

Article

Navigating Entrepreneurial Horizons: Students Perspectives Analysis of the Entrepreneurial Competences in Teaching Context

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Abstract: Entrepreneurship education largely influences the social and economic dimensions of many countries. In the framework of development, frequent changes seek to discover the most effective way of adopting and integrating educational services to meet the requirements of the labour market. This paper aims to analyse entrepreneurial competence in a teaching context from the students' perspectives. The main objective of the research study aims to measure students' attitudes towards entrepreneurial intentions, as impacted in an entrepreneurial teaching context. Additionally, it seeks to highlight the significance of the entrepreneurial competence of the lecturing team that goes beyond traditional teaching methods and focuses on fostering an educational environment. As entrepreneurial competence guides opportunity identification by combining skills, knowledge, and attributes and developing them into values, it bridges the gap between teaching and learning, preparing the students to cope with the challenges of the entrepreneurial world. The data were gathered by administering a structured questionnaire that focuses on the perspectives of students in the third cycle of study. The disseminated questionnaire included closed-ended questions related to the entrepreneurial education context, the entrepreneurial competence of the lecturing team, and entrepreneurial intentions. The results of this study demonstrate that the relationship between the entrepreneurial competence of lecturers and entrepreneurial education is crucial for fostering a dynamic and effective learning environment to enhance the entrepreneurial intentions of the students.



Citation: Pulaj Brakaj, E.; Šafránková, J.M. Navigating Entrepreneurial Horizons: Students Perspectives Analysis of the Entrepreneurial Competences in Teaching Context. *Educ. Sci.* **2024**, *14*, 486. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14050486>

Academic Editor: Vasiliki Brinia

Received: 6 March 2024

Revised: 25 April 2024

Accepted: 30 April 2024

Published: 2 May 2024



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Keywords: entrepreneurship education; competence; students' perspectives; entrepreneurial intention

1. Introduction

The increasing importance of entrepreneurship is reflected in its impact on both the domestic economy and the broader European context. Within the European Union (EU), entrepreneurial education is promoted and prioritised as it aligns with the criteria and standards set by the European Commission. This concept is widely recognised as a fundamental pillar for the development of people's social and economic well-being [1]. Teachers and students, who are considered the key stakeholders [2], play an important role in achieving the objectives related to entrepreneurial education and its implementation [3]. Nevertheless, this interaction is not simple. There are many challenges associated with this process in relation to the content [4,5], the hiring of academic staff [6–9], the methods of implementing entrepreneurship education [3,10,11], and the factors affecting entrepreneurial intention [8,12–14].

Several scholarly studies have highlighted the importance and effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in influencing students' entrepreneurial intentions [14–20]. While some studies dispute the transfer of entrepreneurial skills due to differences in personality and psychological perspectives [21,22], others reinforce that entrepreneurial education can be taught and learned [23] and is an important pillar of economic and social development [24]. For this reason, entrepreneurship education deserves special attention as it can

prepare new generations. The teaching methodologies continuously improve [25], including who can educate students, its content, where it is taught, the entrepreneurial mindset, and entrepreneurial competence and the teacher's role in developing this [9,26–29]. According to many authors, the field of entrepreneurship is still evolving, which has led to a rise in the number of studies focusing on entrepreneurial education with different thematic approaches [30–34] and from different contexts and places.

In this framework, the purpose of this study is not only to analyse the impact of the lecturers' entrepreneurial competences in shaping the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship, but the novelty of this study lies in analysing students' perspectives and what they perceive during the teaching process regarding various variables associated with entrepreneurial education and competences. Based on the above, the objective of this study is to determine how much lecturers exhibit entrepreneurial competence, not only when teaching how to start a new venture, but also to evaluate their attitudes and behaviours towards cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset. To our best knowledge, this is the first study in Albania that has aimed to analyse the role of entrepreneurial competences in the teaching context from the students' perspectives.

2. Literature Review

The beginnings of entrepreneurship education can be traced back to Harvard Business School in 1945 [35], and since then, it has spread and been implemented very quickly in universities, secondary schools, and outside the educational system [36]. The study of entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention can be grounded in many theoretical frameworks that establish a basis for understanding the relationship between these two domains. These frameworks provide guidance for research in identifying the essential aspects, relationships, and mechanisms that affect the intentions of students exposed to entrepreneurial education. The theory of planned behaviour, as a theoretical framework posits that individual behaviour is driven by three components: attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control [37,38]. Another theoretical model such as social cognitive theory, developed by Bandura in 1986, and also developed through the years, highlights the importance of observational learning, self-efficacy, and the reciprocal relationship between behaviour, the environment, and personal characteristics [39]. In addition, human capital theory centres on the acquisition of information, skills, and capacities by individuals through education and training, which enhance the potential for success [40,41]. Under this framework, entrepreneurial education provides students with valuable knowledge and skills that contribute to their entrepreneurial capacity and intentions [42]. Discussing the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention, the model of entrepreneurial event theory [43] explains the process of how individuals become entrepreneurs by examining factors such as perceived feasibility in terms of necessary skills, resources, taking opportunities, and desirability of starting a new venture, as well as their willingness to act [44]. Integrating these theoretical frameworks to explain the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention simplifies the complex interaction of variables that encourage students to think entrepreneurially.

