

A Review of Methodologies for Teaching Entrepreneurship in Universities in Kenya

Robert Otuya

University of Eldoret,
Box 1125-30100, Eldoret, Kenya.
Email: robertotuya@yahoo.com

Abstract

The last two decades has seen remarkable growth and development of curricula and programs devoted to entrepreneurship and new venture creation. In the creative industries, entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as a catalyst to add value to projects, whether in the form of social, cultural, environmental or economic returns. Entrepreneurship educators have been attempting to teach entrepreneurship without really understanding what it is or what the proper goals of teaching should be. As a result, there is today a wide range of approaches to teaching entrepreneurship, focusing on personality traits, entrepreneurial behaviour or environmental factors, with varying degrees of apparent effectiveness. This study examined the different methods used in teaching entrepreneurship in universities in Kenya. A descriptive survey design was employed in the study. A census sample of 126 entrepreneurship students of Moi university and 45 students of United States International University responded to the self-administered questionnaires. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings showed that lecture method ranked highest in usage followed by group discussions and case studies respectively. This shows that experiential learning methods have not been fully embraced in teaching entrepreneurship in universities. The paper recommends that universities pursue experiential teaching methodologies such as use of business incubators where students learn by doing.

Key Words: *Entrepreneurship, teaching methods, universities in Kenya*

Introduction

There is an increasing interest in the entrepreneurial learning (EL) research field (Harmeling & Sarasvathy, 2013). Some studies argue that part of the increasing interest in EL is that the current entrepreneurship educational provision is supply-led and does not fully reflect a demand-led approach that values how entrepreneurs learn (Pittaway & Thorpe, 2012). Entrepreneurship courses were first provided in conventional business education (Kuratko, 2005), consequently, much early research focused on exploring the already provided programmes (McMullan & Vesper, 1987; Vesper & Gartner, 1997). Only later did the interest in exploring the learner side emerge that aimed to understand how real-life entrepreneurs learn and acquire entrepreneurial competencies (Morris, Webb, Fu, & Singhal, 2013).

The competencies, however, have also been gaining considerable attention in recent years across diverse fields (Sánchez, 2013). In this context, competency includes knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to complete an activity successfully (Morris et al., 2013; Sánchez, 2013). Regarding entrepreneurial competencies, they include, amongst many others: opportunity

recognition, opportunity assessment, risk management, creative problem solving, value creation and building, and using networks (Morris et al., 2013). Entrepreneurial learning focuses on exploring how entrepreneurs gain entrepreneurial competencies (Cope, 2005). Many entrepreneurial learning articles have drawn on literature from relevant fields such as individual learning and adult learning (Cope, 2005, 2011; Pittaway & Thorpe, 2012). Furthermore, the discussion on EL is centred on the idea of gaining entrepreneurial competencies through experience that entrepreneurs gain from “learning by doing” (Cope & Watts, 2000), routine activities (Cope, 2005), contingencies, non-continuous events (Harmeling & Sarasvathy, 2013), failure (Minniti & Bygrave, 2001), and reflecting (Cope, 2005) from experience gained through these life events.

Also, the methods suggested by researchers drawing on how entrepreneurs and adults in general learn assume that a high proportion of active learning is important to enable problem-solving, self-reliance and self-reflection (Klapper & Tegmeier, 2010). The educational methods suggested by entrepreneurial learning literature are scenarios, role playing and real business experiences (Corbett, 2005), case studies’ discussions and business simulations (Chang & Rieple, 2013), live projects that combine traditional teaching with talks from business people (Heinonen & Poikkijoki, 2006), peer assessment, primary data gathering and reflective accounts (Chang & Rieple, 2013).

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the methods used in teaching entrepreneurship in universities in Kenya.
2. To establish the extent of usage of the methods in relation to entrepreneurship education themes: teaching "about", "for", and "through" entrepreneurship.

Literature Review

In the 1980s, much entrepreneurship education (EE) literature discussed the trend of the increasing number of EE programmes in universities (McMullan & Vesper, 1987). Over time, the focus moved towards the actual process and content of EE programmes (Vesper & Gartner, 1997). Moreover, more recent works take a rigorous look at course content (DeTienne & Chandler, 2004; Fiet, 2001; Honig, 2004; Shepherd, 2004). Each of these articles, with many other recent articles about entrepreneurial learning, are making a serious attempt to merge theory, practice and actual observation of what entrepreneurs do and how they learn (Harmeling & Sarasvathy, 2013).

