

THE ROLE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON LEARNING PROCESS

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Abstract: *In this paper, we will consider how the development of extracurricular activities based on entrepreneurship may assist in developing immersive, learning, which achieve the entrepreneurial experience. It explores their impact on student learning process in order to understand the extent to which such activities simulate entrepreneurial learning. The article reports one study conducted in the current academic year 2013 - 2014, which explores different forms of extracurricular activities.*

In terms of entrepreneurial learning student's engagement in extracurricular activities provides enhanced opportunities for 'learning by doing' through action and experience. The data show that an increased action leads to reflective practice and social learning is important for students. The article highlights the capacity of entrepreneurship education to stimulate entrepreneurial learning; illustrating the value of extracurricular activities and explaining how develop student's enterprising behaviours. Furthermore, it is very important to examine the need to develop a more enterprising approach to learning by adopting an experiential approach.

Keywords: extracurricular activities, an entrepreneurial process, entrepreneurship, students, and informal education.

JEL classification: L26; I25

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship, or the process of starting up a new enterprise, presents challenges because of the need to make decisions addressing a very range of aspects of business management in situations where there is a great deal of uncertainty (Timmons et al., 2011). A further key issue for entrepreneurial education is how stimulating and enjoyable "value added" activities can be developed for students (Rae, 2007).

Entrepreneurial education has continuously over-looked the role of practice as an epistemological means of learning, and how practice can contribute to entrepreneurial development, which is different from traditional approaches (Higgins D. et al., 2013).

Entrepreneurship education has come in a number of forms: '*about*', '*for*' and '*practice in*' entrepreneurship (Gibb, 2002). The '*about*' form can be related to formal education (curricular: courses and seminars). Education '*for*' entrepreneurship means focus on the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills through learning by doing (Pittaway, 2007). The '*practice in*' can be associated with informal education, extracurricular activities, experiential learning.

The varieties of techniques used to teach entrepreneurship are probably only limited by the imagination of the professors, the abilities and motivations of the students and the resources available to the university (Heriot, C.K. et al., 2008).

The importance of extracurricular activities has become an emergent theme within theorizing on how entrepreneurs learn. It suggests that the domain of entrepreneurship represents a special and unique context in which to study management learning (Cope, 2003).

Accepting that entrepreneurs learn through experience, it is a need to understand how entrepreneurs learn from experiences, through the identification of entrepreneurial learning activities.

Entrepreneurs use very informal methods for making sense of their activities; in other words they develop their own means of sense making of situations from the experience of the activity. However current entrepreneurial curriculum would seek to decontextualize experience in order to allow the entrepreneur to understand the process and learn to act in more effective ways.

Programs have understood for years that education in entrepreneurship requires practical application, more than other business disciplines. Beyond more traditional efforts such as internship, educational institutions are developing others ways to ensure that the students will acquire the necessary skills. The establishment of an open working and learning space can provide for students practical activities and allow the generation of ideas, space to test the manner in which they can be used in everyday practice (Higgins, D., 2013).

Entrepreneurship courses require a non-traditional approach in which students must learn to embrace the challenges of operating in a business environment that favours creativity and risk-taking.

The promotion of extracurricular activities has become increasingly important to the University as they respond to criticism about the lack of relevancy in the classroom.

Further empirical research shows that the entrepreneurship education programs and positive role models and entrepreneurs are strong incentives for students to choose an entrepreneurial career path (Fayolle et al., 2006).

The purpose of introducing the use of practice into entrepreneurial education is to enable the provision of a more informative pedagogy. This approach provides entrepreneurs with the opportunity to think about their own learning and growth, to create for them space to reflect and to lived experiences (Higgins, D. 2013).

We can consider the informal factors that potentially facilitate and hinder the development of entrepreneurial universities. Higher education institution associated with formal entrepreneurial education (courses, seminars, and curriculum) at all levels has the potential to contribute to the cultural dimensions.

Exposing students to extracurricular activities with a variety of aims could develop favourable student attitudes.

2. Why entrepreneurial extracurricular activities are relevant for higher education?

The entrepreneurial extracurricular activities are important within entrepreneurship education. Is a way of enhancing formal entrepreneurship education by allowing activities to be student-led thereby giving additional space outside of the curriculum for students to take initiative (Pittaway et al., 2010).

