



CURRENT STATUS OF THE STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP MOVEMENT IN UNIVERSITIES IN THAI NGUYEN PROVINCE

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<https://doi.org/10.51453/2354-1431/2023/1017>

Article info

Received: 08/6/2023

Revised: 25/7/2023

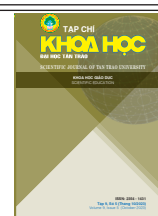
Accepted: 05/10/2023

Keywords

*Students; Starting
a business; Start-
up students;
Entrepreneurship
movement; University.*

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to survey the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen province. Based on a survey of 445 students using the panel survey method, in-depth interview method combined with analysis and synthesis methods, the article clarifies the current status of the student entrepreneurship movement in the above universities. Thai Nguyen province recently, thereby providing a number of recommendations to contribute to promoting the startup movement of university students in Thai Nguyen province in the coming time.



PHONG TRÀO KHỞI NGHIỆP SINH VIÊN Ở CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC TRÊN ĐỊA BÀN TỈNH THÁI NGUYÊN

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<https://doi.org/10.51453/2354-1431/2023/1017>

Thông tin bài viết

Ngày nhận bài: 08/6/2023

Ngày sửa bài: 25/7/2023

Ngày duyệt đăng: 05/10/2023

Từ khóa

Sinh viên; Khởi nghiệp; Sinh viên khởi nghiệp; Phong trào khởi nghiệp; Đại học.

Tóm tắt

Mục đích của bài viết là khảo sát về phong trào khởi nghiệp sinh viên ở các trường đại học trên địa bàn tỉnh Thái Nguyên. Trên cơ sở khảo sát 445 sinh viên bằng phương pháp điều tra bằng bảng, phương pháp phỏng vấn sâu kết hợp phương pháp phân tích và tổng hợp, bài viết đã làm rõ thực trạng phong trào khởi nghiệp sinh viên ở các trường đại học trên địa bàn tỉnh Thái Nguyên thời gian qua, từ đó đưa ra một số khuyến nghị góp phần thúc đẩy phong trào khởi nghiệp sinh viên các trường đại học trên địa bàn tỉnh Thái Nguyên trong thời gian tới.

1. Introduction

Start-up is an emerging issue in recent years, receiving the much attention of the entire society, creating a 'new wave' among young people, especially students with many passionate ideas, aspirations, and ability to absorb, adapt and innovate. However, according to statistics from the Ministry of Education and Training: Innovative start-up activities in most universities have had still some constraints in terms of organizational models and awareness of students and lecturers; the support for innovative start-up activities of relevant parties has been not really good, especially the collaboration between enterprises and universities, lacking information and collaboration mechanisms. The legal framework for the innovative start-up process has been incomprehensible [1]. Discussing

on student entrepreneurship has also attracted the attention of some researchers: Bui Tien Dzung (2019) focuses on providing the orientation to support student entrepreneurship in the coming time [3]; Nguyen Ha Thi Quynh Trang (2018) discusses basic concepts, the characteristics of innovative start-up ecosystems, experiences of some countries in forming innovative start-up ecosystems and some suggestions for building an innovative start-up ecosystem in Vietnam [9]; Pham Van Hien (2021) compiles experiences in supporting student entrepreneurship from universities in a number of developed countries, thereby proposing solutions on organizing activities to support student entrepreneurship from universities in Vietnam [4]. Ha Thi Thanh Thuy (2020) points out the current status of student entrepreneurship activities and supports for

student entrepreneurship, clarifying the factors affecting student entrepreneurship activities, difficulties/barriers to student entrepreneurship activities, from those, the author makes recommendations to universities to improve the quality of current support activities for student entrepreneurship [10]. Hoang Thi Huyen, Nguyen Thi Cuc and Ngo Chau Binh Duong (2021) propose a number of recommendations to promote student entrepreneurship at universities and colleges in Hanoi City [5]. In Thai Nguyen province, Vu Quynh Nam, Tran Chi Thien and Vu Thi Quynh Chi (2019) explore the current status of student entrepreneurship activities at Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration, but there is no comprehensive and systematic assessment about the current status of the student entrepreneurship movement at different universities in Thai Nguyen.

