

## ABSTRACT

### *Fostering Students' Entrepreneurial Attitude Orientations: Challenges for Higher Education Institutions in Trinidad*

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Over the last decade or more, there has been an urgent international call for the fostering of students' entrepreneurial attitude orientations (EAOs), as part of an entrepreneurial development strategy. In assessing the nature of this challenge for higher education institutions (HEIs) in Trinidad, this study examined the factors that shape the EAOs of selected students from public and semi-public HEIs. Additionally, the study also explored for any variations in students' EAOs based on age, gender, ethnicity, income, and programme type. In so doing, the researcher tested the social cognitive theory (as an eclectic socio-psychological framework) and applied the concurrent nested mixed methodology design where in the latter the quantitative thread remained dominant. Using a survey, data were collected from a systematic random sample of 539 students. Responses were analyzed using t-tests, ANOVAs, Pearson's correlations, partial correlations, multiple regressions, and thematic analyses.

Generally, quantitative findings showed that students' perception of their entrepreneurial self-efficacy, cultural values, prior family business exposure, entrepreneurial education, and demographic factors had weak to moderate effects on their EAOs. Inverse relationships were found between students' income, their post-education intentions, and their EAOs. However, no significant differences in students' EAOs were found based on age, gender, and ethnicity. Statistically, students' perception of these factors accounted for approximately 26 percent of the variance observed in their EAOs, which pointed to possible meaningful contributions of social cognitive analyses. Qualitative findings showed that most students pointed to the significance of the informal education and formal prior exposure received from their family and work places. Together, these findings point to the need to develop multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary, entrepreneurial education programmes aimed at reorienting curricula (in both its content and focus), using dynamic pedagogical practices capable of fostering students' EAOs. These remain some of the challenges facing HEIs in Trinidad.

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