Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Emerging Countries

**A collaboration between Maastricht University and DECP-PUM
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Purpose

For the Dutch Employers' Cooperation Programme (DECP) and PUM it is of great importance to explore entrepreneurial ecosystems (EE), as their focus is on strengthening employer organisations in emerging countries to improve the business climate. EEs already exist in some well-established areas and sometimes grow by coincidence, but this can be influenced on purpose. Some of these well-established EEs are Brainport Industries in the Netherlands, Metropole Lille in France and Silicon Valley in California.

Currently, emerging countries challenge to develop their EEs, such as the lack of necessary competencies. The development of an EE is a long and dynamic process which requires various steps. Therefore, this research aims to provide recommendations for entrepreneurs and DECP-PUM to become aware of the necessary competencies in each phase of building an EE. Thereby, recommendations for the stimulation of the competence development will be provided to DECP-PUM for the regions they are active in, which are emerging countries in South America, Africa and Asia.
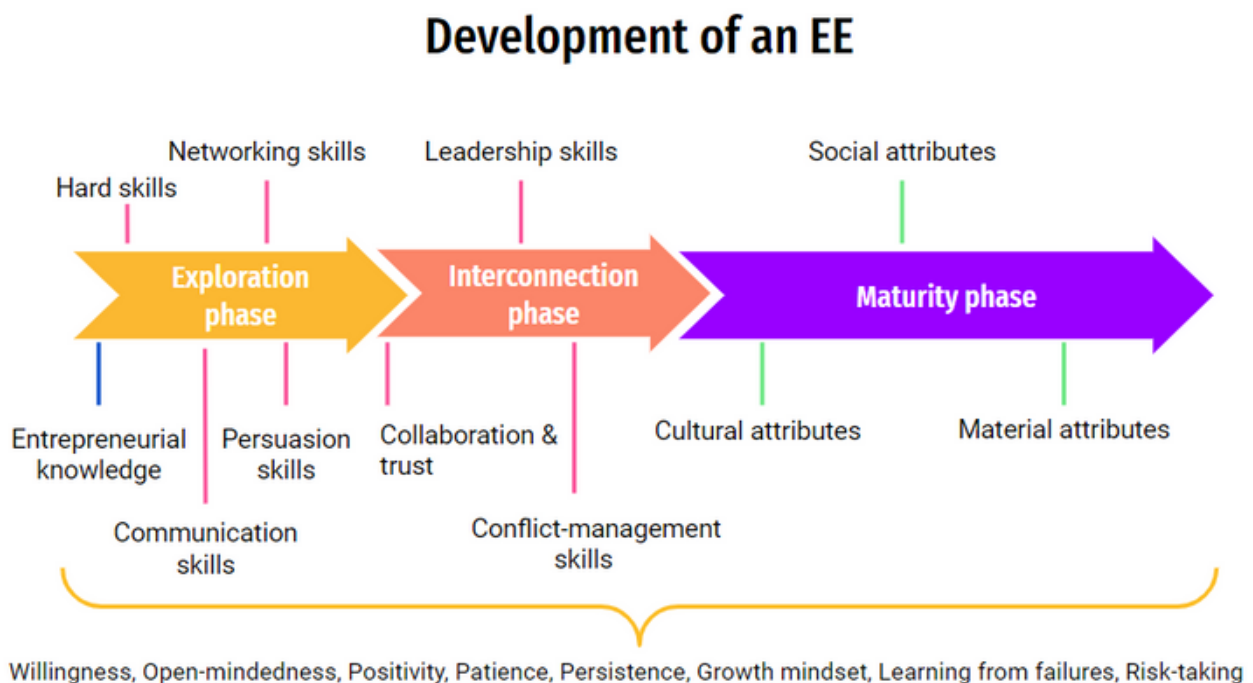
Methodology

In order to help the entrepreneurs become aware of the necessary competencies, this research combines literature and interviews to provide recommendations. Interviews were conducted with 16 persons, who had different perspectives regarding EEs. The sample included, EE experts working at DECP-PUM and University Maastricht, people working at employers' organisations in emerging countries and people who work in well-established EEs. The majority of the interviewees were from Africa, but two other emerging countries, the Philippines and Bolivia, were also approached. Combining these interviews with the literature gave a clear picture of the most important competencies when building an EE.

