

When Intention is Not Enough: Explaining Academic Entrepreneurship in Research Teams

F. Javier Miranda

Full Professor, Universidad de Extremadura, Badajoz, Spain

Abstract:

Academic entrepreneurship has traditionally been analysed through intention-based models focused on individual-level determinants. However, growing evidence suggests that such approaches provide only a partial explanation of how entrepreneurial processes unfold within universities. In particular, they tend to overlook both the collective nature of academic work and the mechanisms that enable the translation of intention into action.

This study develops an integrative perspective on academic entrepreneurship that combines intention-based and capability-based approaches within a multi-level and multi-path framework. Drawing on empirical insights from a large-scale survey of university researchers, the analysis highlights three key arguments. First, entrepreneurial processes in academic settings are inherently collective, emerging from interactions within research teams rather than isolated individuals. Second, team entrepreneurial capability acts as a central mechanism through which relational and individual resources are transformed into collective intention. Third, the transition from intention to action is neither automatic nor homogeneous, as different configurations of individual and team-level factors give rise to distinct entrepreneurial pathways.

By bringing together these elements, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of academic entrepreneurship as a heterogeneous and capability-driven process. The findings suggest that both motivation and execution capacity must be considered to explain why some research-based opportunities lead to entrepreneurial outcomes while others remain unrealized.

Keywords:

Academic entrepreneurship, Research teams, Entrepreneurial behaviour, Innovation capabilities, Knowledge transfer, Collective processes.