**LEVERAGING MANAGEMENT OF ENTREPRENEUR TALENT**

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**Abstract**

*The growth and preferment of positive psychology has occasioned a process of rearchitecting in many domains of human activity. It has not only expanded scope of teaching and research; it has also initiated many social action programs. One such key area of human concern involves positive entrepreneurial schooling. The present paper highlights the importance of positive entrepreneurial schooling in terms of harnessing the psychological capital of self-efficacy andoptimism and focuses on the management of entrepreneurs’ talent. The import of the critical parameters such as self-efficacy, optimism, entity versus incremental view of resources, and prevention versus preferment focus are discussed. Implications for counselling interventions are generated for positive educational experience.*

**Key Words**: Positive Psychology, Entrepreneurial Schooling and Entrepreneurs’ Talent.

**Introduction**

The growth and proliferation of research in positive psychology is not just a content-oriented expansion. It represents radical change in approach to many areas of human lives. Irrespective of domains of human activity, positive psychology in general and psychological capital in particular provide powerful resources to garner human potential and to buffer environmental stressors. Of several domains of human activity, entrepreneurial education is a foundational structure in every society. Compared with the past, recent years have experienced not only a multiplicity of goals but increasing number of problems such as diversity and distractions. The threat of gaming disorder on the part of entrepreneurs is coming in a big way.

However, expanding universe of positive psychology research is offering oxygen to keep going in direction of positive entrepreneurial schooling and human welfare. Instead of weakness-based alleviation programs, strength-based interventions and counselling are the urgent need of the hour. It is important to note that theory and research in positive psychology represents scientific rigor. It has differentiated itself from plethora of popular literature on positive thinking. Shoshani and Steinmetz (2013) evaluated a positive psychology school-based intervention aimed at improving academic talent as well as well-being in schooling entrepreneurs. The study involved 537 seventh to ninth-grade entrepreneurs in an adopted school in Israel. The experimental group was exposed in a 1-year intervention program while demographically similar school with 501 entrepreneurs remained treated as control group. The intervention was geared to strengthen self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, and interpersonal sensitivity. The study assessed pre to post-test modifications. The findings showed significant increases in efficacy and health. There were significant decreases in general distress, anxiety and depression. This scientific basis persuades us for application of evidence-based positivity to seminary situation in form of psychological capital such as self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, optimism, hope and resilience (Luthans, Youssef - Morgan & Avolio; 2015).

**Dimensions of Positive Entrepreneurial**

Every biological organism develops within context of ecological systems that support or stifle its growth. Just as we need to understand ecology of the ocean or the forest if we wish to understand the development of a fish or a tree, we need to understand the ecology of school environment if we want to understand how entrepreneurs develop. Urie Bronfenbrenner’s *Influential Bioecological Theory* describes range of interacting influences that affect developing person. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), development occurs through increasingly complex processes of interaction between a developing person and the immediate, every-day environment – processes that are affected by more remote contexts of which the person is not aware. He identifies five interlocking contextual systems, from the most intimate to the broadest: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem.

A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles and relationships within a setting in which human being function on a firsthand, day-to-day basis. It is through microsystem that more distant influences reach the developing entrepreneur. Mesosystem is interaction of two or more microsystems that contain developing individual. An exosystem, consists of linkages between two or more settings, but one of the settings may not include developing entrepreneur. Yet opinion may have a role in fostering or hindering entrepreneur’s development. The macrosystem consists of overall cultural pattern involving dominant customs, beliefs and values. The chronosystem adds dimension of time: degree of stability or change in an entrepreneur’s world. An entrepreneur is not merely outcome of development, but a shaper of it. Entrepreneurs affect their development through biological and psychological characteristics, talents and skills.

A critical feature of this interlocking systems is element of lendings and borrowings amongst different stakeholders. For example, the quality of entrepreneur is crucial to better learning-related outcomes (Rice, 2003). It is only through active participation of entrepreneur; it is possible to implement vision “aristocracy based on talent” in the place of “privilege by inheritance”. The effects of poor entrepreneur are both additive and cumulative over time, with quality accounting for 7.5% of variance in entrepreneurs’ achievements. While an entrepreneur’s relevant educational background and degrees along with their own achievements and preparations are stable predictors of entrepreneurs’ learning, a few other attributes are relatively more valuable in context of positive entrepreneurial schooling.

