

Entrepreneurship Policy in Iran

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Abstract In retrospect, the government intervention in business ecosystem of Iran has a long history. Oddly enough the dimensions of such intervention are more conspicuous after the approval of the first Constitution in 1906. Nonetheless, it is essential to point out that the strict regulations imposed by the government were partially eased and, at later stages, new concepts in the business world were shaped. This trend greatly contributed to the emergence of entrepreneurship in Iran which goes back to 15 years ago when an Entrepreneurship Development Program at Universities was approved for the first time in this country. Furthermore, the research tries to answer questions about the meanings of entrepreneurship from viewpoints of Iranian policymakers, the actions taken concerning entrepreneurship by government, the key effective factors influencing the policymaking process and finally finding the most prerequisites for effective entrepreneurship policy in Iran. These questions were answered in the wake of studying the relevant National Development Plans (NDPs), and reliable documents which have been recorded by accredited centers also the information gathered through interviews and questionnaires.

1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship in Iran sounds a controversial phenomenon. When Islamic revolution took over in 1979, an ideologically Islamic country enthusiastically foreboded and imprecated capitalist executions, but not for more than one decade. Actually with start of the first administration after the war with Iraq in 1989, policymakers and planers of the first five-year Development Plan (DP) was practically accepted the economic adjustments founded on the liberalism fundamentals in elaborating this DP (Nili 1997) and a liberal politician, as president, started implementing it (Sinaee et al. 2012). Although no attention was paid to

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entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs were normally ignored, some signals indicated that some steps were in the offing.

In this research, we will study entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship policy and different effective factors on it in Iran. After a historical review, this chapter would cite the role of academicians in emergence of entrepreneurship and promoting this concept in academic communities across the country in frame of Third DP. Then with review of Forth-Fifth DPs (2000–2014) articles on entrepreneurship would try to answer research questions about the process of entrepreneurship policymaking and effective factors influencing it as well as the most prerequisites for effective entrepreneurship policy in Iran.

2 Historical Context

If early agricultural communities originated in a particular region¹ (Riehl et al. 2013), could be expected to appear the first nation-state and also one of the first government interventions at same region. Fortunately, these interventions in economic activities extent have usually been restricted to an income tax imposition. In retrospect, the government intervention in business ecosystem of Iran has a long history, as old as its governments. Nonetheless, this intervention as a tool for development planning formally started from the First Pahlavi era in 1937 (Bostock and Jones 1989). Government involvement came into a new stage by launching the First Seven-Year DP on 1948 in Iran and continued with other Seven-Year DP, Three Five-Year DPs before Islamic revolution and then Five Five-Year DPs, after it. The trend of government intervention in economy increased from plan to plan, in parallel with growing government oil revenues during these years, though this pathway moved back and forth, especially after Islamic revolution (1979).

More notably, it is necessary to cite the role of this revolution in historical background of entrepreneurship in Iran. Actually, at this juncture, people and government of this country changed in different spheres, especially in beliefs and ideals. So in this atmosphere, it was difficult to support and celebrate opportunistic men for a Muslim society that has experienced a big gap between poor and rich people for decades. Actually, a high percentage of above mentioned people thought these opportunistic men had been the main cause of all shortages and problems up to now and all such discrimination and inequalities with this revolution would be eliminated. In other words, the majority of this nation thought the entrepreneurship means rent-seeking and so an entrepreneur and his values are incompatible and even supposed to Islam.

Additionally, understanding the story of how entrepreneurship is spreading as an idea in Iran requires a look into the socioeconomic history of this country and its environment (Keyhani and Jafari-Moghadam 2008). In other words, in historical

¹It is assumed to be foothills of the Zagros Mountains in Iran.

review it is essential to point out that environmental changes including economic, political/legal, social/cultural and technological trends, found a relatively appropriate background for evolving the concept of entrepreneurship as an important issue for academicians and policymakers in Iran, after war with Iraq (1980–1988). Actually, the atmosphere of economic reconstruction and production in these years, based on the legal background of first and second Five-Year DPs, resulted in more focus of the government on the constitutional principals’ as a facilitator for economic activities of private sector—especially 44th article of The Constitution—(Sinaee and Zamani 2012). In addition, improvement in higher education development and skilled human resources, increase in government revenues arising from removal of war expenditures and beyond them, progress in political and commercial communications with other countries at regional and international levels (Sinaee et al. 2012) were the most effective above-mentioned trends.

3 Entrepreneurship Policy: The Jungle of Discursive Efforts

3.1 *The Emergence of Entrepreneurship in Iran (2000–2004)*

As aforementioned above, Economic policy in the early years of the Revolution was heavily influenced by socialists’ thinking. Besides the early wave of nationalizations which increased state control over the economy, there was price control and rationing of a long list of essential commodities, which was deemed necessary while the war with Iraq was raging. But since the end of the war in 1988, successive governments have moved the economy away from the war-imposed restrictions which had severely limited the role of markets in allocation. A decisive change of direction toward markets took place with the Second Plan (1995–1999) (Salehi-Isfahani 2006). Nevertheless, for the first time in Iran, a PhD thesis, as the first survey research about entrepreneurship² (1998), introduced Iranian academicians and especially management researchers with this concept and its implications and advantages for national economy. This research report was published as one of the most efficient Farsi books regarding entrepreneurship (Ahmadpour Daryani 1999).

Concerning the translation of the word *Entrepreneurship* into *Farsi*, the writer of this book said: “I and my supervisor, based on our understanding of entrepreneurship and what we have studied about it, recognized the Farsi word of “Arzeshafarini”³ as an appropriate translation for entrepreneurship word, but after

²The topic of this thesis was “Designing a model for developing entrepreneurial managers in Iran industry” and its supervisor was Dr. Ali Rezaeian.

³This word can be translated into English with “value-creation” term in Farsi language.

several debates and in view of the fact that the first translators had translated this word into Farsi language as “Karafarini”, we preferred to accept this translation” (Ahmadpour Daryani 2010).⁴ This translation in comparison to the traditional notion of entrepreneurship that returned to capitalistic, opportunistic and rent-seeking concepts and was pervasive in the first decade of new regime, received widespread acceptance in Iran society. Especially, owing to the fact that literal interpretation of this word in Farsi, promises to solve one of the country’s main socioeconomic problems⁵ (Keyhani and Jafari-Moghadam 2008).

