

UNIVERSITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: POINTS TO PONDER

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ABSTRACT: *With globalization, knowledge revolution and technological advancement in mind, the current era requires providing today's generation with sufficient education of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship readiness amongst other skills. Inspired by this requirement, this paper aims to explore whether it would be appropriate to teach both innovation and entrepreneurship as a general university course requirement to be offered to all undergraduate students apart from their university major. Additionally, this paper aims to highlight several specifications which can be considered whilst designing a general university course with the aim of augmenting and enhancing entrepreneurship education. To achieve these aims, the authors distributed a questionnaire of twelve items to ninety-three undergraduates belonging to different colleges. The results indicated that most of the respondents believed in the importance of teaching entrepreneurship to all students as a general university course requirement, and the vast majority stressed the importance of including innovation as an integral part of a general university entrepreneurship course.*

KEYWORDS: entrepreneurship, higher education, innovation

INTRODUCTION

Several young people aim to establish their own business for different reasons such as ensuring financial stability, independent life, and job flexibility. While some of these young adults inherit their families' business hoping to strengthen and expand the family's inheritance, others establish a business to fill the community gap amongst other reasons. Whatever the reason, it is essential for both categories to acquire a repertoire of entrepreneurship skills to run the business efficiently. What does entrepreneurship mean though? The authors of the current paper believe that entrepreneurship is a combined set of relevant knowledge, adequate skill, and positive disposition which would enable us to start, run, and participate in a business effectively, smoothly, uniquely, and confidently.

Inspired by the significant role entrepreneurship can play in terms of preparing university undergraduates for a brighter future, this paper aims to shed light on effective university entrepreneurship education from the perspective of university students. The second section of this paper is a literature review discussing several areas which are related to the topic of this paper.

The third section presents the research questions, the fourth proceeds to portray study methodology, and the fifth delineates the study's findings. The paper concludes with recommendations for researchers, scholars, and instructors to consider.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the paper discusses five areas pertaining to the main topic this paper deals with. These are: importance of university entrepreneurship education, higher education institutions' role in enhancing the quality of university entrepreneurship education, creativity, innovation, and contribution of EXPO 2020 Dubai to entrepreneurship learning experiences.

Importance of University Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education can occupy an important role in terms of creating jobs and raising quality standards. Several scholars emphasize the importance of entrepreneurship education highlighting its impact on fostering students' skills and modifying their attitudes, not to mention the contribution it makes to economic flourishing (Mueller, 2011; Barba-Sanchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2016; 2018).

Whether or not universities should incorporate entrepreneurship into their programs is an issue of interest to researchers. Davey, Hannon and Penaluna (2016), for instance, assert that despite its significant role in today's demanding world, not enough research about the role higher education institutions play in designing entrepreneurship courses has been conducted yet. Therefore, the inquiries about what universities should do regarding entrepreneurship education still need more and more examination.

Currently, there is an increasing interest in entrepreneurship leadership which is reflected in the emergence of new academic programs that deal with this area of study as a component of university entrepreneurship courses (Okello, 2014; Davey et al, 2016). According to Berry, Kumar and Scott (2014), university education for undergraduate students need to address entrepreneurship as an integral part of its programs.

Fischer (2014) states that half of the subjects who were surveyed in a study which was implemented by Maguire Associates found it hard to find the right candidate for the offered vacancies. This could be due to lack of preparing students in terms of both entrepreneurship and innovation. Gibb and Haskins (2013), amongst other researchers, also stress the role universities can occupy as regards enhancement of entrepreneurship education.

In O'Conner's opinion (2013), policy makers consider entrepreneurship as a means for stimulating, developing, and sustaining economic growth. As seen by D'Este and Perkmann (2011), entrepreneurship-based activities have a role to play in relation to promoting economic activities. Entrepreneurship education's impact is manifested in enhanced economy and increased patents amongst other impacts (Nelson, 2001; Shane, 2005; D'Este and Perkmann, 2011).