Thai Nguyen is a midland province in the Northeast region, with Thai Nguyen University (TU) which is one of three national key regional universities with an important role in training science and technology human resources, serving the socio-economic development of Thai Nguyen province and the Northern midland and mountainous region in particular and the whole country in general. The TU has seven member universities and one affiliated faculty with a training scale of academic year 2022-2023 with 60,228 students. However, the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen province has been still on a small scale, and has not really been popularized, and has only attracted the participation of a small number of students studying business administration, information technology, engineering, etc. Students have not received comprehensive supports in terms of knowledge, entrepreneurship and career development; start-up activities and support for student entrepreneurship at universities in the Thai Nguyen have not been widely disseminated and implemented. Therefore, the research theme 'The current status of the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen province' is

urgent. The results of this research can make a useful contribution to managers, making relevant decisions in training activities to enhance entrepreneurship potential as well as policies, mechanisms and legal environment to develop the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen in particular and the country in general.

2. Research methods

In order to collect, process, analyze and compile the necessary data and document from which to properly and objectively evaluate the current status of the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen province, and there by proposing some recommendations to contribute for promoting the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen province in the coming time, some methods to be used in this research as follows:

- Document analysis and synthesis: from the results of analyzing primary and secondary documents, the author conducted a synthesis according to specific research content to clarify the practices of the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen province.

- In addition, the data obtained from survey and final reports on start-up activities of universities were analyzed and processed by Excel software.

3. Research results and discussions

3.1. Current status of the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen province

3.1.1. Current status of organizing entrepreneurship contests for students

In recent times, universities in Thai Nguyen province have organized many contests on entrepreneurship for students. Entrepreneurship contests have attracted a certain number of participating students in Thai Nguyen province, which are shown in table 2 as follows:

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on entrepreneurship contests for students in the period of 2018-2022 in Thai Nguyen province.

Year	Contest	Start-up project	Number of participating students in start-up contests/ total number of students in the university	Ratio (%)
1. Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry				
2018	The second contest on finding start-up ideas	32	200/3931	5,1
2019	The third contest on finding start-up ideas	28	150/5004	2,3
2020	“Start-up ideas” contest in the field of Agriculture, Forestry and Environment Protection, responding to climate change	30	180/1396	12,9
2021	The 5 th contest on innovative start-up, theme “Start-up in the fourth industrial revolution”	32	200/1296	15,4
2022	The 5 th contest on innovative start-up, theme, “Start-up based on digital transformation platform”	31	190/1585	12
2. Thai Nguyen University of Medicine and Pharmacy				
2019	Innovative start-up ideas	19	59/5863	1,0
2021	Innovative start-up ideas	41	130/5957	2,2
2022	Innovative start-up ideas	57	179/6082	2,9
3. University of Information and Communication Technology				
2020	Start-up ideas	36	83/4259	2
2021	Start-up ideas	44	98/4587	2,1
2022	Start-up ideas	39	95/4798	2
4. University of Economics and Business Administration				
2018	Start-up ideas incubation	21	50/4558	1,1
2020	Start-up ideas	35	75/5012	1,5
2022	Young start-ups	50	150/4691	3,2
5. Thai Nguyen University of Technology				
2018	Start-up ideas - University Level	50	50/6292	0,8
2019	Start-up ideas - University Level	70	70/6094	1,9
2020	Start-up ideas - University Level	90	90/6563	1,4
2021	Start-up ideas - University Level	102	102/6648	1,8
2022	Start-up ideas - University Level	120	120/6872	1,7

(Source: Statistical results of Thai Nguyen University)