Moreover, the strict regulations and strong recommendations imposed by the government and reformers in the 1990s (first and second Five-Year DPs) were partially eased and, at later stages, new concepts in the business world were shaped (Parsi 2012). These changes greatly contributed to the emergence of entrepreneurship concept in Iran which dated back to 2000, when creation the KARAD Plan, an Academic Entrepreneurship (AE) program at Iran Universities, was formally approved in the Third Five-Year DP (2000–2004) for steering decisions to flourish entrepreneurship at universities (IROST⁶ 2006).⁷ Table 1 compares the approvals and accomplishments on Entrepreneurship through 3rd DPs.

3.2 *The Fourth Development Plan (2006–2010)*

It is supposed the policymakers’ attention to entrepreneurship has increased in the fourth DP, especially by considering “Business Environment” importance for the first time. Although, their direct referral to entrepreneurship in this Plan was limited to three articles with obligating government to:

- Allocate up to 50% the budget for productive and entrepreneurial plans,
- Support institutes and SMEs for entrepreneurship development,
- Improving incorporation between educational levels with technology development, entrepreneurship and wealth creation,
- Reform the mission and structure of universities for training professional, creative and entrepreneur persons,

Afterward, in practice the changes were made. Almost about the end of the third DP (2005⁸) two worthwhile routes aimed at entrepreneurship development was

⁴Dr. Ahmadpour Daryani about his important references of his thesis referred to one paper: “Fry, F. L. (1993). *Entrepreneurship: A Planning Approach*. Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN: West Publishing” and Farsi translation of one book: “Meredith, G. G., Nelson, R. E. & Neck., P. A., (1982) *the practice of entrepreneurship*. Geneva: International Labour Office”.

⁵I.e. unemployment.

⁶The Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology.

⁷Attachment 1: Complementary information about Bylaw of KARAD plan and 3th–5th Development plans concerning entrepreneurship.

⁸Third development plan practically finished at the end of year 2005, with one year delay.

Table 1 Summary of entrepreneurship policies in Iran (3th DP: 2000–2004)

Policy approach	Policy making phase	
	Formulation	Implementation
	Approvals	Accomplishments
Cognitive – Entrepreneurship culture development	– Creating an established “academic entrepreneurship” (AE) program inside MSRT ^a – Planning to select core curriculums and prepare educational technologies for implementing AE program – Predicting and planning continuation of AE program via education, research and promotion in future – Approving and notification The (AE) program below to all Iran universities (IPRC ^b 2014)	– Founding entrepreneurship centers as operational arms of AE program just in 13 universities – Holding seminars and workshops on entrepreneurship in most of above-mentioned universities – Distributing books, journals, videos and legal reports about entrepreneurship and AE among universities (IROST 2006) – Starting to publish books about the life and business of different Iranian entrepreneurs ^c (Keyhani and Jafari-Moghadam 2008)
Normative – Appreciating entrepreneurs and recognition their value	– Selecting and encouraging superior entrepreneurs via holding annual festivals ^d	– Paying more attention to the importance of entrepreneurship via medias especially through the Radio and TV channels of Iran (Esfandiari 2014)
Regulative – Clarifying legal limitations and necessities	– Approving the establishment an executive organization for (AE) and inclusion of its budget in the national budget – Advising the first bylaw of KARAD plan: AE at universities (IPRC 2014)	– Creating an executive organization for AE – Allocating annual budget to AE – Approving the first legal bylaw for developing entrepreneurship at universities and offering relevant programs (IPRC 2014)

^aThe Ministry of Science, Research and Technology

^bIslamic Parliament Research Center

^c“Entrepreneurs of Iran: the role of business leaders in the development of Iran” is the name of 1st book about Iranian entrepreneurs narrated by Vaghefi (1975)

^dThe Ministry of Cooperative, Labour and Social welfare

pursued to teach entrepreneurship at graduate level with founding the first Faculty of Entrepreneurship in Middle East by the University of Tehran (FEUT⁹ 2007) and holding annual festivals of excellent entrepreneurs by Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (The Donya-e-Eqtesad 2005).

The first of this festival was held in 2006 and continued during the subsequent years through provincial and national referees committees (Tae 2014). Also, about nine months later, the Council of Ministers forced all the Ministries to establish a new department as “Entrepreneurship Office” under supervision of its related

⁹Faculty of Entrepreneurship at University of Tehran.

Table 2 Summary of entrepreneurship policies in Iran (4th DP: 2006–2010)

Policy approach	Policy making phase	
	Formulation	Implementation
	Approvals	Accomplishments
Cognitive – Entrepreneurship culture development	– Reforming and reinforcing supporter institutes and SMEs for entrepreneurship development – Improving consistency between educational levels with technology development, entrepreneurship and wealth creation (IPRC 2014)	– Empowering entrepreneurship centers at universities and developing it to 10 new universities – Growing number and variety of educational programs for students and other job-seekers by universities and administrations of MCLS (IROST 2006) – Founding the first faculty of entrepreneurship by University of Tehran (FEUT 2007)
Normative – Appreciating entrepreneurs and recognition their value	– Continuing holding annual festivals at three sectors: Industry, Service and Agriculture	– Holding the first annual festival to introduce Iranian excellent entrepreneurs – Paying special attention of media to new businesses via starting professional journals and broadcasting special Radio and TV programs (Esfandiari 2014) – Increasing people who consider starting new businesses as a desirable career choice (GEM Report 2013)
Regulative – Clarifying legal limitations and necessities	– Financial support to industrial entrepreneurship plans – Reforming the mission and structure of universities for training professional, creative and entrepreneur people (IPRC 2014)	– Establishing a new department as “Entrepreneurship Office” in all ministries (Malekitabar 2006) – Increasing the annual budget of academic entrepreneurship (IPRC 2014)

undersecretaries (Malekitabar 2006). Besides, during this DP the KARAD program (IROST 2006) gained great impetus. Table 2 compares the approvals and accomplishments on Entrepreneurship through 4th DP.

