What Do We Think How Best to Teach University Students to Become Entrepreneurial: The Lecturers' Perspective

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Abstract
Entrepreneurship education in higher education is one of the fastest growing fields of education globally. There is however no substantive measure of agreement on 'how' best to teach entrepreneurship that most effectively stimulates entrepreneurial learning, student enterprise and graduate entrepreneurship. This paper explores the learning processes of entrepreneurship students from the lecturers' point of view and seeks to understand how students learn to become entrepreneurial within a higher education context. The research that underpins this study is based on in-depth interviews with lecturers within a UK university. Its focus is on the lecturer perspective of how learning should best be facilitated to develop entrepreneurial learning progressively as students engage with their studies within an entrepreneurship curriculum. The research findings suggest that the learning process of university students is underpinned by an experiential approach to learning, which is likely action-based and student-centred, focusing on the development of entrepreneurial skills and competencies associated with entrepreneurship. Student learning is more effective if it is grounded in an actual or simulated entrepreneurial reality from which they acquire an authentic experience of learning 'by', 'from' and 'through' doing. Subject-centred, authoritarian approaches to teaching designed to produce a standardised set of learning outcomes are unlikely to be conducive for entrepreneurial activities. Instead, the focus should be on the development of necessary skills and competencies which will help future graduates to re-evaluate, adapt, and revise activities in a resourceful manner to suit new environmental contingencies. Entrepreneurial activities have outcomes which are often impossible to anticipate. Therefore, pedagogical approaches should be developed to focus on applied hands-on, action-based activities, resulting in experiential learning.

Introduction
The growth and development in the curricula and programmes devoted to entrepreneurship education in the university sector have been remarkable over the last 20 to 30 years (House of Commons (UK), 2014; QAA (UK), 2012). The volume of literature in entrepreneurship education reflects the growing significance of this area of education in the same period (Sirelkhatim and Gangi 2015). This is not surprising, given that entrepreneurship has been linked to job creation and other aspects of economic well-being, as evidenced in Canada (Baldwin and Picot 1995) and Sweden (Davidsson et. al. 1998). Countries with a dynamic economy and high level of entrepreneurship produce faster economic growth (Wong et. al. 2005). There are also positive statistical relationships between entrepreneurship education and economic impacts including starting new business, increasing employability and earnings, and contributing to the growth of businesses (European Commission 2012; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (UK) 2013). Within the current political discourse both in the UK and EU, universities are perceived as having a vital role in the development of graduate entrepreneurs as the future creators of new ventures and wealth. For this reason, universities are challenged to endow their students with the appropriate mindsets, knowledge and abilities for entrepreneurial activities.

Although the proliferation of literature in entrepreneurship education has significantly improved understanding of what it is and what it does, there is no substantive measure of agreement on 'how' best to teach entrepreneurship that most effectively stimulates entrepreneurial learning, student enterprise and graduate entrepreneurship (Rae 2000; Politis 2005; Gibb 2002, 2006). The unique challenge of entrepreneurship education lies in the 'how' in facilitating learning to support the development of entrepreneurial skills and behaviour. This study seeks to understand how best to teach university students to become entrepreneurial. Its interest is in exploring the learning processes of entrepreneurship students from a constructivist perspective and understanding how students learn to become entrepreneurial within a university context. It seeks to make a contribution to the literature by investigating this process from a constructivist perspective by exploring the basic questions that every educator should ask when examining the issues of curriculum design and pedagogical practice - i.e. What? Why? How? For which results?. In doing so, this paper contributes a deeper understanding of how these key issues are constructed from the lecturers' perspective.

This paper begins with a literature review which presents a critical perspective on the pedagogical approaches to entrepreneurship education. It is through this discussion that I argue that constructivism can offer a philosophical framework which underpins the experiential nature of the entrepreneurial learning process in which knowledge is constructed by the learner based on their experiences. Then, I present the research design and the conceptual model based on which a guideline for data collection is developed. This is then followed by the analysis of data, discussion of findings and conclusions.