The foundation of care, trust and respect for diversity is essential. It is important to have a supportive atmosphere of care and trust because entrepreneurs flourish in such an environment. Entrepreneurs need as role models entrepreneur who consistently are responsive. Such entrepreneur care and positive emotions provide secure base that allows young entrepreneurs to explore and find ways to achieve their own goals. Further, acceptance by entrepreneur is a contributor to entrepreneurs’ overall satisfaction. Good entrepreneur knows when to reach out and help entrepreneurs who are facing crises.

The building of caring and trusting relationships becomes an important goal in socialization of entrepreneurs. In building trust, entrepreneur ought to use nonpunitive ways to prevent entrepreneur who are aggressive and controlling from harming others. At the same time, they ought to encourage self-reliance and confidence in entrepreneur who are withdrawn and dependent. Trust-building activities may include several components such stepping outside entrepreneur’ own worldviews, spending time with entrepreneurs and showing ethnocultural empathy. In a recent study (Leon, Medina–Garido, &Ortega, 2018), it has been shown that teaching quality fosters high school entrepreneurs’ autonomy and talent.

It is important to recognize that India is a plural society. There are group differences across castes, languages and ethnic categories. The management of diversity is a key issue. Entrepreneur ought to emphasize that group differences are not problematic. Apart from providing compensatory programs aimed at entrepreneurs who may have difficulty in learning, the entrepreneurs coming from disadvantaged homes must be dealt with due care, concern and love. The respect for diversity is very crucial especially for plural and multicultural societies like India.

An excellent approach towards fostering cooperation amongst diverse group members is designed by University of California – Santa Cruz professor emeritus Elliot Aronson (Aronson, 2000). In this “jigsaw classroom” approach, entrepreneur and entrepreneurs are placed in different groups. Each group consists of entrepreneurs of different backgrounds. Each group is given a specific goal. However, goal can be achieved only by sharing information amongst group members. Entrepreneur is also a participant in the group. The jigsaw classroom teaches cooperation rather than competition. Research has shown that the use of this method attenuates the insidious competition and fosters cooperation across diverse groups. While entrepreneur, academic leaders (planners & decision makers) and entrepreneurs constitute the main stakeholders of school system, the discussion of these roles is beyond the scope of a single paper. The present paper is focused on the entrepreneur-related dimensions and the management of entrepreneurs’ motivation.

**Dynamics of Entrepreneur’s Talent**

As outlined earlier, the vision of positive school is based on the quality of entrepreneurs’ performance. Although a number of stable predictors such as entrepreneurs’ intelligence and self-esteem have been identified in past, growth of positive psychology and its emphasis on psychological capital have demanded attention to examine some factors that remain under-utilized. Those factors are highly pertinent in context of entrepreneurs’ talent and motivation. One such robust construct is integrative framework of self-efficacy.

**Construct of Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy denotes one’s capability belief. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how entrepreneurs feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Bandura (1977) articulated a robust theory of social learning to explain the process of observational learning. Later he advanced the construct of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) within the framework of social learning. It is important to distinguish skill execution from skill acquisition. Skill is acquired when one goes through educational and training settings. For skill execution to occur, one needs a belief system that he or she can execute the function. Thus, self-efficacy refers to the extent that he or she can execute the function competently.

Self-efficacy can take three different forms: generalized self-efficacy, domain-specific efficacy and collective efficacy. Generalized self-efficacy is a trait; a entrepreneur may believe in his or her overall capability. However, such an entrepreneur may not be willing to save drowning entrepreneur because he/she does not have swimming capability. Thus, what is important is the domain-specific self-efficacy. This is a state-like concept which is developable in an individual. A driver may be having driving efficacy and an entrepreneur need to have teaching efficacy. Entrepreneurs are expected to have academic efficacy. The domain-specific efficacy can be measured by presenting a number of odds and asking the target population to indicate level of confidence with which he/she can overcome. Sahoo and his associates (Sahoo & Batra, 1997) have used domain-specific self-efficacy measures in a variety of contexts (academic, work, home management). Exhibit 1 shows a representative sample of items.