University entrepreneurship education can be looked at from the perspectives of business and employability enhancement amongst others. Looked at from a business perspective, there has to be a room for more flexibility and innovation in the workplace because of the ever-changing

demands for which entrepreneurship education can contribute via means of highly effective preparation programs. Considered from an employability perspective, Asderaki (2009) thinks that entrepreneurship education is expected to equip students with a set of competencies and skills that may make it easier for undergraduates to work since entrepreneurship is considered a career opportunity.

In his study, Shane (2008) examined the effect of education on entrepreneurial success within US contexts. The study revealed that success as related to survival of business increased in accordance with one's level of education; namely, high school graduates' success was less than university graduates' success. Hisrich (2006) states that provision of entrepreneurship courses at higher education institutions is significantly increasing, hence resulting in several specialized entrepreneurship-specialized journals.

Nowadays, governments seek to benefit from entrepreneurship's impact in the presence of economy enhancement attempts and efforts worldwide (Henry et al, 2005). On the other hand, focusing on university-business cooperation and entrepreneurial activities might result in diverting research focus towards the industry rather than the society (Ssebuwufu et al, 2012). In addition, some scholars such as Goldfarb (2008) and Nelson (2001) believe that entrepreneurial-related activities might somehow hinder research productivity processes. These considerations thus might raise questions as to whether entrepreneurship should be formally integrated into higher education programs.

According to the authors of this paper, however, entrepreneurship should be considered amongst the essential courses for university students to learn. Entrepreneurship courses not only build respect, empathy, camaraderie, and trust but they also refine students' communication skills and prepare them for leadership-related positions. Moreover, entrepreneurship courses help young people to acquire grit; a quality that everyone needs to thrive for in life. Therefore, university entrepreneurship courses that teach students how to invent, lead, communicate, collaborate, and endure will be beneficial to them.

How Can Higher Education Institutions Promote Quality of Entrepreneurship Education?

How to augment and sustain the quality of entrepreneurship education should be amongst educationalists' priorities. To start with, personal traits which entrepreneurs need to acquire are many, with the most prominent of which being willingness to help others, risk-taking spirit, integrity, courage, wisdom, confidence, seriousness, carefulness, resilience, and perseverance (Amornpinyo, 2018; Boldureanu et al, 2020). According to several scholars, the motivation one possesses towards entrepreneurship has its significant role as it determinedly urges people to achieve their best to attain targets (Barba-Sanchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017). Accordingly, it is essential that teaching practitioners arouse students' motivation towards and interest in entrepreneurship instruction.

In their study, Berry, Kumar and Scott (2014) observe that even though university technology and innovation courses make it possible for instructors to integrate themes and concepts from the major of Business studies, most courses emphasize business skills that focus on functional expertise whilst ignoring the concept of design which is critical for the success of new services and products.

Jones et al (2014), on the other hand, highlight the importance of autonomous learning for university entrepreneurship students, so that learning experiences can become more long-lasting.

Effective university preparation as viewed by several researchers (Chamorro-Premuzic et al, 2010; Reid and Anderson, 2012; Finch et al, 2013) should emphasize the teaching of both soft skills such as verbal communication; critical thinking; and time management, and functional skills such as English and other universal languages. To realize the intended goals, higher education institutions should integrate change into university learning environments whilst encouraging network opportunities (Wilson, 2012).

Bosma et al (2012) assert that entrepreneurship university education should offer examples on successful role models in the field for students to consider. This goes in line with Bandura's study (1986) which sheds light on how people could be motivated by role models to succeed. Philpott et al (2011) propose that the function of entrepreneurship education has two dimensions: demand and supply. These two dimensions are interrelated in that so long as there is a demand for entrepreneurship education, there needs to be adequate supply. Community-engagement activities involving business sectors are seen as a basic ingredient of university entrepreneurship education (Chiu, 2012). Louis et al (1989) also emphasize contact with industry due to its positive effects on education.