Teaching and Learning Entrepreneurship
Entrepreneurship education is recognised by many as being of fundamental importance for the development of dynamic economies and societies in the 21st century (Hermann et al 2008; Taatila 2010). The volume of literature in entrepreneurship education reflects the growing significance of this area of education. Despite this, there is a shortage of research works which specifically address the unique challenge of how the development of entrepreneurial learning can be effectively promoted (Rae 2000; Politis 2005; Gibb 2002, 2006). There is an increasing consensus that traditional pedagogical approaches to learning alone are insufficient to adequately develop entrepreneurs to deal with the complexities of running and creating innovating business opportunities. Traditional approaches tend to ignore, and not address, the ambiguities and uncertainties which surround the entrepreneurial process and devalue the broader social contexts in which the entrepreneur functions (Higgins et al, 2013). Although the use of traditional teaching approaches is still widespread, it has been noted that there is a significant shift towards experiential learning, learning 'for' rather than 'about' entrepreneurship, within which there is often a focus on the tangible and assessable outcome of a business plan rather than the skills of entrepreneurship (Solomon 2007; Rae 2010). This theoretical and pedagogical shift in entrepreneurship education is reflected in the literature, see, for example, Garavan and O'Cinneide (1994); Gorman et. al. (1997); Hannon (2005); and Pittaway and Cope (2007).

Entrepreneurship is more than the mere creation of new business ventures. As Kuratko (2005) argues, it is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation, which requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. The essential characteristics include

opportunity-seeking, willingness to take risk, ambiguity tolerance, perseverance, and tenacity to push an idea through to reality – i.e. characteristics which are very different from typical business management education. The business environment in which entrepreneurs operate is characterised by diversity and ongoing change. To successfully manage a business venture in such environment, entrepreneurs often cannot use given 'roadmaps' from management and entrepreneurship textbooks as many questions concerning where and how to lead the venture cannot be answered by known solutions. Instead, they often need to resort to creating their own, new 'roadmaps' to find their way through unknown territory. In this sense, learning for entrepreneurship cannot be abstracted from the situation in which it is acquired and used. Knowing and doing are reciprocal, as Brown et al (1989) articulate, whereby knowledge is a product of what we do, the specific context of the action, and the culture within which it is constructed and used. In developing a pedagogical approach which stimulates entrepreneurial learning, there is, therefore, a need for a philosophical framework which conveys the idea that learning is experiential, grounded in an actual or simulated entrepreneurial reality from which students acquire an authentic experience of learning 'by' and 'from' doing.

Methodology

The research design of this study utilises a qualitative research design. The research that underpins this study is based on in-depth interviews with lecturers within a UK university. Three lecturers were recruited as participants for the interviews using convenient sampling. Each interview on average lasted approximately 60 minutes. The interview questions are based on the four main questions outlined in the Research Design section, but have been slightly adapted to reflect the perspective of a lecturer/teacher – see Table 1.

Table 1: Interview Questions

Subject of questions based on key issues	Interview questions
The question of 'what'	What types of content make successful entrepreneurship education?'
The question of 'why'	What are the learning objectives and outcomes of entrepreneurship education? What specific outcomes do you want students to gain from entrepreneurship education? Why?
The question of 'how'	How entrepreneurial learning can best be stimulated through pedagogy? How do you structure a learning environment in which students learn best in an entrepreneurship curriculum?
The question of 'for which result'	How entrepreneurial learning can best be evaluated and assessed? How would you want the learning outcomes to be assessed?