This period also experienced a growing trend of publishing entrepreneurs’ biographies. Most of these books concerned pioneer entrepreneurs in form of helpful biographies for the public as well as entrepreneurship and history students (Khosrowshahi 2004; Saeedi and Shirinkam 2005, 2009; Shirinkam and Farjammia 2010).

In spite of all abovementioned efforts, entrepreneurship education, besides environmental barriers, has suffered from diverse challenges like unfamiliarity of different levels of society with its implications and benefits from one hand and

equivocality of entrepreneurship concept for universities' managers and professors from other hand. Additionally, the structure and regulations of universities were not consistent with entrepreneurship education necessities (Jafari-Moghadam 2008).

3.3 *The Fifth Development Plan (2011–2015)*

The 5th DP was formulated with special emphasis on “improving business environment” and also empowering SMEs and private sector¹⁰ (IPRC 2014) by following actions:

- Allocating the annual budget to assist retailers and wholesalers in protecting their brands,
- Creating an “automated processing single window” for launching businesses.

Modifying Labor Law and Social Security regulations to increase flexibility in harmony between employees and employers, reinforcing the unemployment insurance, empowering tripartism approach, Improving work conditions, creating competitive markets, establishing “The Council of Government and Private Sector Negotiations”. This plan also had approached entrepreneurship as a job-creating tool which obligates government to support networks, clusters and SMEs' connections in local, home and family businesses. Table 3 compares the approvals and accomplishments on Entrepreneurship through 5th DP.

Fostering entrepreneurial awareness and positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship are high on the policy agenda of several economies (GEM Report 2013). This means governments' activities and implementing their policies to support new businesses and improving the business environment could result in fostering attitude and perceptions in a society. With this approach, key indicators changes of “attitudes and perceptions” during years somewhat could attribute to accomplished programs by government for improving entrepreneurship. Table 4 shows changes trend of entrepreneurial perceptions and attitudes as measured by Iran GEM team in 2013:

1. **Media Attention for Entrepreneurship:** The number of general and scientific Farsi journals concentrating on “small business” and “entrepreneurship” have grown from 7 to 13, among 2008–2014 without any specific government support. Also different Farsi journals have increased the number of papers and reports about entrepreneurship and small businesses and make use of these words in their papers and notes, as the frequencies of these words have doubled in mentioned period. Moreover, today the frequency of “entrepreneurship” and “running businesses” terms from reporters, announcers and narrators of radio and TV programs dramatically have increased. In reality, the number of TV and Radio programs related to entrepreneurship with emphasis on occupation-making

¹⁰Articles 69–80.

Table 3 Summary of entrepreneurship policies in Iran (fifth DP: 2011–2015)

Policy approach	Policy making phase	
	Formulation	Implementation
	Approvals	Accomplishments
Cognitive – Entrepreneurship culture development	– Reforming educational system to improve students’ skills consistent with market labour needs – Supporting vocational training in rural areas (IPRC 2014)	– Developing entrepreneurship education programs at graduate levels in public and private universities
Normative – Appreciating entrepreneurs – Recognition value of entrepreneurship	– Continuing holding annual festivals in three sectors: Industry, Service and Agriculture – Supporting SMEs to pay patent costs (IPRC 2014)	– Increasing special attention of media to entrepreneurship and knowledge-based SMEs – Improving Radio and TV programs on entrepreneurship (Esfandiari 2014) – Increasing people who consider starting new businesses as a desirable career choice (GEM Report 2013)
Regulative – Clarifying legal limitations and necessities	– Revising Labor law and social security to improve its capabilities on Tripartism – Allocating an annual budget to protect of Iranian brands (IPRC 2014) – Reforming regulations to support national production ^a – Creating “single window process” for launching businesses and custom services (IPRC 2014)	– Providing financial support to start and develop businesses – Allocating financial supports to activities on SMEs development in rural areas – Improving employee and employer relationships due to Labour law reforms – Starting financial support to start home-based businesses under new regulations ^b

^aIslamic Consultative Assembly News Agency

^bThe Central Bank of Iran

businesses has soared at last three years. Specifically, from 2012 to 2014, just channel one TV, as the most important channel of Iran National TV, has shown one special program about entrepreneurs and their challenges in private and professional life. This program was broadcast in 44 sessions every Sunday night presented during a 75 min-program in 2014.

Furthermore, a radio station entitled “the Radio of Economy” was launched with focus on business and economy. This radio station broadcast five special weekly programs about entrepreneurship since last three years. Also, Iran National Radio has added a weekly consulting program on “starting new businesses” to its nightly programs. This program was selected as the most desirable program of current years from audience view. Finally, the total number of various programs about entrepreneurship on other radio stations increased during this period (Esfandiari 2014).

Table 4 Key indicators changes of “attitudes and perceptions” between 2008 and 2013 (almost 2nd half of Fourth DP and four years of fifth DP) in Iran (GEM Report 2013)

No	Variable name	Description	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1	Media attention for entrepreneurship	Percentage of 18–64 population who agree with the statement that in their country, you will often see stories in the public media about successful new businesses	53	61	62	58	61	60
2	High status successful entrepreneurship	Percentage of 18–64 population who agree with the statement that in their country, successful entrepreneurs receive high status	82	78	85	73	73	82
3	Entrepreneurship as desirable career choice	Percentage of 18–64 population who agree with the statement that in their country, most people consider starting a business as a desirable career choice	57	56	64	61	60	64
4	Know startup entrepreneur rate	Percentage of 18–64 population who personally know someone who started a business in the past two years	46	48	42	36	40	43
5	Entrepreneurial intention	Percentage of 18–64 population (individuals involved in any stage of entrepreneurial activity excluded) who intend to start a business within three years	35.8	22.3	31.4	29.9	22.8	30.6
6	Fear of failure rate	Percentage of 18–64 population with positive perceived opportunities who indicate that fear of failure would prevent them from setting up a business	20	32	30	33	41	36

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

No	Variable name	Description	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
7	Perceived opportunities	Percentage of 18–64 who see good opportunities to start a firm in the area where they live	34	31	42	32	39	37
8	Perceived capabilities	Percentage of 18–64 population who believe to have the required skills and knowledge to start a business	61	58	66	46	54	57

