

Building Community Through Entrepreneurship Education

Innovations Case Discussion:
INJAZ

Soraya Salti draws us into the heart of the INJAZ Best Student Company competition through her vivid description of the event and the people engaged in the program. We can feel the excitement as the young students compete for various recognitions for themselves and their companies, and in many ways, their countries. And, in this intriguing case, that very multi-purpose or multi-level recognition is one of the most critical messages. Entrepreneurship, when approached correctly, is about far more than the creation of individual wealth; entrepreneurship is the identification of opportunities, organization of resources, and the provision of leadership to create something of value. That value is most impactful when created for the benefit of the entrepreneur, entrepreneurial team, community, society, and country. That value can be many things, but approaching it only for the money is the smallest version of entrepreneurship.

The INJAZ story is inspiring. Not quite ten years old, INJAZ has already reached 100,000 students in eleven Arab countries. The program itself can be analyzed as an entrepreneurial venture. It began with **opportunity**, as its organizers looked through a social entrepreneurship lens and saw the possibilities in taking creative action to solve a social problem: growing unemployment among youth. The prospect of 80,000,000 Arab youth in the MENA region seeking new jobs in the next twelve years is extremely daunting. INJAZ was launched to address this

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problem in 1999 as a project of Save the Children with funds from USAID; it became affiliated with Junior Achievement, the US-based organization that operates in 119 countries and reports having an impact on 8,000,000 students per year. Like many start-ups, INJAZ struggled in its early days; in 2001 it was spun off under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah II of Jordan.

Resources were also gathered and organized to support INJAZ's subsequent growth and success. In this case, the social resources were critically important to create the network needed to fund, implement, and ultimately institutionalize the educational program into school systems. INJAZ is specifically a non-governmental program; it was intentionally started outside of the regular classroom in order to avoid developing a burdensome bureaucracy. In fact, early support from the Ministry of Education was reported as fairly weak. However, in Jordan, as in most of the participating countries, INJAZ became increasingly coordinated with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. These institutional relationships were instrumental in scaling it up, as seen in the example of Jordan's Minister of Education successfully lobbying for INJAZ while he was co-chairing the G-8 ministerial meeting for the MENA region.

Leadership also played an important part in the growth of INJAZ. While the program has various leaders, Soraya Salti saw the overall value, the opportunity to impact not only training for the labor force, but also the delivery of education. She built a team that saw possibilities and could achieve its goals. Also, across the INJAZ system a variety of individuals were ready to help move the program forward, both as leaders and as various types of role models.

Which brings us to the topic of **value** created. Salti started with concerns about educational attainment, suggesting that recent increases in attainment have not had a positive impact on worker productivity and that employment prospects remain low. She attributes this outcome to "low quality in education and the failure of schools to address the needs of the labor market and teach the skills in high demand." In contrast, the statistics show that the many students who have participated in the INJAZ program have graduated with "confidence in their abilities, a vision of their career, and skills to succeed in the private sector." This is quite good for the individual students. However, even more powerful, the overarching value is creating vibrant, innovative economies with challenging and rewarding career and job opportunities for the coming generations.

The INJAZ case raises interesting questions about the current state and future directions of global entrepreneurship education which continues to be presented as the primary answer to questions about economic development. Of the many issues to consider, I will set up just four for continued discussion:

- entrepreneurship education and the labor market;
- entrepreneurship education for the future;
- entrepreneurship education and women's lives; and
- entrepreneurship education and the impact on society.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND THE LABOR MARKET

INJAZ was created to address labor market needs—to help create 80,000,000 jobs in the next twelve years—and turned to the educational system as a delivery mechanism. Thus it raised the question of the difference between education and training and the importance of being explicit and deliberate about educational content and delivery. For INJAZ, becoming more closely connected to vocational training was part of the process of becoming institutionalized. All school systems address the relationship of vocational and general education at some point and different school systems around the world separate the two at various points in the student experience. The intriguing nature of entrepreneurship education is that it has elements of both. The disciplinary aspects of entrepreneurship cover specific skill sets that certainly can contribute to successful participation in the labor market. The entrepreneurial mindset approach has as much relevance for a general education, providing a framework for critical thinking and problem solving along with those tools for application. The strength comes from matching both approaches to education to the current and future needs of the students—and the society.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

Entrepreneurship evolved from small business education, moving from how to manage a small business, to the launch process, to a focus on growth and innovation, and into a growing variety of organizational contexts. A review I often suggest, of the domain statement of the Entrepreneurship Division of the Academy of Management, reveals a very broad territory:

Specific domain: the creation and management of new businesses, small businesses and family businesses, and the characteristics and special problems of entrepreneurs. Major topics include: new venture ideas and strategies; ecological influences on venture creation and demise; the acquisition and management of venture capital and venture teams; self-employment; the owner-manager; management succession; corporate venturing and the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development.¹

Therefore, the future of entrepreneurship education must be predicated upon a careful consideration of diversity. The question of whether entrepreneurship can be taught is tightly connected to one's definition of the word and generally has more to do with a stereotypical definition of the entrepreneur as a lone ranger, risk-seeking person with an innate talent that most people are perceived to lack. But robust research findings from around the world show that there are many, many types of entrepreneurs and that few characteristics can be shown to differentiate entrepreneurs as a category. Given that understanding, we need to provide the entrepreneurial education that acknowledges a diversity in people, place, and process and provides a skill set and approach that can be widely applied.

