial self-efficacy which are developed through the Entrepreneur Programme, courses that contribute to the formation of these capabilities were identified, such as: E-commerce, Business and Sales Strategies, Franchising as a Business Model; as well as which of those do not promote entrepreneurial self-efficacy such as: Genesis and entrepreneurial development, Legal Framework and Strategic Alliance, Business Simulator, Export and international markets, Project Formulation and Evaluation, and Analysis and Financial Management. At the same time,

business activities developed through these courses and those that are not being fostered in this programme, were identified.

It is worth mentioning that in the analysis made, students who took the Entrepreneur Programme courses developed one of the business activities related to business creation *designing a product or service that meets needs and expectations of consumers* within the course of Business and Sales Strategies.

Therefore it is recommended to the FCA to generate, teach and learn strategies that will increase the trust level between 50% of the student population that is perceived with medium and low levels of self-efficacy (ESE). As well as specifically putting emphasis on the development of activities of *identifying needs for new products or services* and *designing a product or service that meets needs and expectations of consumers*.

One of the educational experiences that have direct impact on entrepreneurial intention and decrease in unemployment is the establishment of a business incubator. With this, 50% of the students feel motivated to start a business.

For the Entrepreneur Programme, it is recommended carrying out an in-depth analysis of the curricular framework, those capabilities mentioned above which are not developed could be taken as a starting point to establish them as learning objectives, and designing teaching and learning strategies that can foster them.

At the end of this study it was possible to describe the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of students of the UASLP's FCA. Hoping through this information to improve educational quality for an entrepreneurial culture, where students will be able to find a new horizon to start their productive life, be entrepreneurs and thereby contribute to reduce the unemployment problem in San Luis Potosi.

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