Abreu (2013), define as entrepreneurial any activity that occurs beyond the traditional activities, is innovative, carries an element of risk, and leads to financial rewards.

Entrepreneurial extracurricular activities involve *actions*, *experiences* and *newness* and are inherently learning-by-doing process linked to new business creation. Because entrepreneurship education is non-traditional business disciplines and there is no dominant pedagogical model, extracurricular activities must be utilized (Plumly, L.W. et al, 2008).

We must understand how extracurricular activities might affect student learning and how effective activities can accommodate changes in student learning styles and values.

In order to begin detailed understanding of this topic, the first question that must be asked is what an entrepreneurial extracurricular activity is? Entrepreneurial extracurricular activities can be seen as: informal education, non-accredited students activities like: games, competitions, clubs and societies, summer schools, exchanges, mentoring, job shadowing, internships, workshops, financial support, incubation, business support, simulation case studies in enterprise education, speeches by entrepreneurs and role models, networking events and so on.

Many programs discover the need for "accelerated" offerings to recruit and encourage students who have entrepreneurial aspirations and/or well-developed plans. If the extracurricular activities are very well integrated into the educational process, those can provide intensive practical experience for students, and can make the connection between their theoretical notions and real-world experiences.

This kind of informal entrepreneurial education can provide for students: a foundation for experiential learning, supportive environment which gives them a comfort within which to take risks and fail, aim to enhance entrepreneurial skills, raise awareness, aspirations and practical knowledge about what entrepreneurial activity means (Clark et al., 2008). Extracurricular activities are 'action oriented' and based on 'experience'. Action can be exposed in three parts: *the act of doing, the experience received in the doing process and the learning accumulated from the experience* (Pittaway, 2010; Rae, 2000). Extracurricular activities engage students in action and whether this action encourages students to acquire tacit knowledge about enterprising behaviour.

Extracurricular activities not only enhance learning, but they also seek to educate, inspire and encourage entrepreneurial interest and which is directed at the development of enterprising skills, either as a means to enhance employability or as a method of gaining skills relevant to future business creation (Edwards, 2001), help students manage their time better, make more informed and thoughtful decisions, and improve their ability to communicate (Kotts, 2011 apund. Warren 1997).

In terms of entrepreneurship education, the role of extracurricular activities in enhancing student learning in entrepreneurship is often noted. We can discuss about tactics for helping to create new extracurricular activities in order to improve entrepreneurial skills for students.

A benefit of entrepreneurial extracurricular education is the fact that although students have to act in difficult circumstance they are not financially exposed in the same time as an entrepreneur.

The students feel more 'like home' when they are involved in extracurricular activities. Activities came from students are more related to initiative taking.

There are few extracurricular activities that adopt a clear educational focus: case studies, specific project for the company, business plan competition at regional, national and international level, consulting projects for companies, etc.

Business plan competitions are a way to infuse some competitive fire into a coherently safe environment, and innovation is reaching even this "mainstream" tool of entrepreneurship education (Welsch, 2004).

Programs like case studies competitions are bringing more relevant content. Another example is the use of video case studies of entrepreneurial role models within an entrepreneurial module. This kind of exercise enables students to act as a consultant, apply models, theories, tools to gain and understanding the entrepreneurial process. Students were required to participate in cross-cultural teams and conduct specific tasks (Czuchry and Yasin, 2008).

Consulting projects for companies offers students an opportunity to integrate their academic and work experiences in the creation of a consulting solution for a company's real problem (Herriot, 2008 apud Cook and Belliveau, 2006). The consulting projects provide students with experiential learning in a team, problem definition, research and application, project management, critical thinking skills and in making presentations.

Trainings and workshop participation is also a good opportunity to interact with specialist and to improve their capabilities. Entrepreneurial training increases involvement in all types of academic entrepreneurial activities, including in informal and non-commercial activities (Abreu, 2013).

