

'Traditional' and 'Innovative' Potential Entrepreneurs among Portuguese Graduates: A Case Study

Ana Paula Marques

Associate Professor, PhD - Department of Sociology (University of Minho/Portugal)
Senior Researcher of Research Centre for the Social Sciences (CICS/UM)
amarques@ics.uminho.pt

Rita Moreira

PhD student (Foundation for Science and Technology – FCT)
Junior Researcher of Research Centre for the Social Sciences (CICS/UM)
rmoreira@ics.uminho.pt

Doi:10.5901/jesr.2013.v3n7p134

Abstract

If youth entrepreneurship is far from being the solution regarding unemployment, it is likely to be part of a response, fostering the access to the labour market, the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and the social tolerance for risk. Based on the research project "The Entrepreneurial Potentials at the University of Minho", and main results gathered both in quantitative and qualitative approaches (online survey administered to 283 graduates and in-depth interviews with 8 graduates from different scientific areas who finished the course between 2002 and 2008) we intend: 1) to present some reflections regarding the role of higher education to develop the entrepreneurial potential and also understand how activities in an academic context and a political environment (NSRF 2007-2013) may be useful to foster a more favorable atmosphere for innovation and entrepreneurship in the European context; 2) to discuss how academia can (or can not) change the lives of graduates, considering the fact that social capital is crucial to innovative sectors in order to provide intensive knowledge for starting-up a business, and women's options continue to remain anchored in the traditional sexual division of labour, in regard to the two main portraits of entrepreneurial potential identified in our research; 3) and discuss to what extent social capital, gender and the entrepreneurial potential of graduates can be an obstacle to innovation and how higher education contributes towards changing the economic patterns of specialization in Portugal.

Keywords: Higher education, Entrepreneur potential, Social and Sexual division of work, Case study

1. Introduction

If youth entrepreneurship is far from being the solution regarding unemployment, it is likely to be part of a response, fostering the access to the labour market, the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and the social tolerance for risk. In that sense, the policy of higher education and entrepreneurship in Portugal has been assumed as a national strategic priority to facilitate access to the labour market. It means that entrepreneurship brings new and important challenges to the University that are related to their ability that, together with other actors (economic, social, political), develop an entrepreneurial mind-set and an entrepreneurial culture and innovation. Such investment from universities in the promotion of entrepreneurship among graduates may contribute to the transformation of the productive specialisation profile of the Portuguese economy, especially by changing the business culture.

In turn, the profile of a graduate in Portugal is female in many areas of knowledge (53,4%), methods of access to employment, career development and cultural patterns associated with the organization, which is deeply dominated by male rationality and patriarchy, challenges the relationship between entrepreneurial characteristics, social resources, academic, professional and economic contexts, social and cultural environment.

The entrepreneurial potential concept we have tried to develop in this article has a wider perspective, based on two main components: one more dispositional, in the sense of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (1979), with its unconscious and "automatic" character, reflecting existence conditions and class history; and another component, more interpretative, rationally orientated for action and pluralist - based in the notions of *status* and social privilege employed by Weber (1978) - related to structural framework as well as to the social inequalities that can be observed in relation to different

buying powers and different identities in the family groups, namely from the *prestige* and *status* definitions in social hierarchy (e.g. education level, profession, lifestyle). In this perspective, the entrepreneurial potential is considered to involve various dimensions and a pluricausal nature, and may be influenced not only by symbolic-cultural configurations (cultural values and symbolic representations) but also by social capital, in particular due to the objective socio-professional and educational conditions that define the class structures of the family (occupational work system with different types of capital).

Thus, it will be important to understand to which point the focus on entrepreneurial potential centred in the social and gender inequalities among university graduates is inscribed in the logic of reproduction and validation of social inequalities in the framework of higher education policies. This assumption leads us to some relevant questions: to what extent does higher education maintain selectivity in its social recruiting pattern? What is the influence of social origin in the enterprising intention? Does gender influence entrepreneurial potential? Are there differences between courses or at least education fields chosen by those graduates with greater entrepreneurial potential?

