

Perspectives of Entrepreneurship Education in Indian Universities – Educators’ Perspective

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Abstract

Background of the study – According to a National Knowledge Commission 2008 study of Entrepreneurship study in India, approximately 95% of entrepreneurs believe education is a critical success factor and a key trigger to evoke entrepreneurial inclinations. Entrepreneurship education has attained considerable academic and political importance in the recent past in India and is an important area of academic research too. The world entrepreneurship forum (WEF) created in 2008 aims to promote the development of entrepreneurship while creating wealth and social justice. Universities play an important role in fostering entrepreneurship among youth as the subject of entrepreneurship is a recognized discipline being taught in undergraduate and graduate business education programs. Despite these efforts, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report finds that India’s High Growth Expectation early stage Entrepreneurship (HEA) rate is only one-fifth of that of China despite high levels of potential entrepreneurial activity. This indicates that while there is a lot of emphasis on entrepreneurial education in the country, it is however not leading to the desired growth in terms of enterprises. Perhaps one of the reasons is the instructional pedagogy followed. Why and How are we teaching entrepreneurship as a subject still needs enlightenment and a lot of practical work needs to be in the university system to be able to motivate entrepreneurial intentions among youth in higher education and in the process developing skilled graduates who could think creatively to generate business ideas that shall enhance economic growth, empower them and create jobs for others.

Need of the study - The entrepreneurship “pyramid” in India has four levels. While Level 1 comprises of agriculture and other allied activities, Level 2 comprises of trading services, Level 3 is of traditional sector such as manufacturing and energy, Level 4 is the emerging sector

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which is also knowledge intensive such as IT, Finance, Insurance & Business Services, Construction, Community and Social Service etc. According to National Knowledge Commission 2008 report, India ranks 2nd globally as home to fastest growing technology firms. With the youthful population of India with 50 % below 25 years of age, it is this sector that will motivate the youth and needs to be tapped by providing the right skills, appropriate environment and sustained encouragement. This paper explores the entrepreneurship education in business education in universities in India to understand the need of inclusion, expected outcomes and skill development this discipline aims to bring among the young graduates studying in university system. The results of this study shall be highly useful to educators, policy makers for curriculum design, teaching methodologies development in higher education as fostering entrepreneurship has been identified as a goal in higher education by the ministry of Human resource development in India.

Methodology – This is a paper that proposes to initiate further debate and research on this subject area and has used a sample of 100 respondent teachers in higher education who are involved in teaching the subject of entrepreneurship in business education degree courses in universities in India. Data has been gathered through a structured questionnaire with the aim to find out the teacher’s commitment to teach entrepreneurship, institutional support for teaching entrepreneurship, prominent pedagogies being used and their perceptions about the subject itself in Indian universities and its affiliated colleges. A convenience sampling was used to gather the data for the study.

Originality/ value - The results of this study shall be useful to academicians, institution administrators, regulatory bodies responsible for curriculum development and design. This study is a maiden study at the university level in India about entrepreneurship education and the findings of this study shall be useful in identifying gaps that exist in making the teaching of this subject useful and practical at the university level.

Findings – To reveal a surprising and shocking result, 85% teachers engaged in teaching entrepreneurship at two major universities in Delhi and its affiliated colleges do not display any strong commitment

to teach entrepreneurship and are willing to exchange the subject for some other subject of their choice. 60% of the teachers feel that their institution does not have any keen focus to develop entrepreneurship among its students. In relation to training and staff development for teaching entrepreneurship 70% teachers feel that they do not receive any support from their institutions. Institutional support to teaching has to be developed through teacher training programs that enable them to learn new creative and innovative approaches in their teaching to enable students have an enriching experience.

Keywords – Entrepreneurship education, institution support, teaching pedagogy, Quality of education.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is taught as a compulsory subject both in undergraduate and graduate business and management studies in India, inspired by the belief that entrepreneurship is a viable tool for economic growth and that educating youth in this direction will provide the necessary ignition to their minds to take a stride in being an entrepreneur. There is a wide debate on the role of universities and academic institutions in being able to foster entrepreneurship and the relation between government, industry and academic institutions in fostering innovation and enterprise creation. However entrepreneurship is an attractive proposition both for the entrepreneur and the government as it lessens the burden of employment provision on the state and enables wealth creation for the entrepreneur while also creating employment for those engaged in the enterprise.