2. **High Status Successful Entrepreneurship:** Concerning the relatively high position of Iran in Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rate (GEM Report 2013), people typically place high value on business starters. As a result, successful entrepreneurs have had a high social status in this culture from past years, even without any government promotion program. Furthermore, when this rate is normally high, it will be more difficult to improve it.
3. **Entrepreneurship as Desirable Career Choice:** Whereas becoming entrepreneur is a good way for earning money and increasing people's social position, trying to run a business in an inflation-hit society will be an excellent alternative.
4. **Know Startup Entrepreneur Rate:** Relatively a low percentage of this indicator during mentioned years could be analyzed based on peoples' concerns to talk expressly about their intentions for starting a business to others (related to their cost considerations about tax and other formal and informal expenditures in countries like Iran) besides conservative spirit of Iranians to disclose the financial decisions. Also restricted pendulum range of this variable and its diminutive decrease during this period could attribute to specific political events and especially sanctions in recent years.
5. **Entrepreneurial Intention:** It appears that, the restrictions arising from sanctions, foreign currency rate changes and intensive inflation, especially during the last year of this period have resulted in drastic decrease in economy stability and unpredictability of affairs. The natural result of this situation is uncertainty about future and difficult decision making to start new ventures.
6. **Fear of Failure Rate:** Normally, probability of failure in running businesses in economically unstable and unpredictable situations will increase. The concern in comparison of its indicator between 2008 and 2013 is apparent. In reality, this percentage in the recent year, with the tightest sanctions, followed by rising prices has doubled.

7. **Perceived Opportunities:** This variable which increased to 42% in 2010, failed to 32% just one year later, due to wave of threats against Iran via international sanctions. Also, possibly we may argue that the tangible improvement of this indicator up to 37% in 2013 with trying new-entrepreneurs to produce boycotted products and recognizing created opportunities to start new businesses.
8. **Perceived Capabilities:** 20% Decrease in this variable from 2010 to 2011, as a major change in abovementioned period, could be analyzed with regard to return of previous traditionalist government in 2011 and people's concerns of raising prices and increasing foreign currency rate. Reality, with enhancing threats and deficiencies of business environment, people underestimate their capabilities to start new businesses.

4 Conceptual Framework and Research Questions

Definitions of entrepreneurship have evolved over time and reflect a broad range of varied concepts so it is understandable that government policy makers may view entrepreneurship quite differently depending upon the definitions they are familiar with and ultimately choose to guide their actions. Consequently the focus of a policy may only target or reflect the elements of the specific definition or framework (Gartner 1985). More to the point, the meaning of policy and policy making have also changed over time but all definitions are based on more or less common fundamentals such as manipulation of business environment, facilitating business actions, supporting regulations, promoting programs, etc.

Additionally, Entrepreneurship is believed to contribute to economic development because entrepreneurs create new businesses, and new businesses create jobs, provide people with a variety of products and services, intensify competition, and increase productivity through technological change and positively impact individual lives on multiple levels (GEM Report 2013). GEM data also suggests that there is no country that has high levels of entrepreneurship and low levels of economic growth (Reynolds et al. 2002). Present research with emphasis on this approach to entrepreneurship, in a pervasive meaning, consider "Entrepreneurship Policy" as any government intervention to improve entrepreneurship ecosystem, facilitate private sector activities or empowering businesses.

One of the most consistent models with mentioned definition of entrepreneurship policy is entrepreneurship policy framework of UNCTAD (Fig. 1). This recognized model is presented by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. UNCTAD's Entrepreneurship Policy Framework aims to support developing-country policymakers and those from economies in transition in the design of initiatives, measures and institutions to promote entrepreneurship. Afterwards, the main goal of this research is to identify the process of entrepreneurship policy transforming in Iran

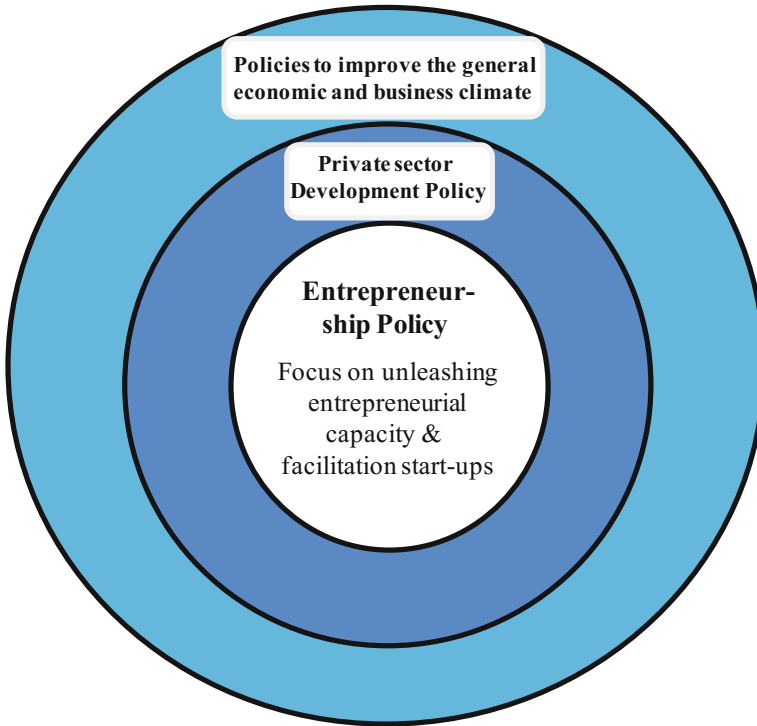


Fig. 1 The focus of UNCTAD's entrepreneurship policy framework

and effective factors on it. So that, the research questions, based on the mentioned goal and selected conceptual framework could be raised as follows:

1. What are the meanings of entrepreneurship in terms of the viewpoints of Iranian policy-makers?
2. What are the actions taken for developing entrepreneurship by government?
3. What are the key effective factors influencing the policy process?
4. What are the major prerequisites for effective entrepreneurship policy in Iran?