In this paper we intend to test some possible answers for these questions, using the results from recent case study¹ conducted at the University of Minho, a Portuguese university located in the north of the country. This paper is structured into subsections addressing four main topics. In the first, some reflexions about selectivity patterns of Portuguese higher education system are addressed. In the second, we point out significant changes in the (re) configuration of higher education emphasising the role of entrepreneurship education. In the third, the exploration of substantial information allows us to characterize the socio-graphical profile of graduates, including their main motivations and preferred sectors for an entrepreneur activity. In the fourth, we present the structure of disposition for entrepreneurial activity by graduate's profile perceptions and point out that women's options continue to remain anchored in the traditional sexual division of labour, in regard to the two main portraits of entrepreneurial potential identified in our research.

2. Selectivity patterns and dispositions towards entrepreneurship

The selectivity of the higher education system, exercised according to the social origins of the families of their young candidates, has been a persistent trend during the past few decades. This trend, corroborated by various sociological researches carried out internationally (Wright, 1997; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 1972; Bourdieu, 1979) and nationally (Casanova, 1993; Fernandes, 2001; Machado *et al.*, 2003; Estanque & Nunes, 2003; Marques, 2006, 2007; Gonçalves, 2009) has been followed, in a yet feeble manner, by a process of progressive widening of the social base of recruitment, with the access of young students from families with relatively low educational and professional qualifications.

In many countries, including Portugal, it is possible to identify strong indicators that the various "elites" continue to perform a prominent role inside higher education, by means of a stratified higher education structure and protected positions in the labour market, or both (cf. Bourdieu, 1979; Balsa *et al.*, 2001; Brennan, 2002; Teichler, 2007). Regardless, there has been a progressive mitigation of social inequalities in the access to higher education, which has led to a *social recruiting double standard* (Machado *et al.*, 2003) or class dualism, but is not sufficient to constitute equal opportunities structures. In fact, cultural capital and the system of dispositions inherited from the family still operate as the social reproduction logic that acts as social selection mechanism (Marques & Moreira, 2011b).

One of the main axis of internal differentiation in the university system is its division in main areas of knowledge, which Machado *et al.* (2003) identify as a *prestige hierarchy socially attributed to the various areas* that cross the higher education field, which is translated into a social closure of certain education areas to students from families with less resources. Thus, in certain courses, such as medicine, law and architecture, an over-representation of students from families with high educational and economic capital persists.

Likewise, it is possible to verify high selectivity relative to education choices, for which feminine preferences explain, in great measure, the sexual replication of the social division of work. The predominance of gender stereotypes, based on a process of "naturalization" of gender roles (Bourdieu, 1998) contributes towards deepening the diversified and unequally valued presence of education paths in function of gender. Some authors talk about the "double effect of gender discrimination" (Cruz & Cruzeiro, 1995) or the "bad choices" (Grácio, 1997) made by women, due to the fact that their options focus on courses with a literary and humanist nature or due to their greater difficulty in accessing work and

¹ This paper is part of the research project entitled "The Entrepreneurial Potentials at the University of Minho" (2010-2012) in which it was intended, firstly, to address the shortcomings of existing empirical studies on the topic of entrepreneurship; and secondly, to understand the important role of higher education in developing knowledge and skills that influence the manner in which they shape the processes of professional transition.

in exercising professions with greater power and social prestige (Marques & Moreira, 2011a).

In the present article we shall cast a look on the social class origin of the graduates in order to understand their dispositions towards entrepreneurship. It is important for us to consider the role of family not only in the socialization process but, above all, as a social group endowed with different resources and varied social capital (e.g. economic, educational and cultural). In this perspective, it is admissible to accept that the social capital link based on family or other intimate relation links may generate different values, beliefs and confidence in the cognitive dimension, favouring the individual dispositions for entrepreneurship. Thus, the contact with business people among family or friends generates, as established by Bott (1976), more favourable perceptions of the convenience or feasibility of creating a personal business.

