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An evaluation of teaching methods of entrepreneurship in hospitality and tourism programs

Syed Zamberi Ahmad^{a,*}, Abdul Rahim Abu Bakar^b, Norita Ahmad^c

^a Management Department, College of Business Administration, Abu Dhabi University, United Arab Emirates

^b College of Business Administration, Prince Sultan University (PSU), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

^c School of Business Administration, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship has become an important subject in many undergraduate and postgraduate programs in hospitality and tourism schools since it aims to prepare and train future entrepreneurs to venture into business. This paper critically reviews and evaluates different methods of teaching the subject. In particular, it provides discussions about the aims of teaching entrepreneurship and refers to the challenges and difficulties of doing so in hospitality and tourism programs (HTP). An emerging conclusion of the paper is that although traditional techniques such as lecturing, tutorial and the case study seem to have been commonly used in delivering entrepreneurship subject, no single teaching method appears to be adequate to achieve the objectives of the course. There has to be a link between theory and practice in order to ensure future innovation in HTP. Therefore, instructors teaching entrepreneurship should consider the contextual factors and, based on this, combine a number of teaching methods in order to provide students with wide range of required skills and an up-to-date knowledge of the entrepreneurial process.

1. Introduction

Under different titles such as entrepreneurship, small business management, entrepreneurial growth, new ventures creation, new ventures management or enterprise development, many undergraduate and postgraduate programs in hospitality and tourism management offer entrepreneurship education (EE) as compulsory or elective subject (Ahmad, 2015). The offering of EE related subject is seen very important since the aim is to provide students with the essential knowledge in starting a business and equipped students with the necessary skills and competences to become effective managers in the hospitality and tourism industries. Students will also get an exposure towards a better understanding of the entrepreneurship concept and learn how to be innovative and successful business owners. In other words, the main rationale for offering this subject is to facilitate graduates moving into self-employment as well as enhancing their employability to work in the hospitality and tourism industries characterised by volatile, complex and uncertain business environment.

One of the major issues in entrepreneurship is how the subject should be taught (Pittaway & Cope, 2006). Educators are still struggling to find the appropriate educational objectives and little is known about effective teaching techniques for EE (Brockhaus, Hills, Klandt, & Welsch, 2001). Despite the fact that studies in this area do exist, majority of these studies were undertaken within business school perspectives (Kuratko, 2005; Solomon, 2007). Studies on EE that were done outside business schools include sport

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: drszamberi@yahoo.com (S.Z. Ahmad), aAbubakar@psu.edu.sa, drrahimbakar@gmail.com (A.R. Abu Bakar), nahmad@aus.edu (N. Ahmad).

management (Ratten, 2011), engineering and science (Handscombe, Rodriguez-Falcon, & Patterson, 2008), veterinary medicine (Henry & Treanor, 2010), art (Gose, 1997), geography, earth, environmental science (Maguire & Guyer, 2004), nursing (Dickerson & Nash, 1999), medical degree (Padilla, White, Bovee, & McQueen, 2011), and history and music (Mangan, 2004).

Given the scarcity of studies carried out outside of the business school, a number of scholars have called for a new approach to EE (Gibb, 2005; Kirby, 2004; Volkman et al., 2009) while others were more conservative by arguing that the current pedagogy in EE should mainly be revised to provide an effective and efficient teaching and learning strategy (Mwasalwiba, 2010). Developing an ‘entrepreneurial mind-set’ within the classroom environment is a challenge for any educator let alone to create a new venture (Gibb & Price, 2014). It demands the formulation of an integrated learning and teaching strategy that aligns intended learning outcomes with the effective selection of pedagogy. Pedagogy or teaching method is of paramount importance in the learning process, involving effective method, competent instructor and sufficient teaching facilities. Given there is somehow a consensus among EE scholars that entrepreneurship can be taught (Ismail, 2010), the emphasis now shifted to what should be taught and how it should be taught (“Chief Scientist”, 2015; Fayolle, 2007; Lourenco & Jones, 2006). However, Rideout and Gray (2013) argued that even though there has been some progress in EE, the field is still at a very early stage of development.