In the same time, the quality of a member in NGOs, entrepreneurship clubs, for students is also a widespread phenomenon. Why are attractive for students the NGOs and their activities? Student clubs function as a platform that allows them to be actively involved in a wide range of activities, to take initiatives, to work in a team, to run projects and so on. The University must have a collaborative relationship with the Entrepreneurial NGOs and support their work and activities. Volunteering should be encouraged by the University, should not be imposed, but must to provide support in order to be manifested by students. In Romania, for example, there are between 2-5 students' organizations in each institution. Some of the universities have particularly societies how covers specific areas. The role of groups, social interaction and interaction with the "community of practice" of specialists define the entrepreneurial learning as a process of co-participation.

The success of any venture, project, or another endeavour depends upon the persons involved and an entrepreneurial program is no different. Important extracurricular activities 'influencers' include, among others, an advisory board, an entrepreneurship centre, a co-working space, a strong network and access to finance.

It is clear that from an educational perspective, this type of learning is invaluable because students get to act like an entrepreneur without incurring any risk, and potential or existing entrepreneurs get information at little to no cost (Knotts, 2011).

3. Data and methodology

Within this study, I want to explore how engagement in extracurricular activities can enhance entrepreneurial learning process. One of the sections of this article highlights the different types of extracurricular activities.

The research was designed to be an initial study. Before detailed surveys or questionnaires can be carried out it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of this subject.

In gathering data for the study, I designed a self-reporting questionnaire following a careful procedure to ensure adequate content. Data collection was based on the procedure of collective voluntary self-administration of the questionnaire to groups of students. During the academic year 2013-2014, a questionnaire survey was distributed to a sample of 400 licence and master students studying business and management studies at West University of Timisoara in Romania. From the 347 questionnaires returned, 285 were fully answered and usable by the researcher.

The questionnaire required participants to: (a) indicate which are the most five relevant extracurricular activities to them (b) rank order the factors that make the students more entrepreneurial (c) list up to five criteria reflective of a successful entrepreneurial students (d) entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial experience. Respondents also provide up to three examples of entrepreneurial activities.

Questionnaire scales and items:

- During the academic year, you have participated in extracurricular activities?
- Each week you spend time participating in extracurricular activities (organizations, student associations, etc.)
- You have already done, an internship?

- During this academic year, you have blended academic learning in the workplace experience?
- Please mention the most important outcome of experiential learning based on extracurricular activities?

The study show many forms of active learning accumulated, for examples: "you can lead a group", "I have learned how to organize myself and use initiative", "I have learned how to communicate", how to work in a team, "I having to deal with some problems", we have challenges, findings way to identify potential projects, "I exercised my analytical skills", "Learned to communicate effectively", "I utilized creative through process to solve business issue"

Students' motivations for engaging in extracurricular activities are varied. For examples, the student's highlight: the benefits of events and networking, gaining practical experience, having the opportunity to put the idea into practice, awareness of business ownership; and assistance with knowledge directly to business start-up, to enhance curriculum vitae and the employability, preparation for starting a business; enhancing transferable skills and so on.

According with study results, first five common entrepreneurial extracurricular activities are reflected in Table 1.

Crt.no.	Entrepreneurial extracurricular activity	Percentage
1	Workshop, training and conference participation	71%
2	Active member within NGO	32%
3	Speeches by entrepreneurs and role models	47%
4	Internship and company visit	37%
5	Business Plan Competition/Presentation	23%

Therefore, the management of the University ought to continue they promoting of extracurricular activities since it clearly benefits the students' academic achievement.

4. Results and conclusion

The aims of this article were to answer two basic questions about entrepreneurial extracurricular activities: why are these activities attractive to students? And what entrepreneurial learning benefits do they provide? The paper has highlighted that extracurricular activities have become very important and are used by many universities to help enhance understanding the entrepreneurship.

From the empirical data, it is evident that entrepreneurial extracurricular activities provide an important component in entrepreneurship education.

Being involved in extracurricular activities provides greater opportunities for students to "learn by doing" through action and experience accumulated (68% of respondents).

Students must have substantive hands-on experience working with community venture to add value to real venture (Plumply, 2009).

The learning outcomes from being involved in extracurricular activities determine the changes that have taken place in the areas of awareness of skills, self-development, confidence and career aspirations (Robertson and Collins, 2003).

To conclude, it is clear that extracurricular activities have real learning benefits for students and there is certainly evidence that they raise self-confidence and provide the required skills to engage in new business creation.

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