5 Methodology

Thereupon, our primary conceptual framework model designed in order to serve our overall goal to answer research questions. For gathering material information required, this goal was planned to conduct a survey research and concentrate on interviews with policy makers (Parliament members and top managers) to unfold

effective factors in formulation and implementation phases of policymaking. Researchers' attempts for making appointments with policymakers showed that they are so busy and it is very difficult and almost impossible as researchers tried to interview two of them, especially owing to the exceptional conditions in Iran. This challenge for more active and effective parliament members in entrepreneurship policy was greater. More to the point, our interview experiences and the background information of their interviews with scientific centers revealed almost all of them would not remember the main historical facts in detail effectively, and unfortunately a large number of them in their viewpoints were chiefly influenced by their political orientations which could result in the deficiencies in research findings.

As a result, researchers decided to concentrate on content analysis method as a main research method, because of not very difficult accessibility to DNIP¹¹ and National DPs' contents recorded in the "Library, Museum and Document Center of Iran Parliament" for answering the first research question. Also, to answer the second question, official documents and independent or state-sponsored research reports were selected as main sources. Additionally, 3th and 4th questions were answered through interviews with experts. Finally, the influencing factors on policy process and prerequisites of effective entrepreneurship policy were ranked through questionnaires findings. Therefore, research process (based on research questions) was specified in following steps:

- **First step:** As already mentioned, the research goal of this step is: To identify the meanings of entrepreneurship in terms of the viewpoints of Iranian policy-makers (via content analysis of two group information: DNIP and National DPs).

Shapiro and Markoff (1997) after reviewing six main meanings from different sources, proposed a minimal and encompassing definition for "content analysis" including of: "any methodological measurement applied to text for social science purposes". Reality, qualitative content analysis as a research method used to analyze text data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1278) over time, it has expanded to also include interpretations of latent content (Graneheim and Lundman 2003). Therefore, content analysis could be described as a technique used for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the context of their use (Krippendorff 2012). This method firstly highlights the exact words from the text that appear to capture key thoughts or concepts. Next, the researcher approaches the text by making notes of his or her first impressions, thoughts, and initial analysis. As this process continues, labels for codes emerge that are reflective of more than one key thought. These often come directly from the text and are then become the initial coding scheme. Codes then are sorted into categories based on how different codes are related and linked (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

¹¹Detailed Negotiation of Iranian Parliament.

Thereupon, this research has chosen content analysis, as an empirical model to examine terms of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur as two concepts and also entrepreneurship policy as a renovative and transforming process in the debates of policymakers during the first phase of research. In this way, two Ph. D. candidates in skilled coder role, and writer, in role of team research mentor started text coding extracted from DNIP as well as documents of five-years DPs in order to answer the first research question. Each of researchers in this process randomly read detailed negotiations of parliament consist key words of “entrepreneurship” and “entrepreneur” from a specific period¹² and finally proposed his categories.

- **Second step:** this pace concentrated on recognizes the actions taken for developing entrepreneurship by government (through formal reports, independent or state-sponsored research reports and media news). The key tools for gathering information from experts in this step were proposed through qualitative approach (interviews and Delphi method). Qualitative evaluation normally involves face-to-face discussions with those in receipt of aid, those responsible for delivering programmes and other stakeholders. These conversations help to get a deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which policy impact is achieved. Also, qualitative evaluation has the major disadvantage that it is not good at providing reliable estimates of policy impact for a number of reasons. First, surveys of a sample of stakeholders run the risk of being unrepresentative of programme participants. Increasing the numbers however either adds considerably to budgets or reduces the quality or depth of the interviews. Second, despite the best efforts of interviewers, there remains a strong risk of interviewer bias. Thirdly, the outcome of qualitative evaluation is more often to describe a process rather than to evaluate an outcome. Fourthly, there is no opportunity for independent verification (OECD 2007). Afterwards, to estimate how a programme which took place several years ago even if some programme participants were able to undertake such mental gymnastics, others clearly could not and there is no way of distinguishing between the answers of the two groups (OECD 2007). With regard to subsequent limitations, our qualitative approach changed to review and analyze the most reliable reports and documents from authentic sources.

Since, neither the organizations and executive officers of different programs in these establishments, nor the beneficiaries of programmes were in a position of a careful, impartial and with a multidimensional view to recognize different positive and negative dimensions of every implemented program. So, it was inevitable to investigate the scientific and official reports. Additionally, non-comprehensiveness and discontinuity of related entrepreneurship actions had clarified the implementation phase complicity. Hence, review of the

¹²This period considered from Third to Fifth Development Plans (2000–2014). Between 1996 and 2000, the word of entrepreneurship has been cited just 15 times in Iranian parliament and before this date we could not find any trace of this word in parliament.

trustworthy researches on Iran government interventions during three DPs (2000–2015) was essential. Literature review of the researches on DPs from reliable journals and conference proceedings (Meystre 2008) also, authentic centers reports from their supervisions and evaluations of DPs in Iran as well as international sources, like GEM reports, put in the research focus.

- **Third step:** last step of research focused on two fundamental points described below:
 - To realize the key effective factors influencing the policy process,
 - To determine the most prerequisites for effective entrepreneurship policy in Iran,

This step started with experts' interviews (entrepreneurship professors and scholars) regarding mentioned key factors and prerequisites. The information obtained from these two groups was summarized in a questionnaire to evaluate their priorities.

6 Finding and Discussion

First step is to identify the meanings of entrepreneurship in viewpoints of policy-makers through “content analysis” of two main groups of information in DNIP and INDPs:

Comparing three categorizations via three coders showed we have selected four exactly comparable categories, one almost similar and two merger-able small categories that finalized in Tables 5 and 6. Then, this process encompassed the main texts of three Five-Year DPs.

Final results of this step are presented in two mentioned tables (IPRC 2014). Unit of analysis in all steps was paragraphs containing the words of entrepreneurship or entrepreneur used by policymakers. Although putting any case in the related categories as well as coding them was possible just based on the background of debates and order of sessions for detailed negotiation of parliament and DPs articles, it was required to assure what had been the topic or core attention of issues and their backgrounds.