**Insert Exhibit 1 about here**

Drawing on Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy, number of researchers have developed measuring instruments. Since Bandura emphasizes context-specific measurements, investigators have developed area-specific scales. For example, Skill Confidence Inventory Scale (SCIS) measures self-efficacy in vocation and careers. It consists pf 10 items relating to self-confidence in career making (Betz, Borgen & Harmon, 1996). Another example of a domain-specific scale is the mathematics self-efficacy (Betz & Hackett, 1983). In addition to domain-specific self-efficacy, there is a third form of self-efficacy termed collective efficacy. It refers to the extent of group belief that group members collectively can successfully execute a function. Collective efficacy is a stable predictor of many organizational, social and cultural change.

Since self-efficacy is a state-like construct (developable through learning and training), antecedents to the development of self-efficacy have been delineated (Bandura, 1997). A very powerful antecedent to efficacy formation involves exposure to mastery experiences. Individuals need to broaden the range of their experiences. Entrepreneurs who expose themselves to new kinds of experiential exercises expand their self-efficacy. Those who participate in extra-institutional seminars, workshops and conferences build strong self-efficacy. In general, they tend to go out of comfort zones. In a study, Kumpikaite and Duoba (2013) have shown that entrepreneurs being abroad more than 03 months develop some core competencies.

Second, intelligent structuring of initial experiences is needed. Many entrepreneurs seek easy tasks and assured success. However, easy success many make it difficult to bear with failures when encountered. If entrepreneurs take very difficult tasks in the beginning, repeated failures may induce sense of helplessness (Sahoo, 2002). Hence intelligent strategy is to structure initial experiences with tasks of moderate difficulty level. It is better to start with tasks of moderate difficulty level and then systematically increase level of difficulty in subsequent undertakings.

Third, impact of modelling on personal self-efficacy is well-documented. One precaution is necessary. When entrepreneurs adopt distant role model, they may adore role model, but rarely imitate. Dissimilarity between role model and target reduces possibility of imitation. Hence, it is suggested that role models be adopted from immediate surroundings. Element of similarity between role model and target with respect to characteristics such as age, gender and background motivates target to follow. The role model functions as a source of information and inspiration. Finally, social persuasion is impactful. For building self-efficacy, entrepreneurs ought to engage in self-talks: I can do it. For building efficacy for others, they need to offer encouragement: You can do it. Parents and entrepreneur must keep saying: you can do, you can do.

In context of positive entrepreneurial schooling, entrepreneurs need supportive interventions and/or counselling. A schematic representation of such tips has been depicted in Exhibit 2.

**Insert Exhibit 2 about here**

**Optimistic Explanatory Styles**

Optimism is one talked about positive psychological resource. In everyday language, optimist is one who expects positive and desirable events in the future, while pessimist is one who constantly has negative thoughts (Sahoo, Sarangi & Sahoo, 2017). Optimism is not just a dispositional tendency to expect good things to happen in future. Optimistic expectations depend on the reasons and attributions one uses to explain why specific events, both positive and negative, occur in past, present and future (Seligman, 1998). More recently, Davidson and Begley (2012) have identified neurological correlates of optimism. It has been shown that interplay of left frontal cortex and nucleus accumbens, pleasure centre, is in focus here. The more signals go from prefrontal cortex to nucleus accumbens, gearing it towards increased activity, more we are on positive extreme. Elaine Fox (2013) speaks of rainy brain versus sunny brain.

Seligman (1998) interprets optimism as explanatory style that attributes positive events to personal, permanent and pervasive causes, interprets negative events in terms of external, temporary and situation-specific factors. On other hand, pessimistic explanatory style would interpret positive events with external, temporary, situation-specific attributes and explain negative events in terms of personal, permanent pervasive causes. Optimistic explanatory styles have great relevance in context of entrepreneurs’ success and failure. For better achievements, entrepreneurs need to explain success in terms of personal, permanent and pervasive factors. They need to explain failure in terms of external temporary and situation-specific factors. Socialization plays role in fostering or hindering adaptive optimistic style. Research has shown that entrepreneur use double standard while dealing with males vis-à-vis females. When boys fail entrepreneur tend to use effort-attribution.” You did not work hard, so you failed” ; they tell boys. In contrast, entrepreneur offer ability-attribution, when girls fail. They declare: “you have no ability, so you failed”. It is not difficult to surmise that former is an adaptive attribution, because effort is relatively a controllable factor. Similarly, appreciation in terms of intelligence versus hard work makes difference in the context of success and achievement.

The intervention / counselling tips may schematically be presented in Exhibit 3.