Furthermore, the European Union is committed to an ongoing policy of engagement aimed at enhancing capacity building in entrepreneurship, considering initiative and entrepreneurship as key competencies related to developing students' skills and knowledge towards an entrepreneurial approach. Hence, in 2016, the European Commission introduced the European entrepreneurship competence framework (EntreComp) as a comprehensive framework that defines the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for individuals to get started on entrepreneurial endeavours [45]. Now, the EntreComp framework functions in conjunction with other approaches that similarly articulate the necessary knowledge and skills that students need to acquire in order to develop entrepreneurial competences. In order to effectively equip students for new start-up creations and ensure their success, academic programs, universities, communities, and governments

must adopt an entrepreneurial mindset. In this context, universities play an important role in initiating the process of learning, disseminating knowledge to students, and fostering entrepreneurial endeavours [46]. As such, an entrepreneurial university places greater emphasis on social and economic development, fostering entrepreneurship and an entrepreneurial mindset alongside its core operations of academic research and teaching [47]. An entrepreneurial university is distinguished by its academic programs that aim to develop the students' entrepreneurial skills, as well as by its faculty members and lecturers who possess and exhibit entrepreneurial competence in their teaching processes. As a result, developing entrepreneurship education programs, preparing qualified entrepreneurial lecturers, and discussing entrepreneurship education teaching models should be priorities for both universities and policymakers.

2.1. Entrepreneurship Education

The concept of entrepreneurship education, characterised by its multifaceted nature, has been subject to diverse interpretations by different authors [8], resulting in the lack of a unique definition. Several definitions have been given by researchers and authors based on their aims and objectives to orientate and classify this kind of education. Entrepreneurial education has been recognised as a significant milestone within the contemporary education system. In the literature, generally, we find that entrepreneurial education includes the following three main categories: "education about enterprise", "education for enterprise", and "education in the enterprise" [48]. These categories are not the only ways of classifying entrepreneurship education; it can also be categorised based on the target audience [49]. It seems that entrepreneurial education is a compilation of structured educational resources that transmit knowledge and skills to individuals at different stages of study, motivating them to create their own business ventures. Similarly, Liñán (2004) defined entrepreneurial education as a comprehensive range of educational and training endeavours, both within and outside the formal education system [36]. These attempts aim to cultivate the participants' interest in behaving entrepreneurially or to influence this desire. The objective of entrepreneurship education is to equip graduates with the necessary skills and mindset to engage in entrepreneurial activities and contribute to the sustainable development of their economy. This includes fostering creativity and innovation, as well as developing the ability to recognise and capitalise on opportunities by establishing new ventures [50,51]. Considering that entrepreneurship education covers more than simply educating people on how to start a business, it allows them to identify opportunities and cultivate innovative and critical thinking skills.

Entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in shaping individuals' entrepreneurial mindset and intentions [52]. This perspective is supported by Wu and Li (2011) and Westhead and Solesvik (2016), who stated that entrepreneurship education fosters enterprise-related mindsets among students, facilitating their entry into the entrepreneurial domain [53,54]. This aligns with the findings of Volkmann et al. (2009) and Lechuga Sancho et al. (2020), who emphasised that fostering this kind of mindset and cultivating the necessary skills and attitudes can support and encourage entrepreneurial intentions [55,56]. In fact, experience enables the development of such skills. However, as Drucker (1985) has previously said, entrepreneurship is a field of study that, like other fields, can be gained through education and training [57].

In the literature on entrepreneurship education, many researchers argue that it can be learned and taught [58–60], making it an integral part of academic programs. Even more, entrepreneurial behaviour should not be exclusively performed in a business context [6]. Taatila (2010) notes that entrepreneurial competences are currently viewed as psychological and social abilities that may be used in many situations [61]. According to the European Commission (2012), "entrepreneurship" refers to the capacity to transform concepts into practical initiatives, encompassing elements of creativity, invention, and a willingness to undertake risks [62]. Additionally, it involves the ability to begin, plan, and lead projects, with the aim of achieving objectives. Therefore, entrepreneurship education rooted in

the development of competences, mindsets, and skills has a wider significance beyond enabling individuals to explore self-employment or establish new ventures.