Universities across the world offer a course on entrepreneurship, however very little is known about the perception of teachers engaged in teaching entrepreneurship, their motivations to teach this specific subject, pedagogy adopted, institutional support and any necessary training if they have felt the need to enhance their subject teaching. (Trivedi, H,R. 2014) This paper addresses this research gap and brings out interesting and in the authors view shocking revelations that have policy implications for skill development and quality enhancement in higher education for India and to other developing nations at large. The role of teachers as mentors is by far very crucial in enabling entrepreneurship at the student level and the positive results in creation of entrepreneurs will arrive only with a strong commitment and motivation on the part of educators. Two leading universities, one state and one central and the departments therein engaged in the teaching of entrepreneurship have been selected for the study.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship education is considered to be an important and influential force shaping the health of an economy. Effective entrepreneurship education fosters positive entrepreneurial attitude and motivates students to start their venture. Brantley & Davis (1997). Enhanced attention and sustained interest in entrepreneurship education is emerging first at a global level on account of far reaching technological changes and emerging world markets providing vast opportunities, second at organizational level with creation of SBU's with rising corporate entrepreneurship opportunities and third at an individual level with government and policy support to enable entrepreneurs in the country by providing support for a various factors of production.

Entrepreneurship development cells have been established in universities and departments with funding support from the government as also the industry institute partnership cells with seed funding from the council of technical education in the Indian context, however a gap that exists is the lack of committed, motivated and suitable trained teachers in enabling the results of entrepreneurship education beyond just as a course to score a credit appear visibly. Despite the everlasting debate whether entrepreneurs are born or can be nurtured, there is an immense contribution of entrepreneurship education to young students.

Entrepreneurial attributes get positively influenced by teaching programmers and even if one cannot be taught to be an entrepreneur, the student can still be taught entrepreneurial skills to be successful. (Henderson & Robert, 2000), Gorman & Hanlon (1997)

Recent work in United Kingdom has shown that entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in motivating students to become entrepreneurs and that students who undergo entrepreneurship course of study are more likely to start a business of their own. (Packam et.al 2000)

The major thrust of entrepreneurship education has, understandably, been to develop the knowledge and procedures needed to establish and grow a successful enterprise. (Gibb 2005), however, suggests that there are three main objectives for effective entrepreneurship education; develop a wide understanding of entrepreneurship, acquire an entrepreneurial mindset (Loudon and Smither, 1999), as well as how to start and operate an enterprise effectively (Solomon et al., 2002). Existing entrepreneurship education literature however, still continues to question the successful integration of entrepreneurship into the curriculum (Hannon, 2006), the extent to which it benefits students and the effectiveness of formal entrepreneurship education.

Fayolle et al. (2006) also argue that entrepreneurship education varies widely across countries and institutions in terms of objectives, audience, format and pedagogy. Furthermore, Hannon (2006) submits that issues associated with quality, coherence and purpose can often dilute the effectiveness of entrepreneurship programmes. The Bologna Declaration (1999) set out a number of objectives that need to be achieved by 2010 (European Commission (EC), 2006). Within this declaration, emphasis has been placed on inter-institutional co-operation and mobility schemes as well as developing systems that promote quality assurance and comparability of qualification across national boundaries. The recent Entrepreneurship in Europe (European Commission (EC), 2006) report argues that a number of steps need to be taken to improve the quality, relevance and student experience of entrepreneurship education. These include:

1. greater clarity regarding the purpose of entrepreneurship education;
2. taking local context into account in the design, development and delivery of enterprise programmes;
3. developing a critical mass of entrepreneurship educators drawn from a wide range of backgrounds; and
4. greater mobility and exchange of experience, particularly in the development of appropriate entrepreneurial learning models and the sharing of knowledge and good practice across sectors and national borders.

