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The two academic directors of the Entrepreneurship Platform at Copenhagen Business School: Professor Daniel Hjorth and associate professor Serden Ozcan.
Photo: Christoffer Regild

From invention to innovation: The entrepreneurial process in between the two

In a joint interview to introduce the Entrepreneurship Platform, Professor Daniel Hjorth and Associate Professor Serden Ozcan, the two academic directors of the platform, highlight how entrepreneurship research and education at Copenhagen Business School can collaborate with companies and the public sector to organise knowledge and processes in order to generate innovation. The Entrepreneurship Platform offers a way for companies and the public sector to tap into useful knowledge and dialogues. But it is a two-way process. The two academic directors invite corporate and public sector leaders to cooperate with them to secure that the resources and com-

petencies of Copenhagen Business School are fully utilised and continuously targeted to match the ever-changing needs of businesses and society.

By Irene Houstrup

► **INTERVIEW** One way to understand entrepreneurship is to see it as the process of taking an idea from invention to innovation, according to Daniel Hjorth, professor of entrepreneurship and organisation in the Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy and one of the two academic directors of the Entrepreneurship Platform at Copenhagen Business School (CBS). His

Knowledge production has become central in our post-industrial society, and the Entrepreneurship Platform at CBS has the potential to play an important role as a knowledge generator and by collaborating with companies and the public sector to organise the entrepreneurial processes,' says Daniel Hjorth, professor of Entrepreneurship and Organisation at the Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy, CBS.

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favourite definition of entrepreneurship is 'the creation of organisation between invention and innovation', that is, the organisation of the knowledge, funding, processes etc. that are needed for the innovation to succeed.

'Knowledge production has become central in our post-industrial society, and the Entrepreneurship Platform at CBS has the potential to play an important role as a knowledge generator and by collaborating with companies and the public sector to organise the entrepreneurial processes,' says Daniel Hjorth.

Serden Ozcan, associate professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Department of Innovation and Organizational Economics and the other academic director of the Entrepreneurship Platform, adds,

'We want to transfer knowledge to society and create innovation. With the Entrepreneurship Platform we have built a single point of entry to facilitate interaction and dialogue with society and business. And we invite companies as well as the public sector to bring their problems or challenges to us.'

Two-way process

According to the two academic directors of the Entrepreneurship Platform, CBS generates valuable knowledge to society and businesses. However, they both emphasise that it is a two-way process: CBS greatly benefits from input and dialogue with companies and public organisations in order to optimise the utilisation of its resources and knowledge pool and continuously target the school's educational programmes to match the ever-changing needs of businesses and society.

They are both convinced that in the future it will be important for innovative companies and public organisations to have closer ties to business universities, as the research community here has updated insight into trends and societal developments. Business universities can offer ways for companies and organisations to tap into useful knowledge and dialogues.

Real business challenges integrated into education

Both Serden Ozcan and Daniel Hjorth emphasise that there is a constant interplay between education and research at CBS, and that this exchange can be valuable both for companies and organisations for CBS on many different levels.

Daniel Hjorth mentions the partnership with Bombardier, a global leader in urban mobility solutions as an example: 'Bombardier introduces CBS to a number of business-related challenges where they are interested in the specific quality of problem-solving that is distinctly academic and provided by students. They can think more freely than consultants and differently than experienced employees. This might involve challenges such as, 'how do we handle this innovation process or sales challenge,' 'how do we sell trams to developing countries when they don't have any money,' 'how do we enter the third world when they don't have a monetary economy,' etc. Some of our students work in depth with these challenges throughout the two-year master's programme in a close relationship with Bombardier. In addition, people from Bombardier come to CBS and enrich our lectures about innovation etc.'

He adds that this collaboration inspires researchers from CBS to develop interesting and relevant research questions that may lead to case studies. Initially, these case studies may be developed for teaching purposes. But in the process of creating these cases, a great deal of material is generated that can easily form the basis of a research analysis or a paper for publication in scholarly journals.

'This way, real business challenges are integrated into the entrepreneurial education at CBS, and the students work with the same issues about business model innovation and organisational change as Chief Innovation Officer Martin Ertl at Bombardier. The result is a very natural and fertile exchange between business, education and research,' says Daniel Hjorth.

He points out that some of the students in the programme enter internships in the company, and some write their final thesis on the basis of company-related topics and issues. The company

may also choose to employ some of the students as intrapreneurs or innovation experts after their graduation.

‘Within this kind of relationship, the main focus is how we can create a new learning process together. And both CBS and the company, in this case Bombardier, receives valuable knowledge in return for its engagement in the relationship,’ says Daniel Hjorth, and continues,

‘Via the entrepreneurship educational programme, we as a business university are becoming more involved in the challenges of society and business, as real problems are detected and integrated into the education.’