Entrepreneurship is identified as one of the key competences in the education curricula [50,63–65]. This means that individuals should be equipped with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary to act in an entrepreneurial way in various life situations. This mindset encourages the integration of entrepreneurial competence across different subject areas and disciplines. The goal is to create a more entrepreneurial and innovative society that can effectively contribute to economic growth and competitiveness. By exploring the entrepreneurial competences of lecturers from students' perspectives, both theory and practice can evolve to better understand the nuanced ways in which educators contribute to the entrepreneurial development of students. It serves as an initiative to include entrepreneurial education in our curricula, starting with primary education and continuing up to the highest levels of education. These processes include not only curriculum reform at all levels, but also a wide range of programs that aim to foster entrepreneurial culture, such as school–business partnerships, student entrepreneurship, and academic training. As such, academics and students have to enhance their entrepreneurial skills and mindset, contributing to modernising both the education system and society as a whole. Only in this way can we contribute to reducing unemployment by adapting education to the labour market for the well-being of individuals and society. Following this trend, the number of programs to make people more entrepreneurial has increased in almost all countries [22]. Entrepreneurship education has increased not only the interest of students in business-related attitudes and behaviours [66], but also the awareness of public authorities, policymakers, and other stakeholders about its contribution to economic development [67]. Entrepreneurship is acknowledged as the key driver of economic growth. Small- and medium-sized firms are regarded as the essential drivers of national economic and social development [25].

According to Cho and Lee (2018), the main role of entrepreneurship education is to facilitate economic growth and help talented individuals [68]. The same opinion was shared by Audretsch and Thurik (2000), who perceive entrepreneurship as a measure of a country's economic health based on its benefits, such as innovation, job creation, and growth capability [69,70].

Many researchers are interested in studying the link between business and education, legitimising entrepreneurship education as a viable career option that helps to develop the enterprise culture among students [66,71,72]. This primarily focuses on the identification of opportunities and the cultivation of personal qualities and skills related to creativity and innovation [50], while also being closely linked to career choices [16]. Entrepreneurship education can differ based on the institutional goals, target audiences, and academic techniques. In their study, Li and Wu (2019) sought to enhance students' self-confidence and interest in entrepreneurial education [70]. By analogy, the following questions arise: What do we know about cultivating the entrepreneurial concept in our education system? How extensively is it applied in our education system? Are we able to teach entrepreneurial competence?

2.2. Entrepreneurial Lecturers

As we attempt to analyse the teaching ability of teachers and lecturers, higher education institutions' continuous efforts to improve entrepreneurial education are widely recognised as effective means to enhance the learning environment and stimulate business activity, leading to regional development [8,15,16,34,73,74]. Although there is widespread recognition of the importance of entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions (HEIs), there is still an ongoing discussion regarding how, where, and by whom entrepreneurship can be taught [8,26,50,75]. Several studies emphasise the various ways of facilitating and supporting entrepreneurial education at the university level. Klofsten (2000; 2008) lists three ways HEIs impart entrepreneurial competencies and skills [76,77]:

- Advocating for “entrepreneurial universities” fosters a business-centred culture that is integrated throughout all university operations, including the courses, research, and community engagement;
- Teaching through specialised courses focused on entrepreneurship provides students with the opportunity to explore this as an independent field of study;
- Helping entrepreneurs creates opportunities to establish more practical training programs for those intending to start their own enterprises or boost existing businesses.

Based on the above, because universities aim to prepare students to face the labour market, they prioritise the content of programs, lecturers’ skills and competences, as well as the creation of a conducive learning environment. Operating in this particular environment, lecturers play a very significant role [78–82] because the efficacy and success of cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset among graduates heavily rely on the competencies, skills, abilities, and behaviours of lecturers. Otache (2019) stated that it is important for lecturers to possess an entrepreneurial mindset rather than necessarily having prior experience as business people in order to effectively teach this topic [8]. In other words, they cannot effectively impart an entrepreneurial attitude without being “seized” to think in this manner. Furthermore, in their research findings, Mukhtar et al. (2021) revealed that imparting an entrepreneurial mindset has a greater influence on students’ intentions towards pursuing an enterprise as a viable career path than just receiving business education [83]. Entrepreneurial lecturers develop teaching and learning activities to engage the individuals who react more creatively and independently, combining their talent with a certain feeling of freedom.

2.3. Entrepreneurial Competences

Lecturers with an entrepreneurial mindset can serve as role models for students, inspiring them to adopt a similar perspective, which is characterised by a willingness to take risks, a proactive attitude towards problem solving, creativity, opportunity seeking, the ability to work in a group, communication, and collaboration to achieve goals. As previously cited by Hansemark (1998) and supported by Fayolle and Gailly (2015), traditional education is commonly perceived as a means of teaching and learning knowledge and skills, whereas entrepreneurship education takes a more comprehensive approach that aims to shape individuals’ attitudes and motivations [59,84]. In addition to the aforementioned benefits of entrepreneurship education towards starting new ventures, it also possesses a broader market potential attributable to the competences and skills it provides [85]. Competence is seen as a broad concept that enhances an individual’s practical performance through the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, resulting in success [86]. Generally, we use the concepts of competence and skill interchangeably, as they are often considered to be synonymous. In fact, the dictionary defines a skill as the ability to do something well. In light of the multifaceted and interrelated nature of these concepts, it is necessary to understand the fundamental meaning of competence. A comprehensive understanding of its nature and general application serves as a basis for exploring entrepreneurial competence, which is known as a life skill. According to the report on the EntreComp framework by Bacigalupo et al. (2016), entrepreneurship is defined as a competency that covers multiple aspects of life [45]. Earlier, Man et al. (2002) defined entrepreneurial competence as a combination of various attributes, such as the knowledge, personality traits, and abilities that collectively contribute to an individual’s capacity to successfully perform a task and facilitate the creation and success of a business [87]. This competence covers a wide range of knowledge and skills, from personal development to active participation in society, from workforce integration as an employee to self-employment, from achieving a successful performance to fostering competitiveness, and from being specific to being comprehensive.

