

Entrepreneurial Mindset: Perceptions, Transformation, and Involvement at Vidzeme University of Applied Science

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Traditionally, an entrepreneurial university is viewed as a transformative institution that serves as a hub for innovation and societal impact. It integrates entrepreneurship into its vision and extends beyond the conventional roles of teaching and research by embedding economic and social development into its core mission. An entrepreneurial university acts as a driver of economic growth and innovation through entrepreneurial education, research commercialization, start-up incubation, and industry collaboration.

In collaboration with 12 partner institutions, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (ViA) explored the perspectives of the university community regarding entrepreneurial and innovation-related activities, attitudes, challenges, and intentions toward adopting an entrepreneurial university mindset. The study also aimed to identify key challenges and motivational factors that influence the development of an entrepreneurial university mindset at each institution. A survey at ViA was conducted among various university stakeholders, including students (62%), researchers and academic staff (20%), professional and administrative staff (14%), and university leadership (4%).

The main findings indicate that although most students have engaged in challenge-based learning or participated in entrepreneurship-related courses, relatively few have initiated start-ups or entrepreneurial ventures. The most reported barrier to starting a business was fear of failure. Nevertheless, more than half of the student respondents expressed an intention to start a business within the next three years. The majority of students did not appear interested in receiving additional information about entrepreneurship study opportunities or in being contacted by staff for support with their start-up ideas or new business ventures.

Academic and professional respondents identified four primary challenges that hinder their engagement in entrepreneurial and innovative activities: high workload, lack of incentives and rewards, insufficient administrative support, and limited financial resources.

Results show that ViA entrepreneurial and innovative transformation can be clustered under three main categories of the focus for the university – 1) mission-oriented education and research (innovative lecture, labs, placement opportunities, an openness for transformation, increasing number of participation in entrepreneurial activities) , 2) consistent institutional support (appreciation from university leaders of staff entrepreneurial activities, top priority of innovative transformation ideas, quality and knowledge of staff), and 3) active participation in ecosystem (business incentives with more involved academics, university awareness and connection with regional entrepreneurial challenges, one-stop agency for different entrepreneurial activities and information).

The main conclusions highlight that enhancing the entrepreneurial potential of Vidzeme University requires a coordinated, institution-wide approach that integrates curricular innovation, robust institutional support mechanisms, and active engagement with the regional ecosystem. Although entrepreneurial awareness and education are relatively well-established, a significant gap remains between students' entrepreneurial intent and actual entrepreneurial activity. Sustained entrepreneurial initiatives are essential to bridging this gap by fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, building leadership competencies, and aligning university efforts with regional innovation priorities.

Further efforts to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset are being implemented within the E³UDRES² (European University Alliance) project “Accelerate Future HEI”, which aims to foster entrepreneurial thinking among students and young entrepreneurs in the Vidzeme region, while also developing entrepreneurial leadership, mindful management, and human resource development skills among university leaders, professional staff, and lead researchers.

Keywords

entrepreneurial mindset, entrepreneurial university, institutional transformation, innovation ecosystem