There are four main roles which higher education institutions can fulfill regarding entrepreneurship education. These are: involving stakeholders in entrepreneurship programs and activities, enhancing entrepreneurship best practices where focus is made on theory and practice, ensuring an inspiring learning atmosphere where fruitful experiences are shared, and engaging in the global competitiveness of the local economy (Groen, 2005; Gibb and Hannon, 2006; Herrman et al, 2008). Offering entrepreneurship courses at the university level is still though an issue that needs to be addressed in line with universities' vision and mission to ensure quality assurance (Fayolle and Klandt, 2006; Mwasalwiba, 2010).

Higher education institutions can ideally assume their role and perform their task by exemplifying entrepreneurship best practices, developing entrepreneurship programs, encouraging entrepreneurship leadership, establishing partnership and collaboration with the local community and industry, and devising entrepreneurship activities (Fayolle, 2007). For entrepreneurship education to achieve its aims, Schulte (2006) thinks that educators need to stimulate and arouse students' interest in entrepreneurship-related topics.

A university entrepreneurship course should seek to maximize awareness about entrepreneurship, arouse motivation, focus on both soft and hard skills, and emphasize entrepreneurship competencies (Henry et al, 2005). Comprised of three stages, Groen (2005) introduces an entrepreneurship model portraying a typical entrepreneurship process: recognition of a potential opportunity, translation of the potential opportunity into a practical idea, and application of the practical idea in the concerned field. Interested in employment of appropriate instructional strategies, Simonton (2000) is of the opinion that holistic strategies which are not intended to focus on one skill or aspect will pave the way for developing innovation and entrepreneurship education.

Is Creativity Required for Entrepreneurship?

How can creativity be portrayed? According to Al-Alami (2020:189), creativity is ‘the lifeblood of organizations, currently becoming an increasingly important determiner of survival; success; and performance’. Roughly speaking, creativity reflects itself in the act of producing something new (Corso and Robinson, 2013). Radovic-Markovic et al (2012) mention that in a traditional class, students are usually passive participants in the teaching-learning process. This is because neither creativity nor critical thinking is prioritized, hence yielding a generation of graduates who can retrieve the information and knowledge they have acquired, but not necessarily are able to apply what they have learned in new situations and act creatively enough. Thus, it would be essential to incorporate creativity into university education including entrepreneurship courses amongst others.

Is Innovation Required for University Entrepreneurship Education?

Innovation can be described as a process of producing a product or offering a service which holds a new or different significant value. Druker (2007) believes that innovation is an essential characteristic of entrepreneurs as it would enable them to explore change as a genuine chance for a new business or service. Being a new enhancement of a product or a service cannot be seen as authentic innovation if the enhancement does not entail any sufficient potential for making a uniquely significant change. Innovation is essential for guiding organizations’ growth whether for already existing establishments or startups. Corporate innovation necessitates the ability to acquire new knowledge which will result in generating novel ideas within the market field. In the case of startups, innovation plays a role in introducing a product or a service which is wholly new in the market field.

Entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is the manifestation of innovation activities leading to growth, prosperity, and sustainability. New services, products, and designs are a springboard for new markets to emerge and for boosting existing ones (O’Sullivan and Dooley, 2009). Innovation may transpire in a newly open establishment or an existing one. However, it may be challenging to estimate innovation-related contribution percentages in startups.

Contribution of Expo 2020 to Entrepreneurship Learning Experiences

World Expos have long been a gathering place for people from all walks of life, providing an opportunity to celebrate human inventiveness and establish long-lasting human bonds. Focusing the discussion on the current EXPO 2020 Dubai, it aims to build on its heritage as the first World Expo to be hosted in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia (MEASA) area, with more than one hundred and ninety-two countries participating. Multilateral organizations, academic institutions, and millions of visitors over the course of one hundred and eighty-two days currently benefit from this event which is expected to create a promising future for all (Lubell, 2021).