As a result, identifying entrepreneurial competences is not only an individual’s responsibility, but it also enables educational institutions to develop and improve their overall teaching quality. Despite several studies focusing on the entrepreneurial competences related to different topics, Mitchelmore and Rowley (2010) [86], followed by the studies

by Kyndt and Baert (2015) [88] and Tittel and Terzidis (2020) [89], gave a complete list of entrepreneurial competences in order to establish a clear framework based on the work of many other researchers. Nevertheless, more studies focusing on entrepreneurial competence have been conducted due to the growing attention on entrepreneurship education.

3. Research Objectives, Methodology, and Data

3.1. Hypotheses

Entrepreneurship should be appealing to students in the same way that other successful courses in the job market are. This means entrepreneurial education has to encourage students to pursue self-employment after graduation. Entrepreneurship education can either encourage students to start their own businesses or discourage it due to several obstacles. Courses that aim to boost students' intentions to become entrepreneurs should provide engaging elements and activities. In this particular context, it is necessary to enhance the relevance and adequacy of the courses' content [90], in order to foster an entrepreneurial mindset. Extensive research has been conducted on the correlation between entrepreneurship and education [14–20]. Despite the small positive correlation between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention found in the research study of Bae (2014), this can raise questions about many of the influencing factors such as the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education, the attractiveness of being an entrepreneur compared to permanent employment, or the ways in which entrepreneurship education can be improved [16]. In fact, higher education institutions face various challenges, including those of real entrepreneurial lecturers. This hinders the lecturing team's ability to realise the necessary graduate outcomes, including entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Consequently, it may also hinder the cultivation of entrepreneurial intention. In our study, we tested this hypothesis to confirm the previously assessed correlations based on several different variables.

To support this view, we raised the following hypotheses, illustrated in Figure 1:

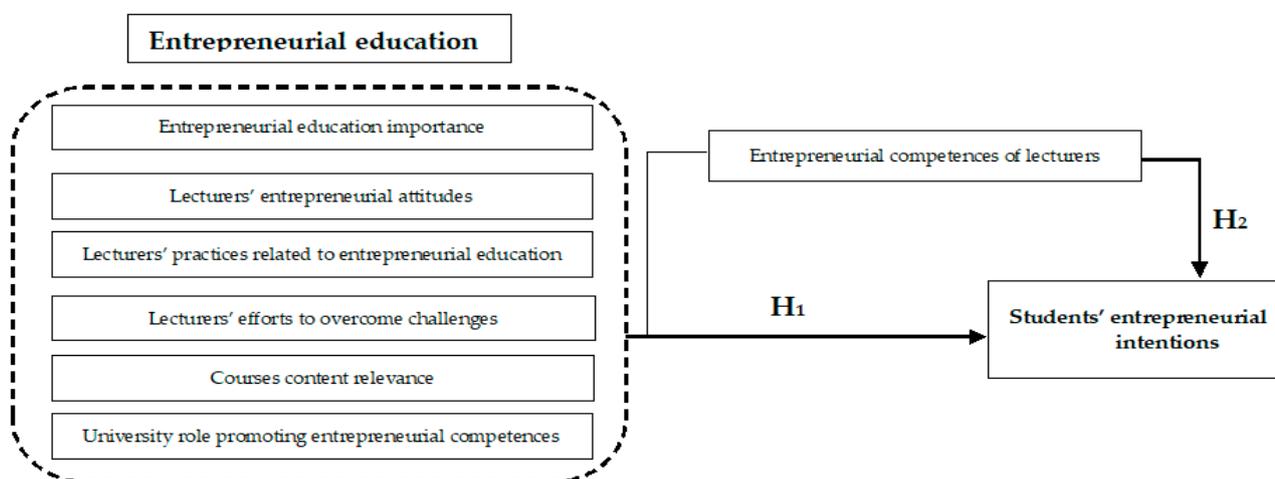


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the research. Source: authors' research.

H₁. *There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial education and students' entrepreneurial intentions.*

H₂. *The lecturing team's entrepreneurial competence positively mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and the entrepreneurial intentions of students.*

3.2. Methodology

The following section outlines the methodology used in this study, describes the sample characteristics, discusses the validity and reliability tests conducted, and explains the data analysis techniques used. This study evaluates the entrepreneurial competence

of lecturers using a structured questionnaire based on the perspectives of students in undergraduate and graduate programs. We have monitored seven independent variables such as the students' perceptions of (i) entrepreneurship education importance, (ii) lecturers' entrepreneurial attitudes, (iii) lecturers' practices related to entrepreneurial education, (iv) challenges faced during entrepreneurial lecturing, (v) courses' content relevance, (vi) entrepreneurial orientation of the lecturing team, and (vii) the role of the university in promoting entrepreneurial competence. It was designed a modified and structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire based on the previous literature [5,8,9,13,32,73,79,82,91].