The table 2 shows that: during the period 2018-2022, universities in Thai Nguyen have paid attention to develop the student entrepreneurship movement. Specifically: Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry is one of the universities in Thai Nguyen province at the leading position of supporting student

entrepreneurship, has organized many contests on entrepreneurship and attracted the highest rate of participating students in entrepreneurship contests among universities in Thai Nguyen province. In 2022, the rate of participating students in entrepreneurship contests accounted for 12% in comparison with

whole Thai Nguyen university. Next, Thai Nguyen University of Medicine and Pharmacy regularly organizes entrepreneurship idea contests for students, however the contest only attracted a small number of participating students (2.9%). Start-up projects/ ideas of students at Thai Nguyen University of Information and Communication Technology are highly appreciated and have practical meaning in entrepreneurship contests. However, the participating student in the entrepreneurship contests is still relatively small portion in comparison with the number of students in the entire Thai Nguyen University. Thai Nguyen University of Industrial Technology organizes entrepreneurship contest for students irregularly over the years, but an increasing number of participating students in entrepreneurship contests over the years. Thai Nguyen University of Science and Thai Nguyen University of Education have only paid attention to this movement in the past two years. The survey results also show that some universities have not paid attention to the student entrepreneurship movement, such as School of Foreign Languages-Thai Nguyen University, which has never organized a entrepreneurship contest for students.

Thus, it can be seen that students of universities in Thai Nguyen province have recently been interested in developing the student entrepreneurship movement through organizing entrepreneurship contests for students. However, the number of participating students in entrepreneurship contests has still been very modest at universities and only has attracted a small portion of participating students who are studying business administration, information technology, and engineering, etc.

3.1.2. Current status of organizing short-term training courses and training workshops on entrepreneurship

To help students gain knowledge and skills related to start-up, in recent times, universities in Thai Nguyen province have organized many short-term training courses and training workshops on entrepreneurship. However, the number of short-term training courses and training workshops on entrepreneurship for students has still been relatively small, the number of participation students is not much, and the duration of the courses has still been short, not enough for students to absorb and practice the knowledge and skills about

entrepreneurship, topics of training courses and training workshops have not really linked to the needs and desires of students, so the effectiveness has not been high. Other activities mainly focused on the participation in forums and experience sharing, but there were no actual study-tour activities or learning from partterns that had been successfully realized. Some universities have not paid much attention yet in training and coaching activities on entrepreneurship for students, typically Foreign Language School- Thai Nguyen University, University of Information and Communication Technology; Thai Nguyen University of Education for the period of 2018-2022 did not organize any training courses and training workshops on entrepreneurship for their teachers and students. According to the author's survey results, currently there have been only a few universities that include the entrepreneurship module/ subject in the training program framework for regular students such as Thai Nguyen University of Sciences; Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, etc. but in the optional knowledge block, so students are quite weak in knowledge and skills related to entrepreneurship. This is the basic reason why students very scared and afraid of start-up. This also partly explains the reason why the number of participating students in the above mentioned entrepreneurship contests at universities of TU has still been relatively small/ total students of each university.

3.1.3. Current status of creating an environment to support student entrepreneurship

The survey results at universities in Thai Nguyen province show that creating an environment to support student entrepreneurship is of great interest to universities. Typical examples are Center for Technology Incubation and Entrepreneurship Support - Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry (2017); Center for Supporting Entrepreneurship and Knowledge Transfer- Thai Nguyen University of Technology (2019); Center for Consulting, Training and Technology Transfer - Thai Nguyen University of Sciences (2020); SCSC-Thai Nguyen University of Medicine and Pharmacy, etc.

In addition, universities also established Entrepreneurship Clubs to contribute for creating a student support environment; these are also places for student groups to exchange and present start-up ideas, etc.

Some universities such as School of Foreign Languages-Thai Nguyen University and Thai Nguyen University of Education have also integrated additional functions and tasks to support student entrepreneurship in the Functional Departments (such as Science Management Department). It can be said that the establishment of Entrepreneurship Support Centers, Training Centers, and Entrepreneurship Clubs is considered as an extremely important bridge to support, connect, promote and develop the student entrepreneurship movement in Thai Nguyen province in recent times. This is also considered as one of the important components of the innovative start-up eco-system of Thai Nguyen province. However, the operation of these start-up support patterns has not been generally very effective; supporting activities have still been fragmented and underdeveloped; lack of co-working spaces, connecting entrepreneurs, investors and start-up project groups; The start-up support teams have been quite weak in both knowledge and experiences in entrepreneurship. Individuals and units that received supports for start-up have not had much awareness, knowledge, and experiences in entrepreneurship, so it is very difficult to support deeply the student entrepreneurship movement. Building connections among entrepreneurship support organizations with entrepreneurs/ businesses, agencies and units with incubation functions, and member universities in supporting entrepreneurship has been still limited.