The results of this step as we can see in the Tables 5 and 6 reveal different attention-grabbing facts. As shown in Figs. 2 and 3 separated areas of personal understanding receives different attention with divers and unsteady frequencies during parliament sessions and DPs articles time to time. The first Misunderstanding of entrepreneurship¹³ is “Employment and job creation” (149 frequencies) in

¹³The Persian language has never had a single word that could encompass the full meaning of “entrepreneur” word and most of the Iranian entrepreneurship experts believe a significant misunderstanding is prevalent among policymakers about this word (Keyhani and Jafari-Moghadam 2008).

Table 5 Connotations of entrepreneurship/entrepreneur words in DPs contents during 3th–5th DPs (2000–2015) (main categories of content analysis and their frequencies)

No	Topic of category	1th DP	2nd DP	3th development plan	4th DP	5th DP	Sum
1	Employment and job-creation		1	1	8	1	11
2	Creativity and business-starting skills			4	12	10	26
3	Running SMEs			4	2	2	8
4	Investment and private sector improvement			2	9	5	16
5	Production, empowering industry			1	7	1	9
6	Entrepreneurs as competent managers			2	0	2	4
	Sum		1	14	38	21	74

Table 6 Connotations of entrepreneurship/entrepreneur words in detailed negotiations of parliament sessions during 3th–5th DPs

No	Topic of category	Main categories of content analysis and their frequencies				Sum
		2th development plan	3th development plan	4th development plan	5th development plan	
1	Employment and job-creation		46	55	48	149
2	Creativity and business-starting skills		43	49	14	106
3	Running SMEs		8	8	5	21
4	Investment and private sector improvement		31	27	34	92
5	Production, empowering industry		17	18	26	61
6	Entrepreneurs as competent managers		6	6	2	14
	Sum		151	163	129	443

comparison with other closer to the meaning of entrepreneurship, Like “creativity and business starting skills” (106 frequencies) or “investment and private sector improvement” (92 frequencies). In fact, about 34% of policymakers consider entrepreneurship as job-creation process and this misunderstanding have unexpectedly increased at the pick of the years of entrepreneurship education through 4th DPs. Besides, more precisely contents parliament negotiations’ indicated the fact that too many words of entrepreneurship connotations about concepts such as “Production, Empowering industry and investment” and “private sector improvement” among

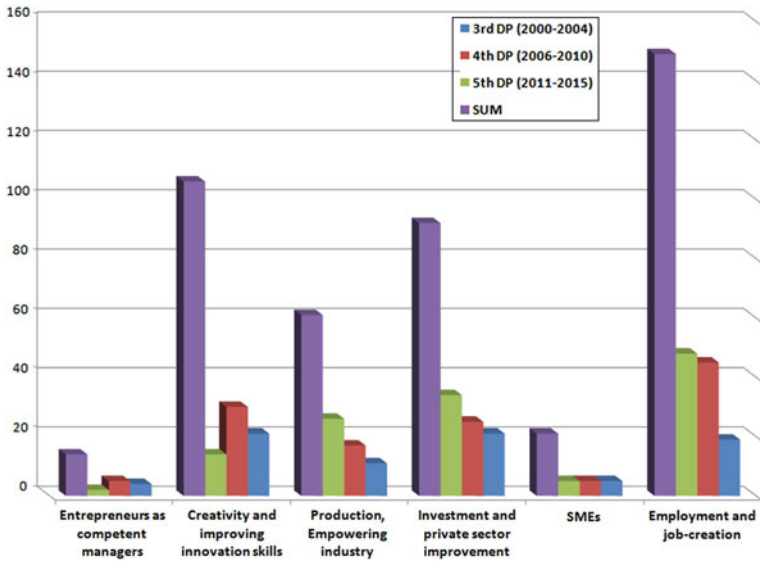


Fig. 2 Frequency of “entrepreneurship/entrepreneur words” in detailed negotiations of parliament sessions during 3th–5th DPs

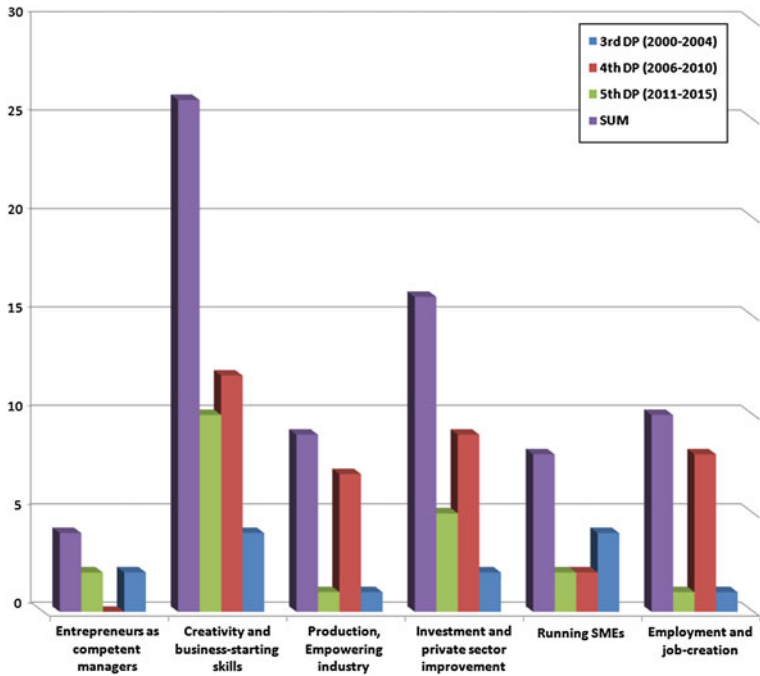


Fig. 3 Frequency of “entrepreneurship/entrepreneur words” in DPs contents during 3th–5th DPs (2000–2015)

policymakers were aimed to increase employment. Wholly, Diverse, vague and dissimilar understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship is clearly depicted in this picture.