The samples were chosen using a non-probability sampling method based on the criterion that these individuals study an economics-related program. The total sample includes 287 students of bachelor's and master's programs, and the data was carried out between May 2023 and October 2023. Table 1 presents the general profiles of the samples from both the groups. A total of 77% of the participants are female, and most of the students are between 18 and 25 years old. The majority of the participants (77.8%) are enrolled in bachelor's programs, and 22.2% of them are part of a master's program at the Faculty of the Economy, specifically in the fields of business and management, finance, and accounting.

Table 1. Demographic characteristic of the sample.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Field of study</i>		
Female	221	77	Business and management	102	35.5
Male	66	23	Finance and accounting	74	25.8
<i>Age</i>			Tourism and marketing	78	27.2
≤20	28	9.8	Economics	33	11.5
21–25	215	74.9	<i>Work situation:</i>		
26–30	34	11.8	Full-time student	213	74.2
31–35	8	2.8	Have a job during the study program	74	25.8
>35	2	1	<i>Are your lecturers able to help if you have a business idea?</i>		
<i>Education</i>			Yes	197	68.6
Bachelor	223	77.8	No	27	9.4
Master	64	22.2	Maybe	63	22
Total	287	100		287	100

Source: own research.

In response to the question about the lecturers' ability to help the students develop business ideas, a high percentage of the students said "Yes" or "Maybe".

Before analysing the data, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire were determined. Table 2 shows the reliability and validity of the variable constructs. The Cronbach's alpha values are higher than 0.7 for all the items, indicating a strong level of internal consistency. The composite reliability of the different items ranges from 0.8 to 1.0, which is above the recommended starting value of 0.70. In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) for every component is above 0.50. In addition, the scales used to measure the importance of entrepreneurial education (Cronbach's alpha = 0.883), the lecturers' entrepreneurial attitudes (Cronbach's alpha = 0.941), the lecturers' practices related to entrepreneurial education (Cronbach's alpha = 0.922), their efforts to overcome the challenges faced during lecturing (Cronbach's alpha = 0.848), the courses' content relevance (Cronbach's alpha = 0.925), and the university's role in promoting entrepreneurial competences (Cronbach's alpha = 0.918) were reliable. The lecturing team's entrepreneurial competence was measured using eight items. This scale was also reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.953). A combination of the variables used in fundamental research by Liñán and Chen (2009)

and So et al. (2017) were used to focus on the dependent variable, entrepreneurial intention [92,93]. It was found that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entrepreneurial intention construct is 0.874, indicating a high level of reliability. We assessed the responses using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

Table 2. Reliability and validity test results.

Variable Constructs	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Perceptions of the important role of entrepreneurial education (PEE)	10	0.883	0.868	0.5032
Perceptions of lecturers' entrepreneurial attitudes (PTEA)	9	0.941	0.924	0.6579
Perceptions of practices related to entrepreneurial education (PTP)	6	0.922	0.886	0.6626
Perceptions of efforts to overcome the challenges faced during lecturing (PTCH)	6	0.848	0.850	0.5694
Perceptions of courses' content relevance (PCC)	8	0.925	0.897	0.6604
Perceptions of how entrepreneurially oriented the lecturing team competences are (PTC)	8	0.953	0.920	0.7530
Students' perceptions of the role of the university to promote entrepreneurial competences (PEU)	8	0.918	0.881	0.6425
Students' entrepreneurial intentions (EI)	4	0.874	0.805	0.7292

4. Results

The results of the study are organised based on three main variables: entrepreneurial education, lecturers' entrepreneurial competence, and students' entrepreneurial intentions.

In order to define the relationship between entrepreneurial education and students' entrepreneurial intentions, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to analyse the impact of the variables used related to entrepreneurship education. All the factors with a significant correlation ($p < 0.05$ level) were analysed through a multiple regression analysis to determine their impact on the dependent variable, the students' entrepreneurial intentions. Before taking the significance of each variable related to entrepreneurial education into consideration, the model summary (Table 3) describes the overall relationships between dependent and independent variables (R), the goodness of fit (the coefficient of determination), and the standard error of estimate. The regression model summary shows the value R and R^2 are 0.515 and 0.265, respectively, the value of $F = 17.384$, and the significance is 0.000. According to the model, 26.5% of the variance of the dependent variables is explained from the used independent variables.

Table 3. Model summary.

Model	R	R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	0.515 ¹	0.265	0.791	17.384	0.000 ²

¹ Predictors: (constant), PEE, PTCH, PTP, PCC, PTEA, PEU; ² dependent variable: student entrepreneurial intention (EI).