Adopting this theoretical approach, we have built a model of analysis of entrepreneurial intentions which, in very broad terms, operationalizes *i)* the relations between the characterization variables of the social origin of the family (social capital) of the graduates from University of Minho, *ii)* associating them to other factors that explain social inequalities, such as the education field and the gender of the graduates.

3. Academic entrepreneurship and policy environment

In the past few years, in Portugal as well as in the rest of Europe, entrepreneurship has been presented as one of the possible access ways to the labour market, having clearly become a professional transition alternative, particularly important for young individuals with higher qualifications. The problem of the substantial increase of the unemployment rate among higher education graduates presents new and important challenges to the University in regards to the employability of its graduates (ECOTEC, 2010; EC, 2009; Clark, 1998).

Notwithstanding the developments of the last decade, Europe still presents what is considered lower levels of exploitation of entrepreneurial potential, be that in terms of self-employment or creation of new businesses. Effectively, the data published in the *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor* (GEM, 2011) does not favour Europeans in regards to entrepreneurial initiative, especially in comparison to countries such as the U.S.A. and Japan. When analysing differences between the genders, it is possible to verify that it is mostly men who are involved in entrepreneurial activities or who declared their intention to start entrepreneurial activities. This discrepancy between the genders also presents itself in relation to the motivation for entrepreneurial activity, with more men than women declaring opportunity as the main reason to start a business; in an opposite situation, significantly, there is no gender disparity when the base of motivation is necessity (Marques & Moreira, 2011a).

The necessity of improving entrepreneurial and innovation capacities of European populations deserved special attention in three flagship initiatives of the current *Europe 2020* strategy for employment and sustainable growth: "Innovation Union", "Youth on the Move" and "An Agenda for new skills and jobs", with action programs such as *Youth@Work*² and *Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs*,³ currently in underway.

The promotion and support to qualified young entrepreneurship has been the aim of public employment policies in Portugal, with particular emphasis on the transversal strategic plan *Youth Impulse - Strategic Plan for the Promotion of Youth Employability and Support to the SME*⁴ and its measures "Passport to Entrepreneurship" and "Entrepreneurial Portugal". Both are measures in which self-employment or the creation of personal business gain relevance in the fight against unemployment or as access mechanisms for first jobs for young citizens with higher education qualifications. The support predicted in these programs aims to encourage entrepreneurship in this segment and make available specialized technical support (e.g. training; support in the elaboration of the business plan; monitoring and tutoring for the business), but also support for raising funds for the creation of businesses (e.g. financing, risk capital, micro-credit).

²This is a new action to fight youth unemployment. The main idea comprises in narrowing the relationship between young workers and small and medium businesses, promoting the search of these potential talents among SME employers and, simultaneously, promoting work in these companies as "a launching ramp for young people who are interested in becoming entrepreneurs".

³Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is a new European exchange programme that aims to support new or future business people in acquiring relevant competences for the management of a small or medium business and assist experienced businessmen or businesswomen who seek new perspectives and international cooperation opportunities. Its objective is to foster entrepreneurship and competitiveness as well as the internationalisation of companies in the European Union.

⁴The Youth Impulse programme presents a wide set of measures to fight youth unemployment. Information available in: <http://www.portugal.gov.pt>.

4. Entrepreneurial potential: social origin, gender and educational field

4.1 Research design

In this point we will advance with the presentation of some of the main aspects obtained in the research "The Entrepreneurial potentials at the University of Minho (2010-2012)". The methodological design combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In the first methodological stage, an online survey was applied to a universe of 1,419 graduates from the University of Minho who terminated their course between 2002 and 2008. These graduates are from 43 courses that were grouped into six scientific areas, according to the Portuguese National Classification of Education and Training Areas (2008) as: "Education", "Humanities", "Social Sciences and Law", "Science and Computing", "Engineering" and "Health and social care". The obtained sample resulted in a 20% share quota, totalling 283 valid surveys. In the second methodological stage, in-depth interviews of the graduates who participated in the first stage of this research, especially those with "high entrepreneurial potential" (in total 8 interviews) took place. Analysing interview data, it was possible to stress some information concerning main motivations and projects for self-employment/business.