This special event is an opportunity for businesses and organizations to grow. The meeting of countries from across the world to display innovation is projected to have a favorable economic impact on a wide range of industries, from small and medium businesses to large multinationals. Entrepreneurs and business owners in the United Arab Emirates are anticipating investment prospects in the area, which may help the country to become a leader in green technology innovation. This event could serve as a catalyst for youth entrepreneurship. With world-class

infrastructure, business-friendly regulatory frameworks, and a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem, the United Arab Emirates has a reputation for facilitating business and trade.

Additionally, with its series of youth-focused events, EXPO 2020 Dubai provides a platform for the generation that will gain the most from the People and Planet Program. The program's material is divided into four sections, each of which examines the world's most pressing difficulties via a different lens - cultural, social, environmental, and economic. Furthermore, the launch of Thrive Together, a business-focused program that includes a variety of curated events and tailored products for businesses of all sizes including homegrown UAE-based businesses and budding entrepreneurs who are eager to share ideas and expand their network as international companies making their first foray into the region, will provide opportunities for economic growth and sustainability. When combined, these measures and initiatives will greatly enhance the economy and encourage entrepreneurship. Universities can, therefore, better prepare and motivate their students for entrepreneurship by incorporating real-world experiences they can gain through EXPO 2020 Dubai to be well-prepared for the corporate world.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks some convincing answers to the two inquiries below.

Question One: Should entrepreneurship be taught as a general university course to be required of all undergraduate students apart from university major?

Question Two: What are the specifications of a general university entrepreneurship course, proposed for enhancing undergraduates' entrepreneurship-related knowledge and skill?

In answering the two questions above, the discussion is presented from an educational point of view. Wherever possible though, the discussion is also presented from both industry and employability perspectives.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Study Population and Sample

This study is concerned with undergraduates' opinions on university entrepreneurship education in terms of its importance and specifications. The study population, therefore, is comprised of undergraduate students belonging to different university majors. To achieve the intended aim, a sample of ninety-three students studying at a private university in Dubai where the authors work was included as the study sample. The sample includes the students who have enrolled in the courses which the authors are assigned to teach during the Winter Semester 2021-2022. It is worth mentioning that out of 93 students, 25 are Public Relations; 23 Business Studies; 17 Engineering and Computing; 14 Interior Design and Architecture; 11 Law; and 3 Education. Inclusion of students as the study sample would be helpful as they are the main party which the current study addresses. This goes in harmony with Linan and Chen's study (2009), amongst other studies, who argue that inclusion of students as samples in research of entrepreneurship is valid since student samples would make it possible for researchers to be in contact with people who are authentically engaged in the process of future career choice.

Study Tool and Implementation

The study tool is a five-point Likert scale questionnaire of twelve items, aiming to examine students' opinions on several issues pertaining to both the topic and aim of the current study. Table one below presents the questionnaire where one indicates *strong disagreement*, two *disagreement*, three *not being sure*, four *agreement*, and five *strong agreement*.

Table One: Student's Questionnaire

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Teaching the fundamentals and art of entrepreneurship should be excluded to Business majors.					
2.	Higher education institutions must teach innovation as an integral part of university courses.					
3.	Higher education institutions must teach entrepreneurship as an integral part of university courses.					
4.	Innovation and entrepreneurship are highly interrelated, so they should be taught within one university course.					
5.	Project work should be an essential assessment item of university entrepreneurship courses.					
6.	A University entrepreneurship course should emphasize internship as an effective tool for students to apply what they have learned in authentic contexts.					
7.	A university entrepreneurship course should aim to equip students with creativity and innovation skills.					
8.	A university entrepreneurship course should consider EXPO exhibitions a practical model for students to learn from.					
9.	EXPO exhibitions enhance the skills of innovation and entrepreneurship.					
10.	A university entrepreneurship course should seek to invite successful entrepreneurs in the community as guest lectures for students to learn from.					
11.	A university entrepreneurship course has to be tailored towards students' needs both academically and professionally.					
12.	Offering one entrepreneurship course to undergraduates may not be sufficient in terms of meeting today's job demands and aspirations.					