Table 4 provides an overview of the regression analysis results. This shows the interaction of entrepreneurial education variables and dependent variables measured by the students' entrepreneurial intentions. Regression analysis reveals that some coefficients have an acceptable p -value ($p < 0.05$). Based on the multiple regression analysis, the variables that have a significant value and must stay in the model are the following:

- The students' perceptions about the role and importance of entrepreneurship education. The lecturers who understand the opportunities of entrepreneurship education

can tailor their teaching methods to better engage the students and facilitate a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial concepts;

- The lecturers’ entrepreneurial attitude towards various aspects of education. This includes recognising the importance of the students’ roles in the classroom, fostering problem-solving skills, promoting teamwork and responsibility, encouraging innovation and creativity, prioritising academic achievements, boosting self-confidence, and developing leadership and communication skills;
- The students’ perceptions of the teachers’ efforts to overcome the challenges faced during lecturing, which are related to being an entrepreneurial teacher, continuous training, creating a positive environment in the classroom, facilitating students’ interaction towards various activities, real-world experience and success stories, and adapting the knowledge and skills to the background of the learners;
- The students’ perceptions of the relevance of the course content in terms of covering basic skills to instill entrepreneurial competences, knowledge of how opportunities can be identified, to meeting and sharing new ideas, practical experience in entrepreneurship through interaction with entrepreneurs, and analysing diverse case studies to provide in-depth knowledge of entrepreneurship in different contexts. Entrepreneurial education helps the lecturers to incorporate innovative teaching methods, update the course content to match the industry trends, and encourage the students to think creatively.

Table 4. Entrepreneurial education variables and their impact on students’ entrepreneurial intentions.

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.042	0.401		2.599	0.010
Students’ perceptions of important role of entrepreneurship education (PEE)	0.332	0.142	0.204	2.337	0.021
Students’ perceptions of lecturers’ entrepreneurial attitudes (PTEA)	0.299	0.108	0.244	2.776	0.006
Students’ perceptions of practices related to entrepreneurial education (PTP)	0.085	0.786	0.433	0.063	0.410
Students’ perceptions of lecturers’ efforts to overcome the challenges faced during lecturing (PTCH)	0.245	0.080	0.219	3.058	0.003
Students’ perceptions of courses’ content relevance (PCC)	0.017	0.174	0.862	1.014	0.028
Students’ perceptions of the role of the university in promoting entrepreneurial competences (PEU)	0.120	1.279	0.203	0.102	0.536

Dependent variable: students’ entrepreneurial intentions.

As the other variables included in the model have *p*-values > 0.05, these variables have an insignificant impact in this context. This can be interpreted as the continuous effort of teachers’ practices to influence entrepreneurial education, not only theoretically, but also by increasing their awareness of their practical actions. Another variable in this model with an insignificant impact is the role of the university in promoting entrepreneurial competence. Universities continually struggle to create and develop a healthy environment which will boost the entrepreneurial intentions of students and provide them with the skills and competencies needed in the labour market. Higher education institutions need to understand the importance and necessity of the process of transforming into institutions that stimulate and support entrepreneurship. For a university that considers the idea of turning into an entrepreneurial university, there needs to be an understanding of what being an entrepreneur means for its staff and students in the socio-economic context in which it operates. University leaders, policymakers, and private sector representatives

must work closely together so that the lecturing staff in these institutions create not only human capital, but also entrepreneurial capital for our economy and society by using their entrepreneurial mindset.

Table 5 shows entrepreneurial competences ranked according to the students' perceptions of how they are perceived to be incorporated by lecturers during the teaching and learning process. Lecturers with an entrepreneurial mindset can serve as role models for students, inspiring them to adopt a mindset characterised by a willingness to take risks, have a proactive attitude towards problem solving, create and identify opportunities, work in groups, communicate, and collaborate to achieve their goals. As it can be seen from the results, several competences are found among the lecturers. The four most emphasised entrepreneurial competences, which were evaluated based on observable behaviours and their entrepreneurial mindset, include communication, teamwork, control, and opportunity identification. Last but not least, according to the students' opinions, which were measured using frequency, these competences work with uncertainty, learning by doing, and a risk-taking capacity.

Table 5. Students' general perceptions of lecturers' entrepreneurial competences.

Entrepreneurial Competences	Students' General Perceptions of Lecturers' Entrepreneurial Competences	Entrepreneurial Competences	Students' General Perceptions of Lecturers' Entrepreneurial Competences
Communication	87.1% ¹	Self-confidence	63.1%
Teamworking	81.9%	Coordinate	62.9%
Control	78.0%	Focus on results	58.2%
Identify opportunities	78.0%	Leadership skills	57.5%
Collaboration	75.6%	Take initiative	56.4%
Entrepreneurial ability	75.6%	Persistence and perseverance	54.0%
Decision-making skills	70.7%	Delegating skills	52.7%
Generate ideas	68.3%	Flexibility and rapid adaptation to change	51.6%
Creativity	66.9%	Ability to work with uncertainty	50.9%
Problem solving	65.9%	Learn by doing	49.1%
Define goals	65.2%	Risk-taking capacity	48.8%
Ability to motivate others	64.1%		

¹ The percentage is calculated based on the number of times the students have chosen each of the competencies.