3.1.4. Current status of information and communication activities for promoting the student entrepreneurship movement

Survey results show that universities in Thai Nguyen province have been very interested in information and communication activities for promoting the student entrepreneurship movement. Specifically: The University of Economics and Business Administration organized the Talk show “entrepreneurship Aspiration”; organized an online seminar on “the Journey from Scientific Research to the Entrepreneurship Application in students”; in addition, directly propagated documents and knowledge about entrepreneurship, the national entrepreneurship program through the so-called the civic activity week at the beginning of the student programs; propagated knowledge about entrepreneurship through electronic websites such as the university’s website and Fan page of Youth Union - Student Association of

Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration, Fan page of Entrepreneurship Student Club. Thai Nguyen University of Medicine and Pharmacy: for entrepreneurship idea contests, there is a special fan page providing information about the contest, knowledge related to entrepreneurship; organizing workshops with a concrete communication roadmap (before, during and after the program). Thai Nguyen Agriculture and Forestry University regularly posts and introduces entrepreneurship support activities on university’s website at: <http://startup.tuaf.edu.vn/> and Fan page TISC (Technology Incubation and Start-up Support Center - TUAF); building the university’s entrepreneurship reportage on Thai Nguyen Radio and Television Station (TV), the reportage on Nhan Dan Electronic Newspaper; taking part in in the entrepreneurship network of Thai Nguyen province in the cooperation program to support the activities of the start-up ecosystem in Thai Nguyen province; taking part in signing a cooperation agreement with the National Start-up Support Center (NSSC); Association of Small and Medium Enterprises and Czech Republic Crafts (AMSP CR); Hanoi Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (HANOISME); Vietnam Silicon Valley (VSV); Center for Innovation and Incubation of Foreign Trade University (FIIS) and Bamboo Up; connecting domestic and international entrepreneurship networks; organizing conferences to communicate, promote and connect online platforms to the innovative start-up community, thereby helping students have more motivation to realize and expand their entrepreneurship ideas. However, activities on entrepreneurship communication at higher education institutions in the province have been not rich yet, the communication content has been not attractive; not regularly and without investment, so the effectiveness of start-up communication and propagation to students has been not high, requiring in the future, universities need to have solutions to improve the effectiveness of these activities.

3.2. General assessment of the current status of the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen province

3.2.1. Achievements

- The student s entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen has basically attracted

the attention and participation of students from universities in the province, the quantity and quality of student's entrepreneurship ideas and projects have been increasing, contributing more to the national entrepreneurship movement.

- Activities to support the student's entrepreneurship movement has been interested in and paid attention by universities, as shown by the fact that universities have cooperated with reputable organizations to open short training courses, training-workshop to train entrepreneurship knowledge for students; organizing talks, seminars with invited successful entrepreneurs to talk, share, and inspire entrepreneurship on student forums.

- Universities in Thai Nguyen province have regularly organized entrepreneurship contests, have mechanisms and policies to encourage students to take part in entrepreneurship idea contests at different levels (from university to provincial level), and established student entrepreneurship clubs, incubators and centers to support student start-up activities. Through these activities, students' ideas can be nurtured and to provide knowledge and practical skills that contribute for training high-quality human resources for businesses.

- The network which connecting universities with entrepreneurs, businesses, experts and investors for students' entrepreneurship projects was initially formed. Many universities in Thai Nguyen province have proactively connected with organizations which supporting the start-up activities so that students' ideas and projects have the opportunity to be implemented; creating an environment for students to interact with businesses during practical internships.

3.2.2. Constraints

- Although the student entrepreneurship movement has recently developed strongly in Thai Nguyen province, but the portion between students which taken part in entrepreneurship activities in comparison with total number of students has still been relatively modest, only attracting a small number of participating students who are studying business administration, information technology, agriculture and forestry, industrial engineering, etc. Besides, the entrepreneurial spirit of students has still been quite superficial and not sustainable, many participating

groups were only at the beginning period of time, but did not persistently pursue their ideas to the end, even though the idea was feasible if implemented, many entrepreneurship ideas were still quite naive and lacked novelty.