Coviello and Jones (2004) argue that the differences in EE practices originate from authors’ varied definitions of pivotal issues rather than the contextual differences. Hence, while EE programmes might be affected by country-specific issues, the aims of these programmes are universal (Samwel Mwasalwiba, 2010), and this study will draw on this diversity to map out common and best practices, and try to categorise the teaching methods of entrepreneurship into generic themes.

While there is a lack of uniformity vis à vis “what” is taught and “how”, causing the courses to vary widely (Bennett, 2006), the most discussed curricula content and teaching methods are business plan, marketing, small business management, simulations, case studies, networking,

product development, opportunity recognition, finance, incubators, guest speakers, selling and sales, mentoring, team building, generating ideas, internships, pitching ideas, and role playing (Bazeley & Richards, 2000).

Literature on the teaching of entrepreneurship can be grouped into three generic themes: theoretical-oriented courses that teach (1) “about” entrepreneurship (Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2014) and aim to increase awareness about entrepreneurship, encourage students to choose entrepreneurship as a potential career choice (Fayolle & Gailly, 2013) and consider self-employment (Klapper & Tegtmeier, 2010); and practical-oriented courses that teach (2) “for” entrepreneurship (Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2014) aims to encourage students and enhance their intentions to be entrepreneurs in future and (3) “through” entrepreneurship, which aim to graduate entrepreneurs (Vincett & Farlow, 2008), support new venture creation (Lundqvist & Williams Middleton, 2013) and develop entrepreneurial competencies (Bridge, Hegarty, & Porter, 2010). These themes are discussed in turns.

Teaching “about” entrepreneurship programmes

The most frequently discussed content subject in the articles that discuss theoretical-oriented courses is the business plan (Honig, 2004). Also, generally, the conventional management-related subjects such as marketing and financial management (Kuratko, 2005) are mentioned often, as well as small business management courses (Solomon, 2007).

Moreover, in this theme, there is entrepreneurship theoretical content that includes: entrepreneurial traits; personality characteristics; economic success; how people think entrepreneurially and entrepreneurial awareness (Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2014). For this theme, teaching is mostly teacher-centred and the learner is passive, and the most used teaching methods are lectures, guest speakers and case studies—usually adopted from textbooks (Fayolle & Gailly, 2008).

Teaching “for” entrepreneurship programmes

Curricula content for this theme takes skills-based approaches where it seeks to train students about the mechanisms of running a business (Bennett, 2006). The content of this theme aims to provide a portfolio of techniques to encourage entrepreneurship practice, including: generating business ideas; team building; business planning; creativity; innovation; inspiration; opportunity recognition; selling; networking; unpredictable and contingent nature of entrepreneurship; adapting to change; and expecting and embracing failure (Fayolle & Gailly, 2013; Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2014).

There is an increasing discussion about the concept of “learning by doing” and experiential teaching methods (Fayolle & Gailly, 2013). Some of the most discussed methodologies used in this theme are simulations (Honig, 2004); other discussed teaching methods range from self-directed activities, team teaching of academics and practitioners, mentoring and networking with entrepreneurs (Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2014).

For the teaching “for” entrepreneurship theme, in most cases students act, role play and pretend to be entrepreneurs rather than really being one, which is the core difference between this theme and the one discussed next, which is teaching “through” entrepreneurship (Vincett & Farlow,

2008). A unique example of learning “through” entrepreneurship is a programme in Sweden, where Lundqvist & Williams Middleton (2013) report that Ph.D. science researchers with inventions are linked with undergraduate entrepreneurship students to create a company that produces the invention. Students start by searching the customers’ needs to make the invention more suitable to the market, building a partnership and applying for seed funding. All of these steps are supported by mentors working for the university’s incubator, and at the end of each project, all students become shareholders in the company.