The data is analysed using a constructivist approach to Grounded Theory, following the methods as suggested by Charmaz (2006). The logic of grounded theory is inductive in that theory is developed from the bottom up, building generalisations and inferences from the data themselves. In constructing grounded theory, Charmaz (2006) advises that grounded theorists should aim to create or adopt methods within appropriate social settings that hold a promise of advancing emerging ideas. Therefore, in practice, the methods are bound to differ (Walker, 1985) from one study to another as following a given set of procedures can be problematic as they tend to be methods developed by authors to tackle specific studies. In other words, because each research project has its own focus and needs, it can be difficult to make transference of these methods into other projects without taking into consideration of the unique external and internal requirements of a given study. It was in this sense that I developed my own method of analysis that is suitable to my specific needs and yet holding as central the importance of being rigorous and accurate.

Data was analysed tentatively as the process flowed between data collection, analysing, changes in the design and more data collection and analysis. In analysing data, the technique of memo-writing was adopted, based on the principles suggested by Charmaz (2006). Grounded theorist write memos to serve analytic purposes. Memo-writing is described by Charmaz (2006, p.72) as "the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers". Writing successive memos throughout the research process keeps the

researcher involved in the analysis and helps them to increase the level of abstraction of their ideas. Memo-writing would help capture the comparisons and connections, and crystallise questions and directions for the researcher to pursue. Through conversing with oneself while memo-writing, new ideas and insights arise during the act of writing, and in doing so provides a space to become actively engaged in the data, develop ideas, and fine-tune the sense-making in the subsequent data interpretation.

Research Analysis and Findings
This section presents the research findings gained from the data collected from the face-to-face interviews with three university lecturers.

Motivation for Learning (the question of 'why')
The question of 'why' relates to the 'goals', 'objectives' or 'outcomes' of learning within a curriculum. It asks the lecturers what specific learning outcomes that they would want their students to gain from an entrepreneurship education and the reasons for them. From the perspective of lecturers, what are perceived as desirable learning outcomes would shape and determine the curriculum of an education.

Lecturers support the need to connect students with the reality of entrepreneurship through practical experiences and by allowing learning in the real world outside the classroom. As an outcome of entrepreneurship education, students should learn to connect to the reality in order to understand and navigate through the professional world.

> "I am minded to give them some practical interventions about real life issues…what we do for start-ups, what are the reasons for doing this, what is involved…clearly based on social and economic perspectives…entrepreneurial traits, value and behaviour…then build some practical stuff around it to give them a feel of it…even let them try it out…and go further into entrepreneur networks and allow them to be introduced to the right business networks."
> "…students get access to the entrepreneur directly, it is a real problem in that person's life…in that sense it is real, it is not abstract… this is a real person with a real problem and let's see if we can help them…"

The results of the analysis indicate a strong focus on the development of certain personal qualities as a major outcome of entrepreneurship education. A highly valued outcome of entrepreneurship education is related to self-discovery and the creation of traits and behaviour associated with creative entrepreneurship.

> "…it is about being able to critically reflect and not just reflect but think about what have I done, reflecting with and on actions…to re-read the notes to see what they have learnt about themselves, not just the hard topic, but about themselves and how they have approached problems or issues."
> "Yeah, it is the behaviour that is key because that is the opportunity we have in higher education. Skills can be learnt on a need basis but I think values and behaviours need to develop overtime. So, what I am expecting my students to be challenged…and confused – I support that 'confusion' in the learning."
> "…stuff around motivation, self-advocacy…about how they develop themselves. So, one thing they would come out with is to discover their entrepreneurial self and where they fit. This is by no means trying to get everyone to be entrepreneur but about entrepreneurial self…"

It appears what would be desirable for an education of this nature is to incorporate something that would help students to get to know themselves and find inspiration to enhance professional life. Lecturers would like students to learn about themselves in terms of who they are and the extent of their 'entrepreneurial self'. They would like to have learning objectives which help inspire students to take a creative and reflective approach to their professional life. This can be achieved by giving them opportunities to reflect on what they really like and suit their needs.