4.2 Educational field and gender

The data presented in table 1 shows us an elevated entrepreneurial potential among the graduates inquired - the majority (72%) declares having desired/considered creating their own business at some point of their path. However, it is possible to notice that the female graduates have a slightly lower propensity to self-employment/business (67%) in comparison to the male graduates (80%). In this case, the female graduates from the "Humanities" field (50%) demonstrated the least interest in materializing a business project. This lower propensity of the female gender for entrepreneurship has been corroborated in research previously carried out in family companies, demonstrating that the men in these families are socialized for a high position in the companies from a very tender age, unlike the women (Ussman, 1998).

Table 1: Entrepreneurial intention by educational field and sex (%)

Educational field	Education	72.9
	Humanities	50.0
	Social Sciences and Law	76.9
	Sciences and Information Technology	67.3
	Engineering	75.0
	Health and social protection	66.7
Sex	Masculine	79.8
	Feminine	67.9
Total		72%
(N)		197

Source: Potential of entrepreneurship at UM Survey (2010)

Also, table 1 shows that the predisposition for entrepreneurship has greater expression in the "Social Sciences and Law" (77%), Engineering (75%) and "Education" (73%) fields.⁵ According to the respondents, this is mainly due to a desire for new challenges and for making more money, associated to difficulties finding jobs in the field of graduation.

In relation to the preferred activity sectors and to the motivations for the creation of self-employment/business, there are differences according to gender and field of education. With the exception of a few courses, there is a concentration of female "Social Sciences" and "Education" graduates in a restricted set of activity sectors associated to care, such as "Education, Health and Social Action" and "Retail, Hospitality and Catering". Inversely, the preferences of male graduates from the "Engineering" courses are associated to the sectors of "Technology" and "Financial Activities, Real State, Rent and Corporate Services".

⁵This desire to move on to self-employment/business presents itself with more significance in the Social Communication, Law and Public Administration, Architecture and Civil Engineering courses.

A similar trend can be seen in relation to the motivation for entrepreneurial activities, with the difficulty in finding jobs in the graduation sector and better conciliation between family and professional life as important reasons to start a business appearing more often among female graduates in the "Social Sciences" and "Education" fields than among male graduates. Among the later, it is possible to notice that motivation is based on individual opportunities related to instrumental dimensions of the work involved, especially aspects such as the desire for new challenges, the perspective of higher earnings, the idea for a new product or service; despite the lack of great disparities between the genders, these aspects are more significant among male graduates in the "Engineering" field.

4.3 Social Origin

The analysis of the social origin of the respondents starts from a privileged base of analysis: the family, where the sharing of resources and lifestyles can take different configurations and differentiate the relative positions that its members occupy in the structural space of social. In the case of our research, the sociologically relevant aspects involved in the analysis of the social origins of University of Minho graduates implied the use of two types of indicators: socio-professional and socio-educational indicators (Bourdieu, 1979; Costa, 1999; Machado *et al.*, 2003).

Firstly, it is important to highlight that the analysis of the information resulting from our research has shown little significant statistic correlation between the entrepreneurial intentions of the respondents and the educational level of both their parents⁶. However, a finer analysis of the information collected shows that those graduates whose parents possess higher educational capital (secondary and higher education) are more represented than those from families with parents who only completed the compulsory education levels⁷, even if this difference is not very relevant in comparative terms. This can be partially explained by the crossing of the entrepreneurial intention with various factors. We can refer, for example, to the higher education levels of the parents of "Social Sciences and Law" and "Engineering" graduates, who, despite the differences among the courses, have shown greater propensity for the execution of self-employment/business projects. In the opposite direction, "Humanities" graduates are also those who come from domestic groups with lower education levels and present the lowest intention levels for entrepreneurship. In general, the data obtained demonstrates a connection, although slight, between the propensity for entrepreneurship, the area of graduation of the respondents and the educational level of their parents.