Another hypothesis in this study pertains to the mediating role of the entrepreneurial competence of the lecturing team and its impact on the relationship between entrepreneurship education and students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Here, the assumption is that the impact of entrepreneurial education variables on students' entrepreneurial intentions would be amplified if the lecturers had an entrepreneurial mindset. Since our analysis relied on the viewpoints of the students (as seen in Table 5), this assumption was assessed, and we performed further analysis.

Based on Hair et al. (2011), a mediating effect occurs when a third variable impacts the relationship between two related variables [94]. In order to examine the mediating influence of the entrepreneurial competences of the lecturing team on the link between entrepreneurship education and the entrepreneurial intentions of the students, it is necessary to fulfil the four requirements specified by Baron and Kenny (1986) [95]. These authors

assert that a mediating effect is present when the following four requirements are satisfied. First, prior to considering the mediator variable, there must be a significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. After grouping the variables related to entrepreneurial education based on the statistical mean, the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention is calculated. The results of the model are as follows: the R and R² values are 0.506 and 0.256, respectively; F value = 98.301 > F (1, 285), sig 0.000 < 0.05; and the direct path results show a significantly positive relationship between the two variables ($\beta = 0.506, t = 9.915$).

Secondly, there should be a significant relationship between the independent variable (entrepreneurial education) and the mediator variable (entrepreneurial competence of the lecturing team). Regression was performed to predict the mediating variable using the causal variable. The model’s output results are as follows: the R and R² values are 0.757 and 0.573, respectively, and the F value is 381.846 [F (1, 285), sig 0.000 < 0.05]. The direct path results reveal a statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($\beta = 0.757, t = 19.541$).

The third condition focuses on the significance of the relationship between the mediator variable and the dependent variable. The direct path between the mediating variable (the entrepreneurial competence of the lecturing team) and students’ entrepreneurial intentions was tested, and there was a significantly positive relationship between the variables. The values of the model are as follows: the R and R² values are 0.430 and 0.185, respectively; F value = 64.723 > F(1, 285); sig 0.000 < 0.05; and the direct path results show a significantly positive relationship between the two variables ($\beta = 0.430, t = 8.045$). After confirming the significance of the direct effect and indirect effect, the strength of the mediating construct must be tested as the last requirement.

Finally, when both the independent and mediator variables are effectively controlled for, the previously observed significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables is expected to either become non-significant or to significantly decline in significance. The model was tested, and the values of the entrepreneurial education variable with the mediating effect of entrepreneurial competences of the lecturing team resulted as follows: $\beta = 0.423, t = 5.426$.

As we can see from Table 6, the mediation model shows a significant positive relationship between the entrepreneurial education variables and the entrepreneurial competence of the lecturing team.

Table 6. Significance test results of the total effects.

	EI Model 1	ECL Model 2	EI Model 3
Entrepreneurial education (EE _{tot})	0.506 (9.915 **) ¹	0.757 (19.541 **)	0.423 (5.426 **) ³
Entrepreneurial competence of lecturing team (ECL)	0.430 (8.045 ***) ²		0.110 (1.409 *)
R	0.506 ^a	0.430 ^b	0.511
R ²	0.256 ^a	0.185 ^b	0.262
F	98.301 ^a	64.273 ^b	50.314

¹ Entrepreneurial education variables’ impact on students’ entrepreneurial intentions; ² impact of entrepreneurial competence of lecturing team on students’ entrepreneurial intentions; ³ model with mediating variable; level of significance * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

After controlling the paths between EE and the ECL and between the ECL and the students’ entrepreneurial intentions, the first model’s previously significant positive relationship between EE and students’ EIs changed. Based on the findings of Hair et al. (2011), the direct effect of the EE variable on the entrepreneurial intention of the students was

absorbed by the indirect influence, which has been found to be significant. The strength of the mediation can be determined from the value of the variance accounted for (VAF), which is calculated by dividing the indirect effect by the total effect. The indirect effect was initially determined through the multiplication of the path coefficients EE and ECL ($\beta = 0.757$) and the ECL to students' entrepreneurial intentions ($\beta = 0.430$). Thus, the indirect effect is 0.326 (0.757×0.430), and the total effect is the sum of the direct and mediated effects ($0.423 + 0.326 = 0.749$). Thus, the mediating effect of lecturers' entrepreneurial competence on the EE to EIs path accounted for 0.44 ($0.326/0.749$). This reveals that the entrepreneurial education variables account for 44% of the variance in students' entrepreneurial intentions via the entrepreneurial competence of the lecturing team (ECL). It can be concluded that a mediation effect exists since the VAF value belongs within the interval from 20% to 80% and signifies the presence of partial mediation [94]. Based on the findings of mediation analysis, it can be concluded that there is an indirect relationship between EE (entrepreneurial education) and students' entrepreneurial intentions, which is mediated by the entrepreneurial competence of the lecturers. The implication is that students' entrepreneurial intentions can be significantly influenced by their perception of their lecturers' mindset towards entrepreneurship. In conclusion, the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in influencing the students' entrepreneurial intentions is enhanced when it is delivered by lecturers who possess a strong inclination towards entrepreneurship.