The authors of this paper distributed the questionnaire after explaining each item to the students in depth. Having collected the responses, the statistical measure utilized for the current study was calculation of percentages of students' responses per item.

STUDY FINDINGS

As explained earlier, the current study aims to explore students' opinions on the importance of university entrepreneurship education alongside its specifications. Table two below reflects the students' responses to each item in percentages.

Table Two: Subjects' Responses in Percentages

No.	Item	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Teaching the fundamentals and art of entrepreneurship should be excluded to Business majors.	24%	59%	7%	6%	4%
2.	Higher education institutions must teach innovation as an integral part of university courses.	3%	4%	5%	41%	47%
3.	Higher education institutions must teach entrepreneurship as an integral part of university courses.	0%	4%	10%	39%	47%
4.	Innovation and entrepreneurship are highly interrelated, so they should be taught within one university course.	1%	3%	4%	33%	59%
5.	Project work should be an essential assessment item of university entrepreneurship courses.	1%	1%	4%	33%	61%
6.	A university entrepreneurship course should emphasize internship as an effective tool for students to apply what they have learned in authentic contexts.	1%	2%	10%	49%	38%
7.	A university entrepreneurship course should aim to equip students with creativity and innovation skills.	0%	0%	3%	33%	64%
8.	A university entrepreneurship course should consider EXPO exhibitions a practical model for students to learn from.	0%	1%	2%	19%	78%
9.	EXPO exhibitions enhance the skills of innovation and entrepreneurship.	0%	0%	4%	15%	81%
10.	A university entrepreneurship course should seek to invite successful entrepreneurs in the community as guest lectures for students to learn from.	0%	0%	1%	27%	72%
11.	A university entrepreneurship course has to be tailored towards students' needs both academically and professionally.	0%	0%	8%	14%	78%
12.	Offering one entrepreneurship course to undergraduates may not be sufficient in terms of meeting today's job demands and aspirations.	0%	5%	13%	27%	55%

As table two reveals, the majority of students believed that university entrepreneurship education should not be excluded to university majors (24% strongly disagreed and 59% disagreed). In

response to items two and three about the importance of teaching innovation and entrepreneurship, the vast majority were in favor of this (47% strongly agreed & 41% agreed regarding innovation, and 47% strongly agreed & 39% agreed regarding entrepreneurship). As far as teaching both innovation and entrepreneurship within the same university course is concerned, the vast majority indicated their approval (59% strongly agreed & 33% agreed). Item five on the importance of submitting a project as an integral assessment component shows that 61% strongly agreed and 33% agreed. Item six which emphasizes inclusion of internship as an effective learning tool also received the majority's agreement (38% strongly agreed & 49% agreed). Almost all the participants advocated the suggestion on the need to equip students with creativity and innovation whilst teaching a university entrepreneurship course (64% strongly agreed & 33% agreed). Besides this, almost all the participants considered EXPO 2020 a practical model to learn from (78% strongly agreed & 19% agreed). Similarly, almost all the students emphasized the importance of EXPO exhibitions in terms of enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship skills (81% strongly agreed & 15% agreed). Additionally, almost all the participants stressed the importance of inviting successful entrepreneurs in the community as guest lectures to learn from (72% strongly agreed & 27% agreed). In answering item eleven on the need to tailor university entrepreneurship courses in such a way that students' academic and professional needs are met, the vast majority approved of the suggestion (78% strongly agreed & 14% agreed). The last item on whether offering one entrepreneurship university course may not be sufficient in relation to meeting today's job demands and aspirations, 55% strongly agreed and 27% agreed that it may not.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the study's questions and findings in mind, this section highlights several recommendations for instructors, scholars, and researcher to consider. To fulfill the needs of today's young entrepreneurs both locally and globally, higher education institutions should offer a general entrepreneurship course for all students to take with the aim of preparing them to encounter the challenges which they may face as future entrepreneurs. As far as the specifications of such a university course are concerned, this section delineates what points should be borne in mind whilst designing a general university entrepreneurship course.