Stimulation of Learning (the question of 'how')
The question of 'how' refers to the 'pedagogy' as a means to achieve learning objectives, goals or outcomes. It seeks to find out from the lecturers on how entrepreneurial learning can best be stimulated through pedagogy, and how they structure a learning environment in which students learn best in an entrepreneurship curriculum.

One dominant, recurrent aspect in the data suggests that learning is best stimulated through pedagogy that emphasises 'learning by doing' and simulates real life professional practice. Learning needs to be practical and applicable in real life or real-world situations. There is a clear desire to be able to apply what is learnt to the real business world. Such learning can be achieved through pedagogies that forge a close relationship between theory and professional practice, and clearly illustrate how theoretical knowledge is applied within real world situations. Lecturers feel that students learn best when learning is practical, supported by the use of relevant examples, case studies and/or audio-visual materials, through which knowledge or theory is 'brought to life' in the classroom, making it 'real' for the students.

> "…it is a real problem in that person's life…in that sense it is real, it is not abstract…this is a real person with a real problem and let's see if we can help them…and by which I would learn and will also generate some networks…learning about real life issues rather than theoretical ones."
> "…it is all about practical stuff…last week…we were about do some sort of consultancy…it was about a business with some sort of issues…There was a pile of difference pieces of evidence that the students had then to place in the context of the theory to pull together to tell a story where that business was and what its issues were…"
> "Yes, the more realistic the better…"

There is a strong emphasis on experiential, practice-based education. However, there is a recognition of the need for theoretical knowledge and its important role in underpinning professional practice. However, students consider that such knowledge must be situated within areas which are perceived to be attractive, relevant and of interest to them.

> "…authentic learning experience…it has got to be grounded in experience…."
> "It feels like playing but they are actually learning a great deal and then I start to relate that back to the theory, always."
> "…we need to apply the academic underpinning so I will try to get the theory there across in an interesting, engaging way obviously…students like to turn up for it…try to stimulate thoughts and further reading. Theories and models have got to get across there."

It is considered that learning is best stimulated if it is 'personal' by providing opportunities for students to relate learning to their own entrepreneurial development and motivation to succeed, as well as to reflect on their learning. Entrepreneurship education provides a learning environment for trial and learning processes which allow students to test and allocate their learning in experiential situations. Reflection on such practical learning processes is considered to be highly valuable for enabling the learner to create an inner connection to their learning needs as part of their personal development process. In this sense, learning is 'student-centred' and constructed by the learner grounded on their individual experiences.

> "Who are these students we are working with, what are their backgrounds, where they came from…so we need to understand them. I would start with getting to draw their entrepreneurial personality so they can see where their mind is, and to get them reflect on what they draw…"
> "…ask them to think about the person who inspires you…I see that guy, I can be that guy or that woman. I can learn from them and their experience, and rationalise that with theory of what I am doing."

Outcomes of Learning (the question of 'what')

The question of 'what' relates to the contents to be taught within an entrepreneurship curriculum. It asks lecturers about their views on the types of content which they regard as important or desirable within an entrepreneurship curriculum. There is an emphasis on subject content which would equip them with an understanding of the notions of who becomes an entrepreneur and entrepreneurship, as well as the knowledge and skills for successful entrepreneurship in a variety of business and organisational contexts. An entrepreneur is associated with being a leader of enterprise whose behaviour and traits are perceived as 'enterprising'.

"To my mind it is very logical to look at entrepreneur and entrepreneurship, what is that is all about. Then you kind of get into the traits and behaviour and all that sort of theories so that they can say 'I have got some of that…I exhibit some of that', then they can recognise in themselves."

"So, what should they be able to do? A lot of it is about being a leader and decision maker, problem solver, partly through a process and partly through a new intuitive behaviour bringing out stuff and developing stuff inside them…around idea spotting, being able to spot opportunities, and develop those opportunities into ideas."

To run an enterprise successfully, it is perceived as important to possess the knowledge and skills of a range of different disciplines, including marketing, leadership, managing people, finance, networking, idea generation, and aspects of implementation.

