



*Mirjam van Praag, The Maersk McKinney Møller Professor of Entrepreneurship, is looking forward to contributing to further developments within the field of entrepreneurship at CBS.
Photo: Christoffer Regild*

Is entrepreneurship nature or nurture?

Entrepreneurship researcher, Professor Mirjam van Praag was recently appointed Maersk Mc-Kinney Møller Professor of Entrepreneurship at Copenhagen Business School (CBS). The appointment aims to strengthen CBS' research and education activities within entrepreneurship. Mirjam van Praag's weighty research is centred on what makes entrepreneurs successful – nature or nurture – as well as the impact of entrepreneurial education and the effective composition of start-up teams. Some of her recent research suggests that environment, or nurture, has a strong effect on entrepreneurship, which, in her view, is a good motivation for policy and education initiatives that foster entrepreneurship.

By Irene Houstrup

▲ **PORTRAIT** Entrepreneurship Professor Mirjam van Praag was rather pleased when one of her recent research projects, a large study of adoptees in Sweden, showed that not only genes but also environment determines entrepreneurship. The study of the entrepreneurial outcome of adoptees found that both biological parents (nature) and adoptive parents (nurture) have a strong effect on entrepreneurship. Yet, the effect of the adoptive parents is twice as big as the effect of biological parents.

'This shows us that nurture, or environment, is important. Further investigation suggests that the nurturing parents affect their children by being role models,' says Mirjam van Praag and adds:

'It would be discouraging for policy makers and educators in entrepreneurship, had we found that nature affects entrepreneurship, and nurture does not. However, evidence of the fact that the environment plays a large role is a better motivation for both policy and education fostering entrepreneurship.'

From labour economics to entrepreneurship

Originally trained as an econometrician and interested in labour economics, as a PhD student Mirjam van Praag was intrigued by the 10 percent of the workforce who are not employees and who, as entrepreneurs, have a greater impact on growth, innovation and employment than the remaining 90 percent. Ever since, her research has focused on what it is that makes entrepreneurs successful. She studies the effects of heredity and environment in relation to entrepreneurial success, the impact of education as well as the effect of teams and behavioural characteristics of entrepreneurs, among other areas. Recently, she has become interested in behavioural differences between entrepreneurs and managers.

The Endowed Chair at CBS

On January 2014, Mirjam van Praag was appointed Maersk Mc-Kinney Møller Professor of Entrepreneurship at CBS, Department of Innovation and Organizational Economics, as a part of donation from the 'A. P. Møller og Hustru Chastine Mc-Kinney Møllers Fond til almene Formaal'. The Foundation has donated 40 million Danish kroner to the establishment of an Endowed Chair in Entrepreneurship and thus provided CBS with the opportunity to strengthen its research and education activities within entrepreneurship. This great opportunity encouraged Mirjam van Praag to move to Copenhagen Business School from the University of Amsterdam, where she has been a full professor of Entrepreneurship and organization since 2005. She has been the founding director and academic director of the Amsterdam Center for Entrepreneurship (ACE), a research and education network of all institutions of higher education in Amsterdam that offers training and coaching to students and entrepreneurs. ACE has also initiated research in entrepreneurship and has been very active in disseminating the research to policy makers, entrepreneurs and other interested parties.

Wants to encourage connection between entrepreneurship and innovation

Mirjam van Praag is looking forward to contributing to further developments within the field of entrepreneurship at CBS:

'In Holland, I had a managerial role and much of my work had a very external orientation. I was part of advisory and supervisory boards for the Dutch government and for private companies. I was the key representative of ACE, responsible for its outreach activities. At CBS, the Maersk Mc-Kinney Møller professorship gives me the opportunity to conduct more research together with my new colleagues at CBS,' she says and continues:

'Working mainly with entrepreneurship, I am excited to learn more about innovation research from the researchers here at CBS. Furthermore, it is my objective at CBS to encourage more connection and cross-fertilization between entrepreneurship research and innovation research. Entrepreneurs are often respon-

sible for radical innovations, whereas innovation is a driving force for many entrepreneurs.'

Research shows that mixed teams perform better

Much of Mirjam van Praag's extensive research is based on field experiments, and her research is widely published in international academic journals.

Among her current research projects is research into team composition in connection with entrepreneurial ventures, since most ventures today are not initiated by one person but by a team of people:

'The entrepreneur as a lone wolf is falling out of fashion, and we therefore need to study the composition of teams as a driver of business success. And our findings show that a team's diversity is a significant determinant of its performance. For instance, teams with a more equal gender balance perform better,' she says.

'Another research project is a study of entrepreneurial couples in Denmark, where we investigate why many start a company with their partner,' she adds.

Getting the message across

An important role for business universities like CBS, according to Mirjam van Praag, is to help stimulate a climate where the best people are inspired to become successful entrepreneurs.

'I think the Entrepreneurship Platform at CBS can play a huge role in getting the message across to decision-makers and translating the research done here in order to educate and stimulate entrepreneurs. Furthermore, I believe it is important to communicate even more and even better about the research done at CBS to stimulate the infusion of more research into society and companies. And I believe that this chair, the Maersk Mc-Kinney Møller professorship, can support this.'

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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Please see www.cbs.dk/entrepreneurship

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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