Methodology Process

Team

Selection of the interviewees with Jos van Erp

01

Experts

Interviews with EE experts to gain the first insights

02

Organisations

Interviews with employers' organisations working in emerging countries to gain on-the-field insights

03

Experts

Interviews with people working in a well-established EE

04

Complete picture

Combining all the information to have a clear picture of EEs

05

Findings

From literature and the interviews could be obtained that there were some major competencies during the different phases when developing an EE. The most important competencies were: attitudes, entrepreneurial knowledge, hard skills, soft skills, communication skills, leadership skills, networking skills, collaboration skills, persuasion skills and conflict management skills. These competencies showed to be of great importance in the development process of a well-established EEs as well as developing EEs. Furthermore, some phases of developing an EE have been identified, although this is not 100% science based.

Development of an EE

Willingness, Open-mindedness, Positivity, Patience, Persistence, Growth mindset, Learning from failures, Risk-taking

Development of an EE starts with the exploration phase, followed by the interconnection phase before going to the maturity phase. Each phase requires specific competencies to a certain extend. The exploration phase requires competencies like: entrepreneurial knowledge, hard skills, communication skills, networking skills and persuasion skills. The interconnection phase requires: collaboration and trust, leadership skills and conflict management skills. In the maturity phase, elements like: cultural, social and material attributes are of importance. Competencies that are necessary in the early phases remain important during the entire process of EE development.

Recommendations

According to the findings, this research provides several recommendations for DECP-PUM and entrepreneurs to become aware of the necessary competencies in each phase of building an EE and how to stimulate the competence development. DECP-PUM can deliver advise focused on these necessary competencies. These recommendations include: organising seminars and awareness raising events, establishing a repository of skills, invest in workshops, start Toastmasters Clubs and team simulation trainings, create an entrepreneur platform and promote a safe environment. These recommendations are aimed to improve the development of EEs in emerging countries.

This article provides a short summary of the recommendations, which are explained more detailed in the full report.

Seminars

DECP-PUM could organise seminars to raise awareness of the competencies gap that may exist between the competencies that students acquire in the education systems and the competencies required for them to become successful entrepreneurs

Skills repository

To help reduce the skills gap that may exist between professional training and the reality in the field, DECP-PUM can help entrepreneurs realise their missing skills, by establishing a repository of the necessary skills.

Awareness training events

To convince entrepreneurs to collaborate it may be interesting to organise awareness-raising events that aim to persuade by example. Once entrepreneurs are convinced of the importance of collaboration, they will be more inclined to join other entrepreneurs.

Workshops

DECP-PUM could encourage entrepreneurs in emerging countries to invest in workshops on hard skills. The workshops will outline that hard skills are tied to the day-to-day operations of the companies and are key performance indicators (KPIs).

Toastmasters Clubs and team stimulation trainings

DECP-PUM could start a Toastmasters club if such does not exist in the region they operate. DECP-PUM could also create a Team Simulation Training that aims to promote team efficiency and productivity.

Platform for entrepreneurs

DECP-PUM could create a specialised website for entrepreneurship and business-related issues, where young entrepreneurs can share their struggles and search for help, opinion, or even motivation. This website will aim to provide entrepreneurs with a positive attitude, by showing them that others are willing to help them.

Promotion safe environment

DECP-PUM could encourage entrepreneurs in emerging countries to foster a safe environment. By having a neutral environment where members feel safe, communication and successful conflict management will be present.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to provide recommendations for entrepreneurs and DECP to become aware of the necessary competencies in each phase of building an EE and to give recommendations for the stimulation of the competence development. The necessary competencies required for each phase have been identified, which exist of attitude, knowledge, and skills. The main attitudes highlighted are willingness, open-mindedness, positivity, patience, growth-mindset, and persistence. Regarding knowledge, the main focus was on sharing knowledge within the EE. Finally, concerning the skills, a distinction was made between hard skills and soft skills. The main soft skills identified are communication skills, leadership skills, networking skills, collaboration skills, persuasion skills, and conflict management skills, with communication as the basis of all soft skills. Thereafter, recommendations were formulated in relation to the phases and competencies, such as creating seminars, introducing a skills repository, creating awareness-raising events, developing workshops, building toastmasters clubs and team simulation trainings, creating a platform for entrepreneurs and the promotion of a safe working environment were developed. Finally, recommendations regarding the successful reach of the maturity phase exist of cultural, social and material attributes.

"Alone we go faster, together we go further."
African proverb

Additional information

From 1 January 2023 the new organisation, DECP-PUM, will focus on this kind of holistic approach in emerging countries. These ambitions do not meet the standards of well-established EEs in Europe or the United States, but it can be valuable to make a start in promising sectors in emerging countries. These promising sectors have a wide variety, including agriculture, manufacturing, construction, maintenance, transport, etc.

In case this article has caught your attention, please contact Jos van Erp for more information or access to the report. E-mail: erp@decp.nl