"Managing people, we would cover the sense-making and sense-giving which is about making sense of being a leader, or your vision... In terms of what is classed as hard skills such as marketing operations and finance. I would say the appreciation of finance is important, to be able for having meaningful conversations in sense-making and sense-giving…underlying and understanding of that. Recognition and idea generation, and exploitation of those…"

"…it would be around marketing, managing people, finance, operations are probably the key areas. I am looking at developing them in an entrepreneurial way…"

The analysis suggests that the outcomes of entrepreneurship education in the eyes of the lecturers are connected to the creation and/or management of an enterprise and the achievement of appropriate knowledge and skills to do so. They are also strongly linked to personal growth and development of the learner and the education of certain leadership qualities.

Assessment of Learning (the question of 'for which results)
Lecturers are normally responsible for the choice of assessment methods, design of the assessment tools as well as the implementation of the assessment process. The question of 'for which results' asks the lecturers how they think learning outcomes would be best evaluated and assessed. The lecturers emphasise the importance of using appropriate methods of assessment which are fit for purpose i.e. using the right tool for the right job. In order to select an appropriate assessment method for assessing entrepreneurial learning, this begins with the question of what should be the learning outcomes for which students are being assessed.

"…to be able to see entrepreneurial behaviour if they are actually demonstrating that. That is why I said that in the beginning…to what extent is that important to you…If you are looking to create entrepreneurs of the future…very important, yeah…If you are there to create enterprising behaviour…so it is what you want to achieve…but observing them and feeding back to students in a supportive mechanism for their overall assessment, I think it is useful…"

There is a recognition of the difficulties in assessing the learning outcomes of an entrepreneurship education due to the unique and complex nature of the subject matter. There is an emphasis on personal development, in particular, entrepreneurial traits and behaviour. This raises the question of the extent to which such learning outcomes can be assessed to evidence learning in terms of behaviour change, and the extent to which such behaviour change can be determined as 'real', genuine learning rather than 'contrived'.

"Well…to what extent are we able to quantify and measure the traits and behaviour…to observe them and say you are demonstrating them. I would be quite nervous about the psychology of that…how much of that is natural and how much of that is contrived…do you know what I mean… The question I am posing: what do you want to measure? So…if we do want to measure it, are we driving natural behaviours or are we drawing out what is naturally there, and to what extent does that matter."

The assessment for what is generally viewed as an essentially practice-based subject should reflect its practical nature. In assessing entrepreneurial learning, lecturers do not tend to value end-of-year examinations and seem to prefer interactive and experiential methods to evaluate students' learning with an emphasis on the application of theory into practice. Students are perceived to learn 'through' the process of assessment. The assessment in and of itself is intended as mechanism to drive as well as evaluate learning.

"…the notion is the experiential type of assessment…do you know what I mean…as well so you will learn as much from the assessment as we test…the measurement, if you see what I mean. We might ask them to work on a scenario…how would you put an innovative strategy in place to turn that around…what are the issues, what are the entrepreneurial traits and behaviour that we expect them to possess…in terms of the kind of entrepreneurial make-up."

"…it is demonstrating they have understood academic materials, they are able to apply it…they are able to evaluate various options, and convince me they are able to provide me with reasons of their evaluation. It is not just the presentation, but their ability to prepare to get the best of them. That would be one aspect. Another thing is around the enterprising thing…say…sending them down the market, having a barrel of something and actually selling them."

Entrepreneurial learning is perceived as a process, as it is progressively developed over a period of time. The evaluation of the process of learning recognises the progressive nature of individual entrepreneurial learning and is therefore student-centred. Rather than assessing the 'end product', there should be an emphasis on assessing learning throughout the process in which students progressive learn to become entrepreneur. This is probably why there is a clear preference for course-based assessments to end-of-year examination. There is an emphasis on assessments which are 'practical', centred on the use of case studies and critical reflection. Such assessments tend to assess student analytical thinking and problem-solving abilities within specific professional contexts.

