

THE ART OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A pedagogic initiative of the Rosario which is unique in Colombia

The wager of the President of the University, José Alejandro Cheyne García, is on entrepreneurship. He is convinced that training persistent and talented entrepreneurs, within an innovative pedagogy which involves art, is the key to Colombia's progress.

By: Inés Elvira Ospina

Photos: Leonardo Parra, Alberto Sierra

The President of the Universidad del Rosario, José Alejandro Cheyne García, is convinced that any person can be an entrepreneur, entrepreneurship is a right and thus universities have an obligation to teach it. Guided by these three ideas and with an innovative pedagogy, the institution teaches and accompanies the young people who have decided to make entrepreneurship their life project.

The path to this pedagogical wager began in the School of Management and Business, where, to their surprise, the students found that all of the walls of the seat of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation campus were like a big canvas painted by the Impressionists. We refer to the pedagogical innovation of *The Art of Entrepreneurship*, a strategy which seeks to sensitize young men and women to art and calls on them to open their minds beyond everyday concerns, which, for the President of the University, is

one of the skills which an entrepreneur should have: The ability to take a "fresh look" at his or her surroundings. This relationship between art and entrepreneurship opened the way for a different training in which skills are developed in an integral manner, supported by settings which are positive for entrepreneurs.

President Cheyne is confident that this is the way out of that vicious circle of unemployment and poverty which the country is trapped in, since history has shown how countries in crisis have moved ahead thanks to what is known as the capitalism of entrepreneurship, which is none other than the driving force of the different enterprises which arise from ordinary persons. In the following interview with *Advances in Science*, the President explains what has been done in this field, how it has been done, the results and the plans to train the most talented entrepreneurs.





Advances in Science (AS): Entrepreneurship has always existed, but how has it changed in recent years?

José Alejandro Cheyne (JAC): Several decades ago, people didn't talk about entrepreneurship, they talked about the DNA of entrepreneurship. "Ever since he was little, that boy has been a great businessman," mothers would say. Then, it was believed that there were a number of circumstances which drove a person to become an entrepreneur, like having been born into a family of entrepreneurs. So, we all thought that it was a question of being very gifted and only for those with a very high I.Q.

That approach radically changed when it was understood that we can all be entrepreneurs. That we don't have to come from a business background, that it hasn't anything to do with our gender or socio-economic conditions, but is within the reach of ordinary men and women because entrepreneurship is a right. And in Colombia it is: If you have an entrepreneurial project, all you to have to do is meet the requirements of a Chamber of Commerce and begin.

AS: Speaking of that, should universities teach it in their programs?

JAC: Yes, and that is why we have that strategy in the university. A number of authors believe that entrepreneurship is an obligation, and in line with that premise, what the universities must do is present entrepreneurship to their students and leave it to them to decide whether or not they turn it into their life project. That is, entrepreneurship has a triple dimension: It is for everyone, it is a right and it is an obligation.

AS: Is that the key to success: Making entrepreneurship your life project?

JAC: People talk about two kinds of entrepreneurs: The person who is one out of necessity and the one who sees an opportunity. The first is the person who, for example, loses his job and begins an informal business without planning or foresight: He or she does not have a process which



“The entrepreneur needs to have the ability to think outside of the box, to see reality with a different optics, a skill which art strengthens”: José Alejandro Cheyne.



is systematic, organized or planned. The second kind is just the opposite: When the person sees an opportunity and follows an organized process to ensure its success.

This difference explains what is happening in Colombia. The country is always ranked at one of the top places for entrepreneurship in the world in terms of the creation of companies, but it also is one of the leaders in their closure. That is why we must wager on the second kind of entrepreneurs, not those who do it by necessity, although we should acknowledge their value, because there are major entrepreneurs who start with empty pockets and are now great businessmen.

AS: How do you teach entrepreneurship?

JAC: Our method is not the usual one. We do not teach our students how to draft financial or business plans. What we do is to involve ourselves in the life project of the youngsters and help them to discover if entrepreneurship is or is not their life project.