Looking at the charts from different times also reveals various facts; even inconsistency among the one category of understanding during the period of study could be seen, for example during eight years (3rd and 4th DPs) entrepreneurship was considered more or less the same as job creation. In addition, By looking at the Fig. 2 dissimilarity is blurred again although it seems the provider of such DP have more or less better understanding of entrepreneurship concept but not adequate. Besides, whereas the base of categorization of this content analysis process has been concepts extracted from parliamentary debates or DPs' articles, with regard to the atmosphere of sentences, this argument could clearly present that amongst these talking and writing about entrepreneurship by top policymakers, during three DPs, has not followed comprehensive approach, policy or strategy to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship policy or even signs of approaching this view.

Second step is to recognize the actions taken for developing entrepreneurship by government. As it was presented in implementation columns of Tables 1, 2 and 3, government actions on entrepreneurship are summarized in three related scopes: cognitive, normative and regulative policies). Moreover, review of the reliable centers' reports consisted of "Islamic Parliament Research Center", "The Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology" also "The Ministry of Cooperative Labour and Social Welfare" confirmed that there is no center in charge of research about government accomplishments. So, there is no published comprehensive report on actions and achievements of government via the development plans implemented, and apparently no document on accomplishments concerning entrepreneurship. Thereupon, the research in this step were only confined to reliable journals, independent or state-sponsored research papers, formal reports and media news regarding DPs in Iran, our findings in first step of this research, as well as international sources, like GEM reports. So that the results could be obtained as vulnerable points in government accomplishments:

1. **Concentration on direct intervention in accomplishments on entrepreneurship development** (IPRC 2014) instead of trying to improve business environment and play an indirect role via private sector, NGOs or intermediary structures like networking,
2. **Emphasis on financial supports as a golden key in entrepreneurship policy** (IPRC 2014) instead of paying attention to practical instructions, consultation and steering through playing a supportive role for private sector alongside financial assistance,
3. **People/institution oriented actions for developing entrepreneurship** rather than obligatory legal actions (Katouzian 2004),¹⁴

¹⁴An outstanding example of this intervention is supportive role of Dr. Jahromi as the Minister of Labour to running the first faculty of entrepreneurship of Iran in 2006 (Keyhani and Jafari-Moghadam 2008).

4. **Implementation in the country of “entrepreneurs without enterprises”¹⁵** these people or economic institutions which may seem the most beneficial to the encouragement of economic development can also serve as prime fodder for the political mobilization of the economic groups and result in state-society conflict (Mazaheri 2008; Fallahi 2012).
5. **Lack of consensus over economic policies** due to dominance of president’s proponents/opponents in the parliament during these years that influenced efficiency and effectiveness of government accomplishments (Habibi 2008; Razavi 2010).
6. **Lack of coherence and coordination among economic and entrepreneurship policies** (Habibi 2008; Ilias 2009).
7. **Lack of balance between what has done and what ought to be done** (Mohseni 2000; Fallahi 2012; Naraghi 2001): This imbalance is evident in the Tables 1, 2 and 3 too. In reality, what has been done usually is just a small part of what ought to be done and occasionally, some initiatives have accomplished based on personal decisions.
8. **Ineffectiveness of policies in practice due to Inefficiency of public administration** system and its subsystems (Danaeefard 2015).
Interestingly, it appears that finding a clear relationship between formulated and implemented policies and the changes in different indicators of entrepreneurship based on following reasons is almost impossible:
 - Inaccessibility to clear, comprehensive and up-to-date information (Malekitabar 2006);
 - A relatively big gap between viewpoints, comments, regulations and programs from one hand and actions, accomplishments and actual behaviors from other hand in society and especially among policymakers at different levels of government (Mohseni 2000; Fallahi 2012; Naraghi 2001).
 - Lack of commitment to effective evaluation of national DPs accomplishments via an influential center (Jannat 2006).

The last steps of research started by arranging interview appointment dates with experts (entrepreneurship professors and scholars) is to identify the key effective factors influencing the policymaking process and the prerequisites for effective entrepreneurship policy in Iran. Interviewees’ opinions regarding the key effective factors on policymaking in Iran presented following elements (and their origins, based on UNCTAD’s framework) that were ranked by Friedman Test in Table 7. Additionally, recommendations of Interviewees as the prerequisites for effective entrepreneurship policy (and their origins, based on UNCTAD’s framework) ranked through Friedman Test in Table 8. Low range of changes in median rank of factors in both tables’ is their common character.

¹⁵This term has applied to refer to “informal economic sectors in Iran” by Clifford Geertz.

Table 7 Key effective factors influencing policymaking in Iran based on experts viewpoints

No	Key effective factors influencing the policy process	Median rank	Originated in/from
1	Inconsistency of approvals in entrepreneurship scope with other roles of national DPs	Oct-33	Policymaking process
2	Inadequate recognition of implementers of related to entrepreneurship approvals	Sep-34	Private sector Development Policy
3	Inadequate familiarity of policymakers with the concept and importance of entrepreneurship	Sep-27	Policymaking process
4	Inconsistency and incompatibility of the rules drafted in entrepreneurship	Sep-21	Policymaking process
5	Inefficiency of approvals in entrepreneurship scope	Aug-47	Private sector Development Policy
6	Inadequate familiarity of executive organizations with entrepreneurship approvals	Aug-44	Private sector Development Policy
7	Inefficiency of policymaking process in parliament and government	Aug-42	Policymaking process
8	Inefficiency of systemic approach to entrepreneurship and its advantages	Jul-95	Private sector Development Policy

Table 8 Prerequisites for effective entrepreneurship policy in Iran based on experts viewpoints

No	Prerequisites for effective entrepreneurship policymaking in Iran	Median rank	Originated in/from
1	Designing a national mega-policy to empower entrepreneurship infrastructures in society and specially in private sector	Nov-72	General economic and business climate
2	Holding a comprehensive program for honoring national entrepreneurs and SME founders	Nov-33	Private sector Development Policy
3	Planning a wide-ranging public entrepreneurship program for implementing in the administrative establishments	Sep-93	Private sector Development Policy
4	Planning a comprehensive organizational entrepreneurship development plan for implementing in private sector nationwide	Sep-52	Private sector Development Policy
5	Designing and implementing a national entrepreneurship training program for Iranian policymakers	Aug-60	Policymaking process
6	Documentation and implementation of national development plans (5–7-year) under a comprehensive national entrepreneurship development plan	Aug-57	Policymaking process
7	Revising different laws and regulations in the framework of a comprehensive policy to facilitate entrepreneurship and launching new businesses	Aug-55	Policymaking process
8	Designing and implementing a national program of entrepreneurship training and promotion in societal institutions such as Families and schools	Aug-44	Private sector Development Policy