The increase in growth of the hospitality and tourism industry in recent years creates a huge opportunity for entrepreneurs particularly the young entrepreneurs between the ages of 20–35 years old (Hospitalitynet, 2016). Given this fact, it is particularly important for educators to ensure that this generation of students graduate with a mix of skills that will equip them for this profession, with the ability to be flexible, adaptive and proactive. The term entrepreneurship is always revolving and varies across different industries and fields, making it difficult for people to define it. For example, Jones and English (2004) define entrepreneurship as “the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognise commercial opportunities and the insight, self-esteem, knowledge and skills to act on them”. Sewell and Poll (2010) on the other hand define entrepreneurship as “the desire, motivation and skills necessary to start and manage a successful business.” According to Olsen and Mykletun (2012), there is no controversy free operational definition of entrepreneurship, such as those defined above; therefore they proposed the use of foundational objective as a basis for framing entrepreneurship.

One of the most commonly used foundational objectives of entrepreneurship education is to encourage students to create their own businesses (Harkema & Schout, 2008). However, creating own business is not the main focus of hospitality and tourism education; therefore, this definition is not quite applicable to HTP (Olsen & Mykletun, 2012). Thus, they proposed a new term that they called “entrepreatality”, a combination of the words “entrepreneurship” and “hospitality”. Entrepreatality focuses on the process of using available resources to create value to a customer while EE focuses on starting a new venture (Olsen & Mykletun, 2012). In other word, given the nature of hospitality and tourism industry, EE in HTP should focus on creating a service-value proposition instead of focusing on new venture creation only. Scholars also noted that most hospitality and tourism graduates would remain employed in organizations and never become independent entrepreneurs (e.g. Ahmad, 2015). The skills that they acquired in EE, however, would help them to act entrepreneurially within the company.

The importance of how EE should be taught or the appropriate teaching method in HTP is still a fundamental issue in EE that is part of an ongoing scholarly debate in the hospitality and tourism literature (Deale, 2016). Teaching contents and methods would be the decisive factors of success for teaching EE in HTP in the twenty-first century (“Chief Scientist”, 2015). Unfortunately, very little is known about effective teaching techniques for entrepreneurship education (Deale, 2016; Olsen & Mykletun, 2012) and research and knowledge about how to teach entrepreneurship in HTP remains relatively underdeveloped despite the growing demand for more entrepreneurial-oriented graduates (“Chief Scientist”, 2015). Having recognised this gap, this paper aims to critically review and evaluate the main teaching methods of EE and discuss the effectiveness of the specific teaching method in relation to HTP at the university level.

2. Focus and scope

This paper hopes to determine the “source” of the teaching method effectiveness within the HTP specifically. However, this article is not intended to be a compendium that provides all the possible techniques on how to teach entrepreneurship but rather an analysis of the widely used teaching pedagogy applied in the EE. The first step was to perform an evaluation or assessment of the past and present teaching methods of EE in terms of their strengths and limitations. While there exist many different definitions of teaching methods or practices (e.g. Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986), we define teaching method as the general principles, pedagogy and strategies used in teaching. One of the greatest challenges for educators is determining the effectiveness of teaching methods for students. According to Read and Kleiner (1996), in order to measure the effectiveness of a teaching method, we need to understand how people learn. People learn when they are actively involved in the learning process and when learning is followed by positive reinforcement such as praises (Read & Kleiner, 1996). It is important to note that in this paper, we only focus on the effectiveness of teaching method and not teacher effectiveness. However, teaching effectiveness can be understood by looking at what effective teachers do. Effective teachers have high expectations for student learning, provided clear instructions, monitored student learning progress, used incentives and rewards to promote learning, highly efficient in the classroom routines, and maintained excellent personal interactions with their students (Hunt, 2009). Specifically, when looking at the effectiveness of teaching method we focus on the learning objectives, introduction of new knowledge, practice to deepen students understanding, students' engagement and participations, classroom management, student teacher relationships and multiple measures of students' achievements (Marzano, 2007). The concept will be further elaborated in the following sections.

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