Methodology

This study employed a survey design. In a descriptive survey, information is collected by interviewing a sample of individuals to determine their attitudes, opinions, and habits (Orodho and Kombo 2002; Kothari, 2004). The target population was the students in universities that take Entrepreneurship major as a specialization at the undergraduate level. A total of five universities falls under the targeted population. However, two universities formed the accessible population for the study. The two were conveniently sampled as they had a significant population of undergraduate students taking Entrepreneurship major. The empirical analysis for Entrepreneurial major was carried out on a sample of the third and final year university students. This is a convenient sample very often used in Entrepreneurship research (Fayolle and Gailly, 2006; Urbano, 2006). These caliber of university students are about to enter the segment of the population showing highest tendency towards becoming an entrepreneur. The total population of the students taking entrepreneurship major in the targeted universities was a census of 178. However, during the actual interview, 100 percent census was not achieved instead, 96.1 percent of the respondents were available for interview giving a total of 171 students, 126 of Moi University and 45 of USIU. The questionnaire had seven items of methods used in the teaching of entrepreneurship education in the universities. The rate of usage of each method was evaluated on a seven-point likert scale with 1 representing method not used at all to 7 representing method highly used. This allowed for calculation of means score for each method and mode of the commonly used method. Questionnaires were administered in class with prior permission from the university administration and the respective lecturers. The students were briefed on the purpose of the study by the researcher and then asked to voluntarily fill the Questionnaires.

Results and discussions

The respondents comprised 54.7 percent male and 45.3 percent female, with a response rate of 96.1 percent. The student' mean age was 22.5 years implying that majority were in the age bracket of 30 and below which is classified as youth in Kenya.

The study sought to find out the extent to which various methods are applied in the teaching of entrepreneurship in the two universities. The methods considered for teaching entrepreneurship were: Lecture, Group Discussion, Case Studies, Guest Speakers, Visit to Entrepreneurial Firms, Business Games and Simulations, Videos, Slides, and Films. The students were asked to rank the usage of each method on a Likert Scale: 1 representing method not used at all to 7 representing method highly used. The findings are presented in Tables 4.36 and 4.37.

The findings from Table 4.36 indicate that lecture method is the highly used method in the

teaching of entrepreneurship in Moi University with a mode of 7, followed closely by group discussions with a mode of 6. The use of case studies recorded a mode of 5. Visit to entrepreneurial firms, guest speakers, business games, and simulations, and use of videos slides and films report very low equal modes of 1. However, literature ranks lecture method very low as an effective method of teaching entrepreneurship education. For instance Frank et al. (2005) report that pupil's development of entrepreneurship is affected by the entrepreneurship orientation at their school. Further, they found pupils' business start-up intentions to be associated with team oriented instruction method. Group discussion method which ranked second is supported by Rasmussen and Sorheim (2006) who found out that team-oriented methods and learning-by-doing activities in a group setting is an effective method commonly used within entrepreneurship education. The use of guest speakers is supported by Rae and Carswell (2000) in that they provide opportunities for students to learn from those with direct experience of enterprise management. However, the findings from the study were also far in terms of the use of guest speakers as evidenced by a mode value of 1.

Cooper et al. (2004) depict a range of learning environments, from a traditional lecture-style class to an in-company placement, in terms of their position along a learning continuum: "At one extreme is the traditional low-involvement lecture, at which the student is passive and the transfer of knowledge is one way. Attempts to engage students in more participation through case studies mark the position further along the scale, while in-company projects are at high involvement end of the spectrum". Cooper's findings reveal that the higher the active participation, the greater the chance the learner has that he/she will reach higher levels of self-efficacy.

Table 4. 1: Methods of Teaching Entrepreneurship Moi University

	N	Mean	Std Dev	Mode
Lecture Method	126	5.6746	1.23011	7
Group Discussions	126	5.6579	0.58463	6
Case Studies	126	4.6123	1.61177	5
Guest Speakers	126	2.3457	3.9856	1
Visit to Entrepreneurial Firms	126	3.9856	2.13639	1
Business Games & Simulations	126	1.5343	1.20211	1
Videos Slides & Films	126	1.4326	1.14846	1