"We are assessing their ability to sell, to develop a product, market that product, to compete with rivalry. It could be different ways of assessing experiential learning…"

"They have to reflect on…how they set it up, how they adapt to the changing environment, and reflection on why they did what they did. The key thing is that they need to think about the different stages of reflection…they can be talking about it when they are packing up, and then sometime later, and compare that to their learning journey. The key thing is to be able to demonstrate critical reflection, whether it is spoken or written or a video. The idea is about giving them something practical to do that culminates…say a business plan but taking it one step further with some practical…they have to sell something, an idea to some people they don't know."

Finally, while there is a recognition that 'real-life' entrepreneurs and innovative organisations may play a role or contribute to the assessment process of student learning, the lecturers feel that they, as the legitimate assessors of the university, must be in full control of and be responsible for the process.

"There are real barriers to that. Students might ask who these people are who are coming off the street to come assess us...but I do feel that there is a role for the entrepreneurs as they may be able to ask relevant questions…so they can be part of the questioning panel, along the learning process."

"Well…at the end of the day, my personal view is this is an academic journey process which will result in a higher education degree so it has to be the faculty teams who control that. That would be the line not to cross."

Overall Conclusions
This study seeks to make a contribution to the literature by exploring the learning processes of entrepreneurship students from a constructivist perspective and understanding how students learn to become entrepreneurial within a higher education context. It contributes a deeper understanding of how entrepreneurial learning is constructed from the lecturers' perspective.

The research findings suggest that the entrepreneurial learning of university students is perceived as a process within which learning is progressively developed over a period of time. Learning is more effective if it connects students with the reality of entrepreneurship through practical experiences and by allowing learning in the real world outside the classroom. Such learning can be achieved through pedagogies that forge a close relationship between theory and professional practice, and clearly illustrate how theoretical knowledge is applied within real world situations. In this sense, learning is perceived as student-centred and experiential, based on a variety of interactions inside as well as outside their classroom with the 'entrepreneurial world'. The role of assessment needs to recognise the nature of learning as a process with an emphasis on assessing learning throughout this process in which students progressive learn to become entrepreneur. There is a preference for course-based assessments to end-of-year examination, and using assessments which are 'practical', centred on the use of materials which bring the real world into the classroom and critical reflection.

Entrepreneurial learning is concerned with learning how to recognise and act on opportunities, how to organise and manage ventures. It means learning to work in entrepreneurial ways, in which knowing, acting and making sense are interconnected. It involves actively 'doing' as well as understanding 'what it is that works', and embodies a form of change which causes or enables the individual to do things differently. In this sense, 'learning is becoming' and experience-based, and very much a future-oriented process of creating a prospective reality for the learner (Rae 2000). Learning therefore enables personal change and includes the dimensions of 'knowing', understanding 'why', and 'doing'. The result of learning is the ability to act differently, through which the individual has greater understanding of their actions (Rae 2003). In other words, knowledge *per se* is not learning and only becomes so when it is internalised by the individual through a process of thinking and reflecting on their own experiences, and make their own theoretical interpretations (Gibb 2002; Gibb 2006). As Honig (2004) suggests, structured close-ended pedagogical approaches which are designed to produce a standardised set of learning outcomes are unlikely to be conducive for entrepreneurial activities, where the very nature of the problem as well as the necessary analytical tools employed, changes radically as the business, the market and technology evolve. Instead, the focus should be on the development of necessary skills and competencies which will help future graduates to re-evaluate, adapt, and revise activities in a resourceful manner to suit new environmental contingencies. Entrepreneurial activities have outcomes which are often impossible to anticipate. Therefore, pedagogical approaches should be developed to focus on applied hands-on, action-based activities, resulting in experiential entrepreneurial learning.

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