The literature, accordingly, suggests that primarily short-term educational and training exercises are necessary with the purpose of developing both entrepreneurial and business acumen (Zapalska, 1997; Socha and Weisberg, 2002). Consequently, the need to further-develop an entrepreneurial culture among the Indian youth through universities and colleges remains.

There are divergent views on pedagogical approaches being used by educators and the relevance and contribution of specific pedagogies in developing the entrepreneurial spirit and potential. Lectures, case studies on successful entrepreneurs, simulations and business plan writing for a new venture among the prominent ones being used (Hill 1988)

Shankar (2012) classifies six primary obstacles to teaching entrepreneurship in India as: 1. Lack of institutionalization, 2. Lack of indigenous experience, 3. Lack of trained teachers, 4. Short-term focus on results, 5. Limitations with pedagogy and 6. Subject not considered as core

With the impetus placed on enabling entrepreneurship amongst youth through

university teaching, there is a lot of emphasis placed on the commitment of teachers engaged in teaching entrepreneurship as a subject and the skills they possess thereof to deal with a multi disciplinary subject like entrepreneurship. In addition, as illustrated by Myrah and Currie (2006), the educational institutions must also be ready to provide the required infrastructural support for teaching the subject. It is possible that unwittingly, they give a lower priority to teaching of entrepreneurship by not providing required infrastructural support like small class sizes and equipment and facilities for simulating new venture creation environment (Fiet, 2001). According to Bennett (2006), institutions need to provide complete support to lecturers for adopting innovative teaching methods, partnering and receiving active mentorship from entrepreneurs and providing seed funding to the students to kick-start a small venture on their own. Ramussen and Sørheim (2006) have also found the importance of providing physical support as one of the basic requirements for entrepreneurship teaching. On the other hand, Myrah and Currie (2006) have stressed upon developing human resources as one of the key-needs in this context.

Little or no research has been done in the Indian context of entrepreneurship education in India. This is a maiden attempt to look at the teaching of entrepreneurship in institutes of higher education from an educators perspective in India aimed at policy initiatives of training of teachers leading to the outcome of skill development among graduate students which is the emergent need in line with The National Education Policy of India which aims to meet the demands of “changing dynamics of the population’s requirement with regards to quality education, innovation and research”

The author believes that higher education in general and entrepreneurship education specifically must aim at developing the students critical thinking ability within bounded rationality and enable the student to analyze information leading to logical decisions with an action and a contingency plan.

Methodology

The study aimed to find Why and How are we teaching entrepreneurship as a subject in institutions of higher education in the City of New Delhi. Data has been gathered through a structured questionnaire with the aim to find out the teacher’s commitment to teach entrepreneurship, institutional support for teaching entrepreneurship, prominent pedagogies being used and their perceptions about the subject itself in Indian universities and its affiliated colleges. A pilot test was conducted on a sample of 20 teacher respondents and two independent subject experts to detect errors and to find out any needed changes in wording of questions. The constructs of the A convenience sampling of 100 teachers engaged in teaching entrepreneurship at undergraduate and post graduate level in colleges

of Delhi University and Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University was used to gather the data for the study.

A structured, non-disguised questionnaire was used to gather data designed to gather data required. Prior to administering the survey, a pre-test was done using the first draft of the questionnaire with two lecturers from the researcher’s own university, three lecturers who teach the subject at the post-graduate level at another institution and two independent subject experts. In the pilot study, the questionnaire was delivered face-to-face so as to detect errors and to find out if change in the wording was required. The constructs were adopted from the study of benet (2006) and responses were taken on a five point likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The Cronbach coefficient alpha was used to test the reliability of various constructs of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Findings

The present study sought answers to the following four questions: (1) How do the faculty members who actually deliver entrepreneurship units define the term “entrepreneurship”, i.e. as simply owning and managing a business or as the application of special personal qualities and attributes such as creativity, innovativeness and imagination? (2) To what degrees are the faculty members who teach entrepreneurship genuinely committed to the subject? (3) What pedagogical approaches do the lecturers’ use for teaching entrepreneurship? Are they aware of innovative pedagogical approaches and are any being utilized by them? (4) What is the level of institutional support these teachers receive and what are their expectations?