Results from USIU sample have a similar trend with those of Moi University in terms of the methods used in teaching entrepreneurship education (see Table 4.37). Lecture method and group discussions have equal modes of 7 hence rank as the most common methods used in teaching entrepreneurship education. However, the mean value for lecture method is slightly higher than that of group discussions. Use of case studies and guest speakers take third and fourth positions respectively with modes of 5 and 4 respectively. The remaining methods record low usage as depicted by the corresponding low modes. Videos, slides, and films record a mode of 2, while business games and simulations, and visit to entrepreneurial firms both posted modes of 1. These findings are in line with what other researchers have established. The literature suggest lots of approaches to teaching of entrepreneurship ranging from the conventional approach such as textbooks (Fiet, 2002), to unconventional like business plan Audet, (2000), life histories of working entrepreneurs McKenzie, (2004); lectures from guest speakers, Volkmann, (2006) and field study or visiting to business organisations (Cooper and Bottomley, 2004). However, these studies do not report on the methods that are frequently used. The findings of the current study have shed more light by ranking the methods in terms of their rate of usage. Further, the findings suggest that the universities have not fully embraced methods that actively engage the students. Instead, they have continued with the lecture method where the student is passive and transfer of knowledge is one way.

Table 4. 2: Methods of Teaching Entrepreneurship USIU

	N	Mean	Std Dev	Mode
Lecture Method	45	6.7719	0.59356	7
Group Discussions	45	5.71333	1.32451	7
Case Studies	45	4.7310	1.63361	5
Guest Speakers	45	2.6374	1.51364	4
Visit to Entrepreneurial Firms	45	4.0234	2.23487	1
Business Games & Simulations	45	1.6725	1.45267	2
Videos Slides & Films	45	1.55563	1.562378	1

Comparison between the results of the two universities show a similar trend for all the methods except the use of guest speakers where USIU recorded a higher mode of 4 compared with Moi

University which recorded a mode of 1. This implies that USIU utilizes guest speakers while Moi University rarely uses this method in the teaching of entrepreneurship education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper aimed to contribute to mapping the entrepreneurship teaching methods at the university level. The teaching methods of entrepreneurship could be grouped into three general themes. The first theme excessively uses theoretical content and is a teacher-centred teaching method which is teaching “about” entrepreneurship and aims to increase students’ awareness about entrepreneurship as a career choice (Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2014). The second and third themes—teaching “for” and “through” entrepreneurship—aim to graduate entrepreneurs and are more learner-centred, and are designed to build entrepreneurial skills rather than only providing content. This happens through either creating an environment where students can imitate real business situations or actually enabling them to start or contribute to venture creation (Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2014; Vincett & Farlow, 2008).

The learning approach adopted by the two universities in disseminating entrepreneurship education is still predominantly trainer centered and dependent approach (lecture method). This supports the first theme of teaching "about" entrepreneurship. The learner centred themes - teaching "for" and teaching "through" entrepreneurship have not received a lot of attention in the universities. Many universities across the world offering social science programs put emphasis on theory at the expense of practical learning approaches and Kenya is no exception. In the case of Entrepreneurship Education, a theoretical approach denies the students hands-on experience of doing business and the perception of doing it as a career of choice. Accordingly, this study recommends the utility of more practical approaches such as internship in entrepreneurial ventures, visits to successful businesses, group projects, and business incubators as supported by Berghe et al (2010) who advocates for experiential learning. Experiential learning approaches accords learners an active participatory role that ensures acquisition of relevant entrepreneurial skills, attitude, and knowledge. This recommendation is supported by Turker and Selcuk (2008) who submit that if a university provides adequate instruction and inspiration for entrepreneurship, the possibility of choosing an entrepreneurial career might increase among young people.

In view of the findings of the study, it is further recommended that future research could explore many research questions relevant to the entrepreneurship education discipline, namely what “exactly” do we mean when we use the term “entrepreneurship education” (Pittaway & Cope, 2007); what are the detailed contents provided and teaching methods that contribute to achieving the different programmes’ objectives (Smith & Paton, 2011); how are the courses that use the label “entrepreneurial” linked in terms of content to the entrepreneurship process (Kuratko, 2005); how can the experiential learning programmes be made to be cost-effective (Sullivan, 2000); and what results are entrepreneurship education programmes giving in terms of the actual graduates who start or grow a business (Rae et al., 2012). Answering these questions might contribute to unfolding the current provision, which will consequently lead to improving entrepreneurship programmes in universities in Kenya and other countries that have similar trends (Lee et al., 2005).

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