7 Conclusion and Proposed Model

Entrepreneurship policy offspring in Iran was university. Policymaking on entrepreneurship started with academic entrepreneurship in third DP (2000–2004), and developed in next DPs. Entrepreneurship policy progressively encompassed to more sectors of Iran society by holding the annual festivals to introduce Iranian excellent entrepreneurs, Establishing Entrepreneurship Offices in different ministries, improving Radio and TV programs on entrepreneurship and governmental supporting to start different kinds of SMEs under new regulations. So, it appears starting and developing entrepreneurship based on approval articles in Iranian Parliament have passed a relatively acceptable path, especially with regard to variety of societies' restrictions and challenges. But, in practice respecting the findings of study don't depict a satisfactory vision.

Importantly, UNCTAD's Entrepreneurship Policy Framework (Fig. 1) as the research conceptual framework, has identified six priority areas for policy focus that have a direct impact on entrepreneurial activity as follows: optimizing the Regulatory Environment, Enhancing Entrepreneurship Education and Skills Development, Facilitating Technology Exchange and Innovation, improving access to finance, and Promoting Awareness and Networking. Review of entrepreneurship policy process in Iran (Tables 1, 2 and 3) exposes the question that, though all approvals and accomplishments of Iranian government during these three DPs (2000–2014) are classifiable in one of these priorities, why don't we evaluate entrepreneurship policy in Iran as a preferential case. Apparently, UNCTAD's framework has answered the aforementioned question, by conditioning the effectiveness of entrepreneurship development strategies [policies] on two conditions:

- **How the different elements of the strategy are integrated?**
- **How they are aligned with overall development strategies and with other national competitiveness and private sector development policies?**

Harmonization with strategic processes pursued by different national ministries and national commissions are crucial to exploit synergies.

The first challenge relates to the internal coherence of the strategy as a system. Second challenge is to embed the national entrepreneurship strategy (policy) in the overall DPs of governments. The targets set in those plans should be reflected in the specific objectives of entrepreneurship development from specific economic sectors or groups of society. The third and most challenging task is alignment of the entrepreneurship strategy with the broader private sector development agenda, based on competitive advantages of the country. Entrepreneurship policy is, therefore, an integral part of the overall national competitiveness policy. This calls for a coherent policy approach that interlocks different areas of private sector development, including industrial policy, investment promotion, trade facilitation, export promotion, SME promotion as well as fiscal policy.

As a result, Tables 7 and 8 also have revealed almost all of mentioned challenges among key effective factors influencing policymaking (especially numbers: 1, 4 and 8)

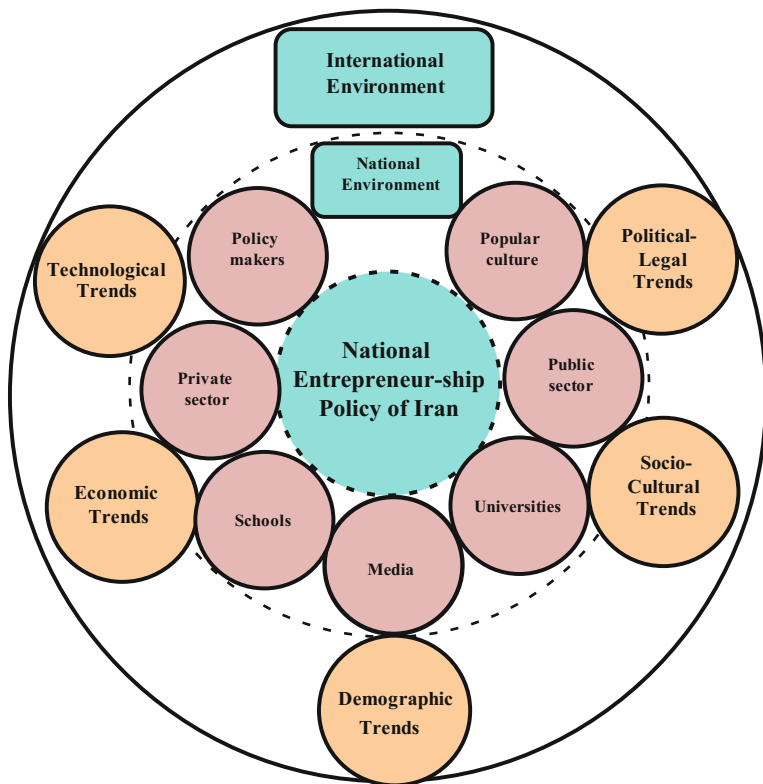


Fig. 4 The multiple scopes policymaking model for Iran

or prerequisites for effective entrepreneurship policy in Iran (numbers: 1, 4, 6, 7, 8). Additionally, these factors are classified in two main groups of policies, based on UNCTAD framework (general economic and business climate and Private sector Development Policy) as well as one fundamental group (policymaking process) in these tables. Regarding to abovementioned results, paying more attention to both policy levels of business climate and private sector, for Iranian policymakers is completely necessity. Moreover, the policymaking process as a multidimensional and vulnerable process, respecting diverse scopes of policymaking in a developing country, could be considered a great challenge.

In conclusion, an entrepreneurship policymaking model, based on UNCTAD structure is presented as a conceptual framework for entrepreneurship policy in Iran. The model focuses on main scopes of policymaking with regard to research findings (Fig. 4). Indeed, it recommends concentration on seven main scopes of entrepreneurship policy as bellow: Policymakers, Popular culture, private and public sectors, Schools, Universities and Media, under a comprehensive national entrepreneurship policy (consistent with national vision and long-term development plan). In the model, the interactions among policy scopes have been seen at the

national level. Furthermore, it has been delighted these interactions with key trends in business environment (at national and international levels). Cut lines of model are devised to emphasis in the certainty of active and effective international relations to improve entrepreneurship policy in Iran.

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