Research in companies can generate innovation

According to Daniel Hjorth, a central question in entrepreneurship is, ‘What is the business model that can bring the business idea to its full potential?’ He points out that CBS entrepreneurship research and education can help companies and the public sector organise knowledge and processes in order to attempt to answer this question and generate innovation.

At Symbion, a Danish science park and incubator, CBS researchers and PhD students are looking into the design of Symbion’s learning programmes for start-ups in order to investigate the knowledge input start-ups receive to be able to build a strong business with growth capacity.

‘The industrial PhD scheme is a very efficient way to generate new knowledge for companies and promote their innovation. CBS has had PhD students employed by for example Dong Energy and Tryg to investigate how philosophical questions can help the company’s ability to improve knowledge sharing, motivation etc. in the field of HR. It’s a structured learning process that is oriented towards the conceptual level of the business perspective rather than the development of a new product, for example,’ says Daniel Hjorth.

Other examples of collaboration between entrepreneurship researchers and companies includes: research projects for compa-

nies, for example an eighteen-month project that involved studying an incubator for creative industries in Lund; leadership development programmes, where CBS contributes with research-based knowledge about entrepreneurship; and the developing of case studies of companies like VIPP and e-Types.

CBS also organises and hosts the Copenhagen Innovation Symposium, where practitioners and academics meet to discuss innovation challenges. The event has been held every second year since 2008.

CBS points out societal issues

Serden Ozcan sees yet another important future role of the Entrepreneurship Platform in highlighting unaddressed problems in society – for instance the lack of female entrepreneurs in Denmark.

The Entrepreneurship Platform recently organised an event at CBS with 23 Chinese women, who came to talk about development programmes in China that have given them the impetus to start their own business. According to Serden Ozcan, these programmes have focused on developing the women’s potential. The female entrepreneurs in China contribute to growth, they innovate, and they are represented in a wider range of industries than Danish female entrepreneurs.

‘When it comes to entrepreneurship, the Danish women are lagging behind both China and the rest of Europe – Sweden and Holland in particular. Every time a Danish woman starts a new business, 2.7 Dutch women do the same, and 1.55 Swedish women. With our event about women and entrepreneurship, we wanted to address this societal problem and initiate a dialogue about this issue, both internally at CBS and in society at large,’ says Serden Ozcan.

Heterogeneity is a source of creativity

‘The cooperation between companies and business universities is a matter of co-producing knowledge. Heterogeneity is a source of creativity. An organisation or a company – and this of course



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includes an organisation such as CBS – often develops a homogenous culture, where it is difficult to create something new. That makes it valuable to cooperate with someone who represents a generative difference,' says Daniel Hjorth.

He believes that researchers are often able to articulate the situation the company is facing in a way that is not possible for the company itself, because the researcher possesses analytical competencies and the conceptual vocabulary that comes from working in a knowledge/research environment.

According to Daniel Hjorth, research enables the company to handle, for example, an innovation process in a new way by offering new perspectives on their situation. Similarly, the employees of an organisation are able to frame and articulate problems in ways that will not be generated from a university context. Therefore, if this dialogue is nurtured by a willingness to learn, both parties can go farther than if they had worked on their own, Daniel Hjorth explains.

'It is often the articulation of something in a new language that resolves an issue or leads to new ideas. In the open formulation of the challenge or the problem that research enables, 'the new' is articulated. That is often valuable to companies, because this open formulation points to something they had not discovered themselves,' says Daniel Hjorth, and continues,

'In the ideal partnership between company and business university, the whole point is the source of new knowledge that lies in the 'odd' questions that researchers ask. Often, that leads to a new idea and a new challenge for the company. Which in turn triggers learning processes that hopefully lead to new business opportunities for the company.'

In Daniel Hjorth's view, the dialogue is paramount: 'The need to develop a new language and to think differently is also stimulated by experiencing challenges related to existing practices in companies. When the new language emerges and develops, it is also crucial to receive feedback from experienced professionals. That initiates a generative conversation, which usually results in new knowledge that is valuable for both parties,' he says.

enter Entrepreneurship Research and Education Magazine

enter Entrepreneurship Research and Education Magazine is a new online magazine from the Entrepreneurship Platform at CBS. enter aims to offer quick and accessible insight into entrepreneurship research and knowledge at CBS and to bring the research and educational landscape at CBS into a more intense dialogue with business and society.

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CBS ENTREPRENEURSHIP PLATFORM

Copenhagen Business School (CBS) established the Entrepreneurship Platform in spring 2013. The platform integrates and coordinates entrepreneurship research, education and outreach activities at CBS and is a single point of entry for entrepreneurship at the Copenhagen Business School.

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