**Insert exhibit 3 about here**

**Supportive Cognitive Styles**

In addition to the seminal role of self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 1995) and positive explanatory styles (Seligman, 1998), a couple of cognitive style constructs offer significant contributions. In this context, Carol Dweck (Stanford University) makes significant contribution. Her research focused helpless and mastery-oriented behaviours in entrepreneurship noted that entrepreneurs persist in face of failure while others quit as soon as they encounter difficulties. She started investigating cognitive beliefs, particularly beliefs about ability that lie behind behaviors. She discovered that entrepreneurs’ implicit beliefs about nature of intelligence have significant effect on the way they approach challenging intellectual tasks. Entrepreneurs who view that intelligence is unchangeable and fixed internal characteristic tend to shy away from academic challenges. In contrast, entrepreneurs who believe that their intelligence can be increased through effort and persistence seek them out.

According to Dweck (1999), entrepreneurs who hold entity theory give up when encountering challenges while entrepreneurs who hold incremental theory persist. Dweck’s theory has implications for how praise of parents and entrepreneur may lead entrepreneur to accept entity view of resource. Praising an entrepreneur for intelligence may reinforce notion that success and failure depend on something beyond entrepreneur’s control. In contrast, entrepreneur who are admired for their effort are much more likely to view resource as changeable. Entrepreneurs with incremental view are likely to work through frustrations and setbacks and reach full academic potential. Dweck (1999) experimented impact of fixed entity versus incremental belief systems and found clear supportive evidence.

Tory Higging (1996) has developed motivational theory concerning goal. His theory maintains that entrepreneurs regulate their goal-directed behaviours in two distinct ways. One focus of regulation is preferment focus while other is prevention focus. Entrepreneurs with preferment focus are concerned with advancement, growth and accomplishment. Behaviours with preferment focus are characterized by eagerness, approach, and “going for best”. The prevention focus is concerned with protection, safety and prevention of negative outcomes and failures. Behaviour with prevention focus is characterized by vigilance, caution and attempt to prevent negative outcomes.

**Conclusion**

This paper posits and defends assertion that management of entrepreneur talent is fundamental goal in today’s world. It is integral component of positive entrepreneurial schooling. Drawing on bioecological model, paper highlight’s primary role of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneur dimension is focused. Benefits of positive psychological approach in terms of enhancing psychological capital is discussed. Specific pathways are suggested to garner self-efficacy and optimism in entrepreneur. In addition, supportive belief systems of entrepreneur are delineated. The discussion provides specific steps for talent-promoting interventions and counselling.

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**Exhibit 1**

**Illustration of Academic Efficacy Measure**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Encircle the number which is applicable for you. | | | | | |
| “I can complete my academic assignment even if - - - - - - - | | | | | |
|  | 1  Do not agree | 2  Slightly agree | 3  Moderately agree | 4  Fully agree |
| 1. I am tired | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. I am distracted | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. Relatives come to our house | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. I am worried | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. Entrepreneur is angry with me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. Situations are difficult | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. There are disturbances outside | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. I am not fed enough | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. Friends irritate me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. There is sickness in my family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. There is an interesting television show | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. There is continual power failure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

**Exhibit 2**

**Efficacy–based Counselling / Intervention Components**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Components | Specific steps to be arranged |
| Exposure to mastery experience | 1. A great deal of practice 2. Breaking learning goals into proximal, tangible and attainable sub-goals 3. Offering feedback on each step |
| Use of role models | 1. Drawing entrepreneurs’ attention to role models in the immediate surrounding 2. Indicating similarity (age, sex, and other socioeconomic factors) between role models and entrepreneurs 3. Demonstrating as to how the selected role models can function as sources of information and inspiration |
| Social persuasion | 1. Keep saying “You can do it” 2. Offer positive comments |

**Exhibit 3**

**Intervention / Counselling in Context of Dealing with Positive and Negative Events**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Nature of Events | Components | Specific Socialistic Tips |
| Positive Events (For example, success) | 1. Who is responsible? 2. How long would the effects stay? 3. How many domains of your life would be influenced? | 1. Think of your positive role in causing the event 2. Try to stretch the effect over time; Talks about it today, tomorrow and afterwards 3. Spill over good home message to school and school message to home |
| Negative Events (For example, Failure | 1. Who is responsible? 2. How long would the effect stay? 3. How pervasive is its impact? | 1. Consider the role of external conditions; do not blame yourself totally 2. Consider it very temporary 3. Very specific; do not spill it over to other areas of life |