According to the data presented in table 2, it is possible to observe that families with higher global capital are more represented among the graduates with higher entrepreneurial potential. If we consider the two classes with higher volume of resources - "Businesspeople, Directors and Liberal Professionals" and "Technical and Framework Professionals" - it is possible to notice that these present greater entrepreneurship intention when compared to other professional groups. It is important to stress that in the case of "Factory Workers" there is a contrasting pattern between the two genders, with the entrepreneurial intention of sons influenced by the father figure.

In global terms, the data reveals that there is an important correlation between the professional group where the father is inserted and entrepreneurial intention. A possible explanation for this fact relates to the greater influence of fathers, in comparison to mothers, when it comes to the choice and transmission of professions to descendants. This idea is shared by Bourdieu (1979), who mentions that the correlation between one practice and the social origin (assessed by the father's position) results from a double effect: the effect of the influence exercised directly by the family or by the original conditions of existence and that of the social trajectory itself, about its dispositions and opinions. This latter is, by itself, an essential dimension of the first, since the trajectory of the father contributes to form the original experience of dynamic insertion in the social world (Marques & Moreira, 2011b).

Table 2: Entrepreneurial intention by socio-professional class of parents (%)

Socio-professional class of the parents ⁸	Entrepreneurial Potential		
	Yes	No	Total

⁶ Father ($\chi^2=4.80$; $V=0.134$; $p=0.187$) Mother ($\chi^2=1.59$; $V=0.077$; $p=0.662$).

⁷In regards to the educational level of the parents, we decided to consider for our analysis the compulsory education period of 9 years, enforced since January 1st 1981. This situation was altered recently by law no. 85/2009, which established a compulsory education period of 12 years (12nd grade) or until age 18.

⁸It is important to mention that, within the composition of the variable socio-professional class of the parents (father and mother), we have combined the great profession groups of the National Professions Classification (CNP/94) and of the Portuguese Professions Classification (CPP/2010).

Businesspeople, directors and liberal professionals	Father (1)	77.5	22.5	100
	Mother	61.1	38.9	100
Technical and framework professionals	Father	82.1	17.9	100
	Mother	83	17	100
Independent workers	Father	38.9	61.1	100
	Mother	71.4	28.6	100
Factory workers	Father	76.2	23.8	100
	Mother	63.9	36.4	100
Executing employees	Father	53.3	46.7	100
	Mother	66.7	33.3	100
Other (non-classifiable)	Father	75	25	100
	Mother	-	-	-
Total	Father (1)	(N) 130	(N) 49	(N) 179
		72.6	24.7	100
	Mother (2)	(N) 93	(N) 35	(N) 128
		72.7	27.3	100

(1) ($\chi^2=16.43$; $V=0.303$; $p=0.006$)

(2) ($\chi^2=5.36$; $V=0.205$; $p=0.252$)

Source: Potential of entrepreneurship at UM Survey (2010)

For those reasons, it is not strange to find a greater predisposition for entrepreneurship among graduates from the two groups with more resources and more expression in our sample: the "Businesspeople, Directors and Liberal Professionals" and the "Technical and Framework Professionals". The resources detained by these groups are, in most cases, economic resources originated in business activities and management positions (in the public and private sectors) and not so much due to the possession of high levels of education (considering that the global percentage of fathers and mothers with academic background does not surpass 17% and 19%, respectively). This idea is reinforced if we pay attention to the high percentage of parents that only completed their compulsory education levels, a number that surpasses 65% in both cases (67% of fathers and 70% of mothers).