The future of entrepreneurship education is also based upon diversity in innovation, applying Joseph Schumpeter's early explanation to economic opportunities not only through new goods, but also by devising new ways of producing, new places for selling, and new supply sources of materials for manufacturing existing goods.² Entrepreneurship education must include a broad spectrum of methods for identifying opportunities and acquiring resources.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S LIVES

Women play an important role in INJAZ, as the case article's call-out shows. Salti notes that women make up most of the winning student teams, and are many of the volunteers from the private sector. They also manage all but one of the country programs. Indeed, findings from the world's largest global entrepreneurship research project, GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor), are drawn from a cross-national assessment of entrepreneurial activity in 41 countries. The most recent report provides four implications for policy:³

- Female entrepreneurship is increasingly important as a key contributor to economic growth.
- A gender gap exists regarding business ownership, however the gap varies by country GDP and region.
- Most women entrepreneurs are also employed in the labor market and have networks that include other entrepreneurs.
- Perceptions around optimism, self-confidence and the approach to failure also predict women's likelihood to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

It is crucial that those launching and leading entrepreneurship education programs consider what has been learned about women entrepreneurs and how to best frame their programs to benefit from the learning of others around the world.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND THE IMPACT ON SOCIETIES

Education is an investment in all of our futures. Education based upon an entrepreneurial mindset provides a framework for learning and ultimately for that necessary contribution to the greater marketplace and society. The entrepreneurial mindset builds on a foundation of opportunities, resources, leadership, and value creation.

This consideration can be put into the context of other demographic changes. For example, in the future we will live longer and we will certainly need to work longer too. How, then, do we create an educational system that meets immediate needs to prepare students to support themselves and their families, while also providing a foundation for the future? In other words, how do we address the current needs of the labor market, but also create ways to change and improve markets? How do we not simply produce workers for existing types of jobs in existing types of businesses in existing types of economic systems? We simply cannot decide in

advance that those types of much-needed macro-level innovations will not come from a specific set of students. All in all, an overly deterministic type of education may provide for a short-term gain but limit longer-term advances. One advantage of a program like INJAZ is its emphasis on innovation, creativity, and problem solving with a double intention: not only to prosper financially, but also “to inspire, lead, and become a role model for less fortunate youth in their own community.”

And so, to come full circle, the ultimate goal must be more than merely filling the needs of the existing labor market. We must also educate students to create the jobs of the future, and thereby define the societies and cultures of the future.

CONCLUSION

In summary, it is crucial that we educate our citizens so they are prepared for the labor market. Multitudes of programs around the world—either currently in action or planned for delivery—position entrepreneurship as the primary response to economic and social problems through the creation of new businesses. Most of these businesses, by definition, will remain quite small. This is not unusual, or necessarily disturbing. Compare them to the U.S. economy, which is often presented as an entrepreneurial archetype. We often forget that while almost 6,000,000 U.S. firms with employees exist, slightly over 60% of those firms have fewer than five employees⁴. Strikingly, over 20,000,000 people report that they are “nonemployers,” meaning they are self-employed⁵. We are a country, and indeed a world, of very small businesses. However—and this is an important however—we need to consider a few guiding principles as we look at the spread of entrepreneurship education around the world.

First, the motivations and objectives of any entrepreneurship education program are critical for determining outcomes, but program leaders must recognize what years of experience have taught us in the field: people start businesses for all types of reasons. Most of the programs started in emerging market countries address what the GEM program would call “necessity” entrepreneurship:⁶ a person will start a business activity out of desperation and lack of other options. The challenge lies in assuming that program personnel can then predict or determine specific outcomes from specific participants. Even within a category of entrepreneurs driven by necessity, a range of entrepreneurial outcomes will occur. Entrepreneurship education needs to be broad enough to cover a full range of outcomes, not only the self-employed or micro businesses, but some who will want and accomplish larger projects.

Second, entrepreneurship education is a long-term solution and works best as part of a bundle of solutions. While recruiting businesses into areas (international or domestic) may provide that short-term solution of a greater number of immediate jobs, entrepreneurship is, or should be, about building community as much as building that individual wealth. This means that economic developers, policy advisors, and decision makers need to understand the process and the

timetable of these activities and approach them as an investment opportunity that takes some time to mature.

Finally, entrepreneurship education can have a positive impact on both entrepreneurship and education, not only as one type of approach, but also as separate activities. Salti saw this in action as she observed potential changes in pedagogy from a “memorizing for exams” approach to experiential learning. Perhaps even more important is the impact on educational content. Before INJAZ, concepts of social responsibility or volunteering were limited and not popular. Bringing these ideas and actions into an economic education environment and watching them grow is certainly part of the value created by the INJAZ program.

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