

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: ANOTHER APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a university-based entrepreneurial course conducted at the University of New Orleans during a summer intersession. The learning process was heavily engaged in developing networking and negotiation skills, as well as developing a strong awareness of the economic environment. The paper was designed to explain the process of the course's development at UNO. Because of the small number of students involved, it is not statistically sound to make any conclusions as to the validity of the course. It can be stated that all ten students did successfully finish the course.

The research also looked at a strong literature review of other entrepreneurship teaching methods. It became very evident during this literature review, that there is no one way of teaching entrepreneurship. But the described methods used by UNO seem to be more effective and applicable in real life situations. The research proposes one view of addressing what should be taught in an entrepreneurship education course.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to describe a university-based entrepreneurship course which focuses on the development of skills needed by the entrepreneur or small business owner, especially regarding the handling of personnel and external situations. Internally, there are employees and/or family members to hire, train, motivate, lead, supervise, and fire. Externally one must deal with customers, bankers and other sources of capital, trade associations, suppliers, the media, consultants and landlords. Networking and negotiation skills must be developed as well as an awareness of the economic environment. Those who teach in the entrepreneurship/small business area should find this approach useful for their teaching purposes.

The question of whether or not entrepreneurship can be taught has been settled, for it can be learned (Drucker, 1985). Other issues are what should be taught and how should entrepreneurship be taught (Sexton & Upton, 1987). This paper presents one view of addressing these questions. Other approaches are presented in the following selected literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The challenge for university entrepreneurship education is to devise learning situations which replicate entrepreneurship situations (Young, 1997). The most effective approach to conveying entrepreneurial knowledge is to learn by doing or hands-on experience (Zeithaml & Rice, 1987; McMullan & Long, 1987; and Sexton & Upton, 1987).

Solomon, Duffy, and Tarabishy (2002) conducted an extensive analysis of entrepreneurial education (Kuratko, 2005). They found that such education must include skill-building courses in negotiation, leadership, new product development, creative thinking and exposure to technological innovation (McMullen & Long, 1987; Vesper & McMullen, 1998). Several other areas considered important include sources of venture capital (Vesper & McMullen, 1988; Zeithaml & Rice, 1987), idea protection (Vesper & McMullen, 1988), and ambiguity tolerance (Ronstadt, 1987).

The types of teaching methods were found to be business plans (Gartner & Vesper, 1994; Gorman et al. 1997; Hills, 1988; Preshing, 1991; Vesper & McMullen 1988); interviews with entrepreneurs, and environmental scans (Solomon, et al. 1994), field trips and the use of video (Klatt, 1988), and consultation with practicing entrepreneurs (Klatt, 1988; Solomon, et al. 1994).

The Small Business Institute Program (SBI) provides hands-on experience where students provide consulting services to small business clients. There has been extensive research published over the past three decades concerning the SBI program (Osborne, 2003; Jackson, Gaulden & Gaster, W., 2003). Topics include the client, the student, process models, and improving projects.

Other studies related to the SBI program include those concerning SBI-Small Business Development Centers relationships, Fry & Howard, (1987), Hulpke, Harvey & Methalchi (1993); and

economic development and community outreach, Cours, Williams, & Schramm (2001), Bradley (2003), and Young (2004).

SBI students were surveyed by Brennan (1995) over three academic years on the likes and dislikes of the SBI experience. Students overwhelmingly liked their experience, especially the hands-on aspect of it. The amount of time required was liked least. Most students were positive about instructors, the final report, and client cooperation. Teamwork received mixed ratings.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International's Accreditation 2005 outlines two trends which impact on the SBI program. One is the stress on experiential learning, the second, improved assurance of learning. Ames (2006) presents recommendations for strengthening the student consulting process as does Rainsford (1992).

Economic development is a buzzword today even in a depressed economy. States regions, cities and localities vie to bring in major facilities by offering tax and other incentives and to help existing businesses. The SBI program by its very nature of helping small businesses aids in the economic development of an area. Osborne (2003) presents a model for an SBI program in developing relationships with other organizations involved in business support activities and economic development. Such organizations can include chambers of commerce, county planning and development departments, and economic development agencies. Benefits to the SBI program include university support and recognition, identifying opportunities, establishing relationships with new and emerging businesses, and undertaking projects of wide public interest, e.g., a parking study for a local jurisdiction.

Bradley (2003) relates how an SBI project brought about the possibility of an intermodal port to be built on the Arkansas River that would include facilities for water, rail, trucking, and air

transportation. The report emphasizes the impact that student research can have on the development of a city or region.

Wallace and Belville (2002) show how the SBI can impact local economic development. They devised a set of criteria for judging a program's impact on economic development. It concerns the level at which a program intervenes and the types of clients it attracts, selects, and assists. They conclude that more guidance is needed to find clients who can help the economy grow. Last Vander Veen presents a model for using the SBI program in community development (Vander Veen, 2003).