5. 'Traditional' and 'innovative' profiles of potential entrepreneurs

Based on the analysis carried out in the preceding items, we will now present the two type-profiles that result from the operationalization of our analysis model, seeking to answer the main question posed by this work, which regards the different relations between social capital (position of the family of origin in the class structure), gender and the predisposition for entrepreneurship, consubstantiated in the idea of creation of self-employment/business. Beyond the social characterization factors (social origin and gender of the graduates), other aspects have been considered in this typological test, namely the preferential sectors and the motivations for carrying out a self-employment/business project.

We must also consider that the construction of this typological essay regards only the cases of graduates who revealed high entrepreneurial potential, that is, those individuals who at some point of their individual path have considered and/or desired the creation of a self-employment project or personal business. The key indicators that were the base of this essay enabled us to find not only common features among the respondents, but also the differentiating aspects and the singularities of each profile in relation to entrepreneurial potential. This proposal was supported by the crossing of information collected in two separate stages of the research⁹, as we have referred previously.

Table 3 summarizes the distribution of the population with high entrepreneurial potential in homogeneous groups, according to the two profiles identified: *Traditional entrepreneur potential* and *Innovative entrepreneur potential*.

The first profile, *Traditional entrepreneur potential*, is composed of a majority of women from two fields: "Social Sciences and Law" (in the specific case of the Law course, more traditionally orientated for the exercise of liberal professions) and "Education". Despite a double pattern of social recruitment, this profile encompasses young women from families with lower social capital, characterised by the low educational level of the parents (except in the case of the Law course) and composed of "Businesspeople, Directors, Liberal Professionals" and "Technical and Framework Professionals" or "Factory Workers". These individuals generally have ambitions of a self-employment/business project

⁹ The type-profiles are supported by a simple statistical analysis of the information collected in the online surveys, as well as in the analysis of the contents obtained in the in-depth interviews.

for their professional future, but prefer to take this step in a set of restricted professional sets that are close to the traditional definition of "feminized" sectors, such as "Education, Health and Social Action" and "Retail, Hospitality and Catering". That is clear in the following statement of an interviewed woman: "My business sector is clothing, that is, creating a clothing line (...) we will bet on this project because we have a certain facility, in other words, financial facility, (this project) did not require much investment (...). This project is small, i.e., is not anything new ... we are trying something and seeing if it works" (E7, 30 year old Female, Education). Another aspect to consider in this profile is its position in relation to entrepreneurial activity, with the difficulty in graduates finding a job and better conciliation between family and professional life appearing as the main reasons to advance with self-employment/business. In fact, the 2nd woman interviewed revealed that the choice for entrepreneurship appears as an alternative to unemployment: (...) Look ... I'd liked, for example to start-up a FTA Leisure Centre (Free Time Activities), or a kindergarten. For now, because I really love children... and I think it is increasingly difficult to find employment (...) and I am going to have a son and I know it is increasingly difficult to find a kindergarten, for example, "(13, Female, Sociology). As a result, in this profile, the motives to start entrepreneurial activities are more orientated by economic necessity, that is, as an alternative to unemployment and a way to ensure economic subsistence when jobs in an individual's graduation field are hard to find.

Table 3: Structure of entrepreneurial dispositions by graduate profiles¹⁰

Structure of entrepreneurial intentions	Type-profiles	
	Profile 1 Traditional entrepreneur potential	Profile 2 Innovative entrepreneur potential
Social Origin	Low educational level of parents From the families of Factory Workers and Unqualified Workers	Higher education capital From the families of Businesspeople, Directors, Liberal Professionals Medium and High Technical Levels
Educational field	Social Sciences Education	Engineering
Sex	Feminine	Masculine
Sector of activities preferred for self-employment/business	Traditional, low skilled and feminized work: - Education, Health and Social Action - Retail, Hospitality and Catering	Innovative, skilled and masculinized work: - Technology and Science: - Financial Activities, Consulting, Real Estate, Rent and Corporate Services
Motivation for self-employment/business	Means to ensure economic subsistence: - difficulty finding jobs in the field of graduation - better conciliation between family and professional life	Opportunity and Innovation, ambition to apply the knowledge gained in the graduate course: - desire for new challenges; - autonomy (being their own boss); - perspective of earning more money; - ideas for a new product/service.