- Entrepreneurship and support activities at universities in Thai Nguyen have not been widely deployed. Currently, some universities have students who taken part in the "National Entrepreneurship" program, but they only stopped at small activities, not really creating motivation to promote students' start-up activities.

- According to survey results, currently 6/8 universities have established 'Entrepreneurship Clubs'. However, the activities of these clubs have not really been effective due to the lack of advisors or because lecturers have not had enough time to support students. Forming an educational pattern of 'Entrepreneurship experiences' in universities have still been difficult due to lack of funding, the support activities for start-up activities have still been really fragmented and undeveloped; lack of co-working spaces, connecting entrepreneurs, investors and entrepreneurship project groups.

- The content of the entrepreneurship incubation courses mainly has focused on supporting the formation and planning of ideas, but did not pay much attention and clarify the meaning of innovative start-up, so student's start-up ideas were not feasible ones, originating from personal interests, most of those ideas were not innovative or creative. Other activities mainly focused on participating in forums and sharing experiences, but there were no actual study-tour activities or learning from patterns that have been successfully realized. This caused students to encounter a lot of confusion when realizing their ideas due to lack of practical experiences.

- Forming connections among different start-up support organizations with entrepreneurs/ enterprises, agencies with incubation functions, and universities in supporting start-up has still certain limited. Start-up projects often did not have enough conditions to cover costs for machineries, equipment's, and development of ideas and products. Students' start-up ideas basically have not been accessed to preferential loans, so it was very difficult to realize their start-up ideas.

- The collaboration among sectors and levels in Thai Nguyen has not been synchronized, university leaders have not focused on this activities or have not been drastic in leadership and direction; the entrepreneurship communication activities among students have not been extensive, mainly integrated communication by unions.

3.2.3. Reasons of constrains

* Subjective reasons

- Survey results show that almost students do not want to take part in the start-up activities because they are still afraid of failure, they do not have knowledge about business, market analysis, understanding of business laws, etc., do not have their family's supports, and do not have capital, leading to students being afraid of start-up.

- Students' ability to access capital is extremely limited because students are young and do not have assets to mortgage, beside that, policies to encourage and support student's start-up in Thai Nguyen in different forms such as capital support; credit at preferential interest rates; corporate income tax exemption and reduction for innovative start-up students in the beginning years after graduation... are still limited.

- The professional qualifications of the start-up support teams at universities in Thai Nguyen province are lacking and weak in both knowledge and professional skills, so it is difficult to support strongly student entrepreneurship movement.

* Objective reasons

- Universities in Thai Nguyen do not have majors in training entrepreneurship, while courses on entrepreneurship and extra-curricular activities on business ideas and entrepreneurship are limited and only of a movement nature.

- The network of connections among entrepreneurs, experts and universities in Thai Nguyen is still in its infancy, the financial funds to support and implement start-up ideas are not enough.

- The role of start-up support organizations is still vague; the formation of start-up ecosystems in universities has not received adequate resource investment.

3.3. Some recommendations for promoting the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen province in the coming time

3.3.1. For universities

- Building co-working spaces for student's entrepreneurship groups; laboratories; incubators for technology testing, market testing, etc. especially engineering and technology universities (University of Engineering and Industry; University of Information and Communications Technology, etc.). These entrepreneurship groups can include lecturers and enterprises outside the universities (the participation as advisors - financial contribution for pilot production...); supporting for the development of innovative start-up ideas; building a feasible business plan with three development stages: idea generation, product development and growth. In addition, it is necessary to reserve an appropriate space for technology incubation activities, design and manufacturing workshops for students, and support innovative start-up activities for final-year students and former students (Tran Anh Phuong and Le Ba Phong, 2019).

- Cooperating with outside organizations to organize ToT (Training of Trainer) courses; training courses on "Entrepreneurship for Lecturers"; participating in the so-called 844 Program (Supporting the development of the national innovative start-up ecosystem until 2025), cooperating with Bach khoa Technology Investment and Development Co. Limited (BKHoldings) - this company with tasks for developing the start-up advisory community and promoting entrepreneurship training activities.

