

Chapter 6

Entrepreneurial Work– Integrated Learning

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ABSTRACT

After decades of decreasing long-term job security and ongoing global economic crises, attention on and interest in entrepreneurship have significantly increased among Gen Y and Gen Z students in higher education institutions around the world. The pedagogical potential of work-integrated learning (WIL) and the increased offering of entrepreneurship programs in higher education intersect in a field referred to as entrepreneurial WIL (EWIL). This field, where WIL pedagogy is applied to deliver the learning outcomes of entrepreneurship education, is discussed here. The unique features and associated challenges that EWIL presents, particularly when compared with traditional forms of WIL experiences, are also examined, from the framework of a case study conducted on an internship-based course offered in a Canadian university. This chapter contributes to an understanding of the various factors that should be considered when developing novel EWIL programs in higher education institutions.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, WIL in the context of entrepreneurship education is presented in the form of a case study based on the authors' experience, analyzing a specific modality of WIL, which henceforth will be referred to as Entrepreneurial Work-Integrated Learning (EWIL). It is then followed by a detailed analysis of how the theory of experiential education and WIL pedagogy manifests itself in relation to the intersection with entrepreneurship education for the purpose of teaching *about* and *through* entrepreneurship, specifically with respect to the engagement of students with authentic entrepreneurial activities to acquire knowledge about entrepreneurship. Various features of EWIL are discussed, as well as inherent challenges that present themselves when using EWIL pedagogy.

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Entrepreneurship has become prominent in conversations relating to economic growth (Galvão et al., 2017), and more recently, economic recovery (Maritz et al., 2020). With the boom in entrepreneurial activities seen in the last few decades, entrepreneurship is considered vital for economic growth for two main reasons. First, entrepreneurship plays a significant role in job creation. In the United States alone, hundreds of thousands of jobs are created every year due to entrepreneurial activities. Second, entrepreneurship is the driving force of innovation and technological advancement (Kuratko, 2005). Since entrepreneurship and economic activities positively affect each other (Galindo & Méndez, 2014), entrepreneurship plays an important role in shaping public policies (Henrekson & Stenkula, 2009). Incentives encouraging and promoting entrepreneurship are offered by governments around the world and range from tax breaks and low-interest loans to dedicated immigration programs and grants (Acs et al., 2016).

Moreover, the disappearance of life-long careers, which was the norm for baby boomers and Gen X, has resulted in a more precarious job market for Gen Z and Y. As a result, Kuratko (2005) noted that the “younger generation of the 21st century is becoming the most entrepreneurial generation since the Industrial Revolution” (p. 578). In response to the mentioned societal changes, higher education institutions worldwide have introduced an increasingly diverse offering of entrepreneurship educational programs, both curricular and extra-curricular. In this chapter, Work-Integrated Learning pedagogy is presented and its capacity to deliver entrepreneurship education’s learning objectives is analyzed using a case study.

BACKGROUND

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship, as a career choice, has been recognized for many centuries (Casson & Casson, 2014), however, the appearance of entrepreneurship as a subject of study within the formal higher education system is a relatively modern phenomenon. In North America, entrepreneurship education only began growing in earnest in the 1970s (Barnard et al., 2019; Kuratko, 2005; Mei & Symaco, 2020; Sánchez, 2013). With the growing popularity of entrepreneurship program offerings, an intellectual debate was soon to follow, questioning whether entrepreneurship can be taught and learned or whether it is an innate attribute of an individual (Dickson, 2008; Fayolle, 2013; Haase & Lautenschläger, 2011; Henry et al., 2005). This debate persisted for a few decades, throughout which entrepreneurship courses were being introduced across the post-secondary sector.

Once a critical mass of institutions was offering a range of entrepreneurship courses and programs, Kuratko (2005) concluded that “the question of whether entrepreneurship can be taught is *obsolete*” (p. 580). Since then, discussion has continued about the purpose of entrepreneurship education, what it should include, and which pedagogies are most suitable and/or effective in delivering on its aspirational goals (Pittaway & Edwards, 2012). In recent years, entrepreneurship education’s objectives expanded beyond the expectation of creating entrepreneurs, to encompass the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills (Stuetzer et al., 2013). These skills are sought-after even in established corporations, as they face constant pressure to innovate and adapt to a changing industry landscape and thereby survive the advent of new, disruptive technologies. Entrepreneurship education, therefore, positions itself as being useful and even essential for Gen Z and Y as a survival tactic in a treacherous economy; this is particularly fitting as both Gen Y and Gen Z have been characterized as being entrepreneurial in nature (Schwieger & Ladwig, 2018; Wiedmer, 2015).

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