Kuratko (2004) points out that the trend is for universities to develop new and unique curricula and to expand entrepreneurship programs. Next, we present a selection of unique or innovative entrepreneurship courses.

Boyles and Lang (2009) built on previous critiques of entrepreneurship education to develop a pedagogical model that immerses students in a dynamic and interactive process of innovation and creation, empowers them to develop initiative, and engages them in critical thinking and problem solving. Strempek and Paul (2003) provide a description and outcomes assessment of a program that uses live entrepreneurship as the underlying theme for integrating a management and marketing context in an undergraduate business curriculum.

According to Czuchry, Yasin and Gonzales (2004) there is a disparity between higher learning practices in relation to teaching technical entrepreneurship and the needs of high-tech start-ups and existing technology-based businesses. The authors provide an innovative approach to this issue on which stresses an open-system orientation with external partners in industry, business, the professional community, and technology-based business incubators.

A reengineering approach was taken by Lyndon State College's entrepreneurship curricula. Active learning is emphasized. Lectures and texts have been discontinued. Hands-on exercises, software for tutorials and testing, computer simulations, case studies, role playing, and group projects are used to facilitate active learning (Haym, 2006).

Markulis (2004) reports on an approach in which a small business management and entrepreneurship course was established in which three undergraduate students worked with a local entrepreneur on an actual business plan. This was an integrative approach which capitalized on the talents and experiences of both students and area entrepreneurs.

The traditional case method of teaching is over 100 years old. Theroux & Kilbane (2004) present a new type of case study called real-time (RTC) which was produced and applied in a course on entrepreneurship. RTC was conducted over the course of one semester and covered events at a single company at the time those events happened.

A one-day "Boot Camp" format is used at Dominican University, Chicago, to introduce business and non-business students to entrepreneurship. Faculty, students, and local entrepreneurs are brought together within the context of a four component experience (Johnson, A. C., 2006).

Students learn entrepreneurship best by using active learning experiences. Campus-based student businesses provide such opportunities. For schools which do not have incubators restrictions are being lifted on dormitory-based businesses (Sobel, 2000). A survey of four-year colleges and universities found, however, that there was not much support by university administrators for undergraduate students businesses (Thompson, Frangedakis, & Dickey, 2003).

The use of technology such as simulation, internet case studies and distance learning are reflected in research presented by Fregetto (2005), Clouse, et al. (2004), and Kotey (2004). McKenzie

(2004) examined the view that entrepreneurship education can be enhanced by the study of the life histories of working entrepreneurs, specifically using oral histories.

Neck, Neck, and Mayer (1998) suggest the use of the video (movie), *The Dead Poet's Society*, as a vehicle to enhance student learning of various entrepreneurial concepts as well as to introduce them to the entrepreneurial mind set. Suggested lessons learned include: (1) conformity stifles creativity, (2) find your passion and bring it to life, and (3) creativity can be unleashed, we all have it.

The University of Central Arkansas has used an approach for years that allows the student to choose between pursuing the traditional Small Business Institute model; performing individual feasibility studies—for students wanting to start their own business; developing a business plan for their own business; or working as a group developing economic development plans for cities, counties, chambers of commerce, and economic development districts. Another program has been developed to adopt a city or a county for economic development research by utilizing the Small Business Advancement National Center. A new curriculum has been created in the last few years working with non-profits helping them develop fundraising activities, feasibility studies and other ways to become self sufficient. This has been done with financial help from Winrock International, headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Last, the Marion Kaufmann Foundation awarded \$22.5 million in 2006 to eight universities to help change the culture of entrepreneurship education on U.S. colleges and university campuses. The grant recipients will embark on a wide variety of programs (rather than courses) aimed at integrating entrepreneurial studies into college life. Some schools will create minor degree programs; develop new courses in entrepreneurship; conduct research in the field of entrepreneurship; use new technology to help students build social networks and build or expand community-based businesses that benefit students and surrounding areas. Entrepreneurial activities will be expanded to liberal arts and

technology colleges or divisions within colleges. All will involve faculty from disciplines outside the business school (Background... 2006).

To illustrate, Arizona State will bring together its four campuses and the community for innovation and entrepreneurship. A major feature of their program is Sky Song, a complex which will be the hub for all enterprise innovations for students, faculty, staff, and community entrepreneurs. There will be student entrepreneurship advisors on each campus and an online database of the area's entrepreneurship landscape (Background....2006).

MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR ENTREPRENEURS (BA 3056)

This course was introduced in 1998 at The University of New Orleans. It is a required course for the B.S. in Entrepreneurship which was approved by the Board of Regents in 2005. BA 3056 is open to undergraduate juniors and seniors regardless of their major. It is held once a year during the two week Spring-Summer Intersession period, typically May 15-31. Classes are held six days a week (Monday-Saturday) from 9:00-11:30 a.m. There is no textbook. The average enrollment for the period 2003-2008 was 15 students.

The course objective as stated in the syllabus is:

In starting and running one's business, the entrepreneur/small business owner must deal with a variety of persons. Internally, there are employees and/or family members to hire, train, motivate, lead, supervise, and fire. Externally, one must deal with customers, bankers, chambers of commerce, suppliers, the media, and landlords, among others. Networking and negotiation skills must be developed and put to work. This course focuses on the development of skills needed in dealing with internal and external factors associated with small business.

The teaching methodology includes: (1) instructor lecture-discussion, (2) cases, (3) guest speakers (lecture-discussion), (4) field trips, (5) role-playing, and (6) a research project dealing with an existing business. There is an objective final examination.

Various topics are covered by the instructor and guest lecturers. The instructor covers such topics as networking, trade associations, customer service, sources of help, time management, and the everyday issues of importance to the small business owner, e.g., security, keeping good records, and hiring.

Topics covered by guest lecturers vary, however, those covered in the Spring 2009 Intersession are typical.

BA 3056, SPRING 2009 INTERSESSION

- * The New Orleans Economy-UNO economist.
- * Managing a Franchise-Owner of a local franchise.
- * How to Find and Work with a Business Consultant-Local business consultant.
- * Disaster Planning and Recovery.-UNO professor, an expert in this area. This is an important topic in this hurricane prone area.
- * Overcoming Personal and Business Difficulties-New Orleans businesspersons who has had to face personal and family illness obstacles and having both her business and home being destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.
- * Managing a High Tech Business-Owner of a small hi-tech business. Managing engineers and new product development are covered.

- * Selecting and Working with your Banker-Local banker. Role playing. Sources of funding are covered.
- * Negotiation-Local owner of a major retail appliance store. Role playing.
- * How the Small Business can Benefit from a Chamber of Commerce Membership-An area chamber staff person.
- * Managing a Business Startup-Presentation by owner who started a restaurant in 2008.
- * Turning a Company Around-Business consultant, a turnaround specialist.
- * Being a Successful Entrepreneur-Local entrepreneur. Keys to success are covered.
- * Social Networking as a Marketing Tool-Local social networking consultant. How to use Facebook and LinkedIn.
- * Field trip-Attend networking evening event of a local business group, students are free of charge.
- * Field trip-Visit to men's clothing store. Business dress for both men and women is presented.
- * Field Trip-Visit to Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission office. Meet staff. Discuss programs of the agency.
- * Field Trip-Oak Street and Oak Street Merchants Association. Observe first-hand, business in a survival mode due to street resurfacing on their block. Discuss Main Street program with association director.

A field project was assigned to the students. Its purpose was to understand the problems small owners face in today's recession, actions taken to solve those problems and what sources of help or assistance has the owner sought out. (Note in prior semesters problems related to surviving Hurricane Katrina were explored.) Given the short duration of the course, the sample size was limited to five small businesses per student of the student's choosing.

In the most recent class, 7 of the 10 students evaluated the course. The major strength of the course was the discussion with the real-world speakers, the field trips, and the variety of topics. There were no major weaknesses, although two students wanted more field trips. All of the students successfully completed the course.

CONCLUSION

As can be seen by the literature search and the explanation of the University of New Orleans Intersession Entrepreneurial Course, there is no one way to teach the entrepreneurship course. The UNO Model is very reminiscent of the European approach of block teaching. This approach has worked very well for our European counterparts and also demonstrates potential for American universities to use in intersession or summer courses. The use of field trips, social networking, and guest speakers are all tools that can be used to provide a great learning situation for the students. Live case learning in many cases is superior to the textbook approach. SBI case approach gives the student a real world example of how business works and how to solve problems in a real world environment. It is a recommendation of the authors that each individual professor should research the various examples and suggestions given throughout both the literature review and the UNO example, and pick the method that best suits their style of teaching. The intent of this paper is not to say that one method or approach is better than another but to give the reader an understanding of various approaches through a strong literature review and the example of the short-term UNO approach.

The UNO approach also lends itself well to increasing the student's ability to communicate through the written word. To truly develop a successful entrepreneurial education program, the program itself should be tailored to the needs of the students, the business community, and the professor's abilities. The researchers feel that the UNO experience accomplished that with outstanding results. The proof of the success of the UNO experience was that the students, small businesses that

were helped, and the professor, were all very happy and elated with the outcomes. Students learned, businesses were assisted, and the professor was able to accomplish the learning objectives set out at the beginning of the course.

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