- Promoting the collaboration among State - University - Investor on the basis of harmonious benefits and shared risks; promoting the cooperation, expanding domestic and international links and connections; receiving orders from localities, gradually forming an ordering mechanism to promote green and sustainable socio-economic development.

- Inspiring and nurturing the students' entrepreneurial attitude and will: universities need to increase their impact on the entrepreneurial spirit, especially the entrepreneurial attitude and will through activities to inspire students' entrepreneurship. These activities can be done during direct lectures in class, through

subject discussions, or through visual illustrations and discussions and practical proofs with students' current start-ups or stories of successful entrepreneurs (case studies). In addition, other communication channels such as activities of the universities' Youth Union, student association, business clubs, topical exchanges and talks with guests who are successful entrepreneurs... also will be an effective support source for developing students' start-up will, attitude, and inspiration.

- Establishing consulting groups to accompany students' start-up ideas. The main task of these groups is to accompany students, answer questions, and support students from the starting time when they first have an idea until it is completed, including any ideas that are not suitable or feasible will be advised by lecturers to move to other ideas. Based on the consulted ideas, every year, groups will select potential ideas to help students completing and sending them to compete at higher levels.

- Implementing programs to train students' start-up skills: universities also need to focus on training and practicing necessary skills for students such as soft skills, opportunity analysis skills, and financial analysis skills, forecasting and adaptation skills by regularly organizing extra-curricular classes on both short-term and long-term soft skills in university so that students can easily access them through self-organizing or collaborating with soft skills training centers such as Vietskill, Tam Viet, etc. In addition, the universities can establish Business Skills Clubs (refer to experiences from the BSC Club model of the Banking Academy), continuously inviting successful entrepreneurs and economic experts who have extensive experiences to teach students, opening large and small scaled contests inside and outside the universities such as business case analysis contests (refer to experiences from the Business School - National Economics University).

3.3.2. For students

- Students need to focus on knowledge of economics, business and entrepreneurship. Equipping yourself with knowledge about entrepreneurship, in addition to the foundation of scientific and technological knowledge will help increase students' perceptual abilities, improving their entrepreneurship intention. In addition, students need to actively take part in scientific research activities and accumulate business experiences in

society if possible, thereby cultivating leadership capacities, which is a driving force for entrepreneurship intension development because entrepreneurs are always associated with leadership capacity, mastery capacity, and the ability to coordinate a certain team/group.

- Students need to form motivation through awareness of the attractiveness of start-up opportunities, evaluate entrepreneurship capabilities, and then form start-up ideas, intentions plus passion to realize those start-up intentions.

- Actively participating in clubs and extra-curricular activities: participating in business groups and clubs will help students learn a lot of practical experiences while expanding their network of positive relationships for future business activities.

- Perseverance and hard working: The reason why perseverance is an important factor, because in the start-up process, not everyone can have success at the first time when they start business activities, there are people who fail many times but they do not give up, continuing to stand up to implement their ideas. It is the determination and perseverance in that person that creates certain successes. The reality has been proven that successful entrepreneurs are people who have a higher spirit of determination than ordinary people to overcome obstacles, and have more passion and perseverance than others to stand up from failures in a short time.

4. Conclusion

Through analyzing the current status of the student entrepreneurship movement in Thai Nguyen province, the article shows a picture of the current status of the student entrepreneurship movement in Thai Nguyen province recently; points out the constraints and reasons of constraint. The article makes a number of recommendations for components, universities and students in Thai Nguyen province. In practical terms, the article can contribute to helping educational managers who have more information and understanding to propose appropriate measures to promote student entrepreneurship movement at universities. The article simultaneously, give some specific recommendations to universities and students themselves to develop this movement increasingly

more strongly and more widely. However, for the student entrepreneurship movement at universities in Thai Nguyen province to be effective, the prerequisite is that there needs to be synchronous collaboration among the State - University - Entrepreneurship Supporting Community and potential entrepreneurial students themselves. Due to time and research budget constraints, the article cannot avoid some limitations such as surveyed sample size. In the near future, the author will focus on motivation and factors affecting the transition stage from entrepreneurship intention to actual start-up operation.

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