Source: Potential of entrepreneurship at UM Survey (2010) and in-depth interviews (2011)

The second profile, *Innovative entrepreneur potential*, comprehends, in their majority, male graduates from courses in the "Engineering" field. This is also a group that presents a double pattern of recruitment in terms of social origin, despite the majority of students coming from families that possess more social capital, with the type-profile defined by higher educational level among the parents, who belong, in their majority, to the "Businesspeople, Directors, Liberal Professionals", "Technical and Framework Professionals" or "Factory Workers" family groups. As the name suggests, the group of individuals that comprise this profile invest in the development of more innovative business opportunities, preferring knowledge-intensive sectors and strategic areas of scientific and technological development, a fact that suggests more involvement in activity domains that make it possible for them to mobilize all their potential and apply the knowledge gained in their university courses. Among their preferences for the creation of self-employment/business employment stand out the sectors of "Information and Communication Technologies", "Biotechnologies" and "Financial Activities, Real Estate, Rent and Corporate Services", among others. We can underline this trend looking at the following

¹⁰ It is important to mention that, beyond these two profiles of entrepreneurial intention, there may be others that do not differentiate from a statistical point of view, but which may be significant from the perspective of deeper sociological analysis.

statement obtained from an interviewed man: "I chose to create a company related to environmental engineering services, because of the basic training and knowledge that I have in this area (...) I thought that we could foster better services. I also had personal research and development projects so it made sense for us to launch this service "(E8, 30 year old male, Environmental Engineering); and in another statement: "I can give several reasons to advance, but none is a matter of employability. It is really for enjoyment (...) I'm just not able to teach, I can do other things, I have a talent for that (...)" (I2, Man, Biology/Geology Teaching). As for the motivational base for self-employment/business, in this group it is possible to verify that it is related to opportunity and justified by aspects, such as the desire for new challenges and autonomy, the perspective of earning more money and the will to innovate with new products or services.

6. Final notes

The present paper was intended to essay the heuristic potential of a typological portrait of entrepreneurial intentions. The results collected in our research point to an important relation between the entrepreneurial intention and the social origin, field of education and gender of the graduates of the University of Minho that amassed our study. This data also shows that the higher social capital of the male graduates of the "Engineering" courses is decisive for the choice of innovative and knowledge-intensive sectors for the creation of a business; on the other hand, it is possible to notice that the feminine options of "Social Sciences" and "Education" graduates are still based in the traditional model of sexual division of labour, with individuals preferring to create self-employment/business in more "feminized" activity sectors related to care, as previously shown.

In truth, the predisposition for entrepreneurship is a consequence of various factors and different social capitals. The substantive analysis of the results of the entrepreneurial potential survey leads us to consider that the choices made by the graduates throughout their academic paths vary according to their preferences and social origins, which in turn make it possible to glimpse the way in which they unequally position themselves in relation to entrepreneurial intention.

Therefore, it seems plausible to assume that the entrepreneurship strand is particularly decisive in the game of social opportunities and obstacles in current days, with expectations that inequalities based on gender or scientific study field, in the current context of economic crisis and job instability/precariousness, become an obstacle to innovation and to the reconversion of the productive sectors of our country, as well as accentuating the social labour division and contributing for the reproduction of social inequality in the labour market. In this particular context, the exploration of two type-profiles of potential entrepreneurs (traditional vs. innovative) and some testimonials extracted from the in-depth interviews led us to question to which point the Academy, namely the academic trajectory, may effectively break (vertical and horizontal) professional and occupational segregation or, in contrary, configure itself to reproduce social inequalities in the labour market.

Finally, it is important to add that it would be interesting for future sociological research to deepen the concept of entrepreneurial potential, recurring to a multidimensional perspective that, in parallel to social origin, consider the importance of diversified factors and contexts (social, educational, cultural, political, economic) for the configuration of new entrepreneurial and innovative trajectories in higher education.

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