As a start, a general university entrepreneurship course should align with market expectations and requirements. A university entrepreneurship course should also offer opportunities for students to acquire a repertoire of skills which are required for entrepreneurs to succeed in today's ever-changing world. With quality education in mind, university entrepreneurship education should strive for contemporariness, quality, adequacy, uniqueness, and excellence. A general university entrepreneurship course should also integrate innovation for students to handle complex organizational and societal issues. This entails emphasizing a unique mindset and focusing on entrepreneurship ecosystems in line with job needs and market demands. Throughout the instructional process, main effective personality traits to focus on include amongst others positivity, confidence, risk-taking, independence, flexibility, perseverance, wise planning, effective communication, good time-management, and skillful leadership.

Relating the discussion to course design, there are five steps for course designers to take into consideration. The first step would be to ensure that the course aligns with the vision and

mission of the institution, which normally speaking, are derived from the Ministry of Higher Education's expectations and aspirations. The second step would be to involve stakeholders such as the local community's entrepreneurs and the institution's faculty in the process of designing a well-thought of curriculum. It is through this step that exchanging fruitful experiences, sharing success stories, and highlighting problematic issues that may arise can be portrayed. The third step would be to set course learning outcomes in light of a program's attainment targets.

Having set course learning outcomes, the fourth step in designing a general university entrepreneurship course would be provision of up-to-date relevant knowledge about the fundamentals and art of entrepreneurship, critical thinking tasks, creativity issues, positive disposition, sense of coherence, leadership competencies, and innovation opportunities. It is the authors' conviction that innovation specifically should be offered as an integral component of a general university entrepreneurship course. To maximize instruction effectiveness, innovation teaching requires a balance amongst teaching knowledge, augmenting skill, and instilling positive attitudes on the part of learners. As known, each student has certain abilities which may be different from others' abilities. Nevertheless, it is through provision of varied inspiring learning experiences and employment of different appropriate pedagogical methodologies that higher education institutions' role is significant in preparing future generations for the challenges yet to emerge. Activities which teaching practitioners can perform to enhance entrepreneurship education include simulations of practical situations, role-play, personalized experiences, novel solutions, project work, networking communication, and community-oriented tasks amongst others. Universities as a teaching and research body should urge students to learn via means of innovation, experiential learning, and creativity. Entrepreneurship optimal roles and models should be highlighted and shared with students. Healthy practices, professional behaviors, and promising personality traits should each be a component of university entrepreneurship courses. Pedagogical methodologies appropriate to university entrepreneurship education should assume that students are actively involved in the learning processes whereby they construct sufficient knowledge about the fundamentals and art of successful entrepreneurship. Moreover, holding entrepreneurship events to create a pro-entrepreneurial attitude on the part of students would be helpful.

The fifth step in designing a general university entrepreneurship course would be proposing several appropriate assessment items to be conducted in accordance with attainment targets. Assessment with rigor is to be maintained whilst measuring students' knowledge, skill, and disposition. Accordingly, assessment should be future-oriented, thorough, valid, reliable, credible, and unbiased.

To conclude, this study aims to depict a clear idea about the role higher education institutions can play in relation to augmenting university entrepreneurship education. Furthermore, this study aims to suggest specifications of successful entrepreneurship education at the university level as perceived by undergraduates and proposed by the authors of this paper. The study, however, is limited to ninety-three university students studying at the institution for which the authors work. Based on this limitation, it is recommended that future studies on similar issues cover more students, institutions, and countries. In addition, exploring other stakeholders' opinions on the same issues is also expected to achieve more thorough findings and outcomes.

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