Art allows us to discover their characteristic talents and awaken the sensibility of the people who perceive it. Often, the entrepreneur does not see business opportunities because he is not sensitive to the needs of people. That was the idea which decided us to promote entrepreneurship through the work and paintings of Impressionists like Monet, Renoir, van Gogh and others.

AS: What skills does art hone for entrepreneurs?

JAC: The entrepreneur needs to have the ability to think outside of the box, to see reality with a

different optics, a skill which art strengthens. He or she must work in a team, promote an entrepreneurship of solidarity which allows the person to work with others and we can learn a lot about that from the Impressionists. In their era, artists usually painted in black-and-white in their studios and the Impressionists decided to use colors and paint in the open air. What they did is admirable because their paintings were not exhibited in art galleries – people even made fun of them, which led them to work as a team. They joined together and supported each other in order to move forward. The same happens to entrepreneurs: Without a team, they go bust. An entrepreneur who begins on his own and works on his own closes his business on his own.

The third skill they have in common is a limitless surrender to their work. In his short life, van Gogh painted more than 800 pictures and Renoir, even at the height of his glory, continued to paint despite his chronic arthritis. The entrepreneur cannot think of limiting his work or stick to a timetable of eight hours and always relax on the weekends.

AS: How did you implement the Art of Entrepreneurship? What were the results?

JAC: We surprised the students at the seat of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation campus when we filled the walls of its corridors with pictures by the Impressionists and direct messages about entrepreneurship. A year after the Art of Entrepreneurship started, the students who wanted to be entrepreneurs multiplied by three.

AS: How you work with those entrepreneurs?

JAC: First, we undertake a process to sensitize them to entrepreneurship and those who decide that this will be their life project receive an additional training, at no cost, which works on their skills. Later we help and accompany them in the process of starting their company, and we support those who already have one in the process of making it grow.



Also, those who accompany them are not only our professors, but all of the actors who surround them. We organize activities and invite their families and successful entrepreneurs in order to support that training.

AS: Entrepreneurs often stop due to the circumstances which surround them. How do you prepare them to not “give up”?

JAC: That is known as a negative externality, that is, factors like uncertainty, a lack of infrastructure or little access to funding, all of which do not allow them to consolidate their enterprise. That is why you have to work on building an ecosystem which is in the hands of the State, but also in the hands of entrepreneurs and the private sector.

For example, we made an alliance, called *Mentes Valientes* (Courageous Minds), with the Centro Comercial Santafé (shopping center) in Bogotá, in which we were responsible for the pedagogy and the shopping center provided us, for several months, with venues to display and commercialize the products and services of different business ventures.

We are also going to create an entrepreneurship fund, so that there is an economic support, because we understand that every entrepreneur needs a supportive push.

AS: Part of that ecosystem are your Laboratories of Entrepreneurship. What are they?

JAC: They are laboratories at the service of entrepreneurs, so that they can undertake their process of learning and investigation there. The total investment is thirty thousand millions of pesos (approximately USD \$8,969,000) of which ten thousands were already invested in the first laboratories, which were opened last year.

The “*Shopper Lab*” and the Laboratory of Organizational Behavior are already functioning at the seat of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation campus. We expect the others to

be opened next year. They are the Laboratory of Logistics, with the whole supply chain; the Laboratory of Innovation, with 3-D printers and other leading-edge technologies; and one for Health Administration.

AS: What is the Masters in Entrepreneurship and Innovation?

JAC: There was a demand for formal programs, training and the teaching of skills. Hence, we created the only Masters in Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Colombia, which prepares the student during a period of 14 months and he or she only graduates when his or her enterprise is working and shows results in terms of sales and so forth.

AS: What is the biggest challenge entrepreneurship faces?

JAC: Strong and serious research, which is barely beginning. The problem is that entrepreneurs work at top speed and investigation barely reacts; but it is necessary so that it can be the foundation and linked with entrepreneurship in order to work on different challenges and problems.

Thus, José Alejandro Cheyne, who became the President of the University in October, 2018, has made this wager, unique in Colombia, to train a new generation of entrepreneurs, which, in the short term, will permeate all of the areas of knowledge and extend to all of the programs which are taught at the Rosario, because everyone can be an entrepreneur, from doctors to economists. ■