5. Discussion

This study aims to evaluate the role of some focal variables of entrepreneurial education and their impact on the entrepreneurial intentions of students. The students' perspectives on the mediation role of the entrepreneurial competences of the lecturers are evaluated through the examination of key factors, such as lecturers' entrepreneurial attitudes, lecturers' practices related to entrepreneurial education, the efforts to deal with challenges faced during entrepreneurial lecturing, the relevance of course content, and the role of the university environment in promoting entrepreneurial competences. Through multiple regression analysis and using a mediation effect model, the hypotheses were tested to explain the role of entrepreneurial-related variables mediated by the entrepreneurial competence of the lecturers on the entrepreneurial intentions of students. Based on multiple regression analysis, the following variables are those which have a significant impact on the entrepreneurial intentions of the students:

- The perceived importance of entrepreneurship education;
- The teachers' entrepreneurial attitudes towards the respected role of the students in the class; learning the skills necessary for problem solving, teamwork, and becoming responsible citizens; innovation and creativity; academic achievements and improving self-confidence; and acquiring leadership and communication skills;
- The students' perceptions of lecturers' efforts to overcome challenges faced during entrepreneurial lecturing;
- The students' perceptions of the courses' relevance in terms of updating the course content to match industry trends and encouraging the students to think creatively.

Some other variables included in this model have an insignificant impact on the dependent variable, perceived entrepreneurial intention, and these are as follows: the lecturers' practices related to entrepreneurial education, and the universities not promoting entrepreneurial education. This can be interpreted as an ongoing effort to increase the significant influence of the practices related to entrepreneurial education, not only theoretically oriented but also by increasing their awareness of practical actions and students' empowerment. Lecturers' entrepreneurial competence impacts their entrepreneurial mindset and inclines them towards improving several aspects of teaching and learning

Furthermore, universities must promote entrepreneurial education more, helping to create and develop a positive environment that will boost the entrepreneurial intentions of the students and provide them with the skills and competencies needed in the labour market. Higher education institutions need to transform into universities that stimulate

and support entrepreneurship. It is quite important to be aware of fulfilling the third mission of universities in addition to the traditional mission of teaching and research. The relationship between the entrepreneurial competence of lecturers and entrepreneurial education is crucial for fostering a dynamic and effective learning environment. Turning a regular university into an entrepreneurial university requires an understanding of what it means to be an entrepreneur for its staff and students in the socio-economic context in which it operates. University leaders, policymakers, and private sector representatives must work closely together so that the lecturing staff in these institutions create not only the appropriate workforce but also the entrepreneurial capital that affects our economy and society through their entrepreneurial mindset.

The process of transforming universities using an entrepreneurial approach is not an easy one. It is associated with many challenges and requires a prepared lecturing team with an entrepreneurial mindset, as well as close cooperation between the other stakeholders that helps to overcome the challenges during entrepreneurial lecturing. Despite the many challenges and barriers, entrepreneurial universities are the best model for facing the changes in the labour market, which enables them to survive and increase their competitiveness in national and international arenas.

6. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Like any research, our study comes with some limitations. This research study includes some of the main variables related to entrepreneurship education. Other research works have studied some of them separately and in depth, such as course content [90], lecturing staff practices and attitudes [55,96,97], and the role of the university [47,98,99].

Second, the data for this study were obtained through the administration of a structured questionnaire that addressed the perspectives of the students regarding the context of entrepreneurial education, the lecturing team's entrepreneurial competence, and the students' entrepreneurial intentions. The idea of using a quantitative data collection strategy through a structured questionnaire was to ensure the inclusion of a large number of respondents. Adding qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to complement the quantitative data and provide deeper insights into the students' perspectives is a potential approach for future research to conduct a qualitative study comparing the opinions and perspectives of students and teachers.

Third, our findings represent the research study limited to a specific area in Albania during a certain period. This could be an incentive for future research, such as investigating other educational environments or exploring the long-term impact of entrepreneurial education on students' career outcomes.

Despite these limitations, our study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the lecturer's role as an important key actor in entrepreneurship education frameworks and encouraging the integration of entrepreneurial competence across different subject areas and disciplines. By exploring the entrepreneurial competences of lecturers from students' perspectives, we can enhance both theoretical frameworks and practical approaches to gain a deeper understanding of how educators contribute to students' entrepreneurial development.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, E.P.B. and J.M.Š.; methodology, E.P.B. and J.M.Š.; software, E.P.B.; validation, E.P.B.; formal analysis, E.P.B.; investigation, E.P.B. and J.M.Š.; resources, E.P.B. and J.M.Š.; data curation E.P.B. and J.M.Š.; writing—original draft preparation, E.P.B.; writing—review and editing, E.P.B.; visualization, E.P.B. and J.M.Š.; supervision, E.P.B. and J.M.Š.; project administration, E.P.B. and J.M.Š.; funding acquisition, none. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding authors.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank all the participants in the study.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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