Table 1
Background information of respondents

Variable	Frequency/ Percentage
Lecturers/ Assistant Professors	64
Associate Professors	13
Professors	13
Male	69
Female	31
Post Graduate Degree	54
M.Phil	36
Ph.D	10
Marketing	48
Human Resource	23

Finance	18
International Business	11
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	
Less than 5 years	54
5-10 years	32
10.1 - 15 years	12
More than 15 years	02
Corporate Experience	10
Consultancy Experience	18
No corporate/ consultancy experience	72
Yes	12
No	88

Table 2
Pedagogical approaches used

PEDAGOGY USED	YES	NO
Lectures	97	3
Case Discussions	88	12
Video Cases	11	89
Guest Speakers	28	72
Role Plays/ Simulations	03	97
Oral Presentation	85	15
Entrepreneurs interviewed by students	05	95
New Venture Creation Group Project	11	89
Student Business Plan Contest	07	93
Review writing of books/ articles on Entrepreneurs read	03	97

Table 3
Interpretation of Entrepreneurship by Teachers

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Entrepreneurship means owning and managing a business	36	24	22	17	1
Anyone who starts a new business venture is an "entrepreneur"	39	23	28	10	0

At the end of the day, entrepreneurship is basically about the practical aspects of running one's own small business	46	28	18	8	0
The term "entrepreneurship" should be restricted to people who differ from the rest of the population in that they possess special characteristics such as creativity, innovativeness and imagination	19	38	23	12	8
Entrepreneurship is fundamentally about the application of personal qualities such as creativity, innovativeness and imagination	21	42	18	13	6
Entrepreneurs are people who have special qualities of perseverance, resourcefulness and persuasiveness that set them apart from the rest of the population	15	45	21	9	10
Being a successful entrepreneur has more to do with being a visionary, a dreamer and a charismatic leader than with being good at managing specific business functions (marketing, financial control, etc.)	19	32	19	12	18
Entrepreneurs are different from other people in that they have different attitudes towards taking risks	26	38	19	12	5
Entrepreneurs are different from other people in that they feel much stronger desires to achieve and succeed	29	43	14	10	5
The term "entrepreneur" should be restricted to people who create new ventures that supply completely novel products or services, or products or services that are very different from those currently available	14	20	12	32	22
New ventures fail mainly because their owners lack basic knowledge of business functions (marketing, financial control, etc.), not because their owners lack creativity, innovativeness or imagination	22	38	10	12	18

Table 4
Belief on teaching Entrepreneurship

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Entrepreneurship is a learned competency rather than an innate predisposition or cultural trait	24	42	12	18	4
Personal qualities such as creativity and innovativeness can be greatly improved through an individual completing an educational course	28	39	10	12	11
Teaching people to be entrepreneurs is highly problematic because only a small percentage of the population possesses the innate entrepreneurial characteristics that are necessary for this role	14	22	18	29	17
A flair for taking risks is more important for successful entrepreneurship than formal business training	18	24	18	24	16
Entrepreneurship is an academically rigorous subject	24	36	14	12	14
It is more important for entrepreneurship courses to give students a firm grounding in business functions (raising finance, marketing, budgetary control, etc.) than to encourage students to be creative, imaginative and innovative	12	26	09	28	25
The purpose of entrepreneurship courses is to nurture higher level thinking and reflection, rather than teaching practical business skills	15	18	12	23	32
It is more important to get a student to examine the deeper aspects of self, emotions and values than to learn about specific business functions	7	11	18	42	22

Table 5
Approaches to teach Entrepreneurship

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
When teaching entrepreneurship I emphasize practical skills concerning raising finance, marketing, selecting premises, etc., rather than the development of personal qualities such as innovativeness, creativity, self-confidence, etc	20	28	18	19	15

The methods and techniques I use when teaching entrepreneurship are fundamentally the same as the methods and techniques I use when teaching other subjects	19	39	21	11	10
When teaching entrepreneurship I try to get my students to tackle problems in a detached and objective manner rather than encouraging them to become emotionally involved with the problem or issue itself;	22	24	14	23	17
When teaching entrepreneurship I try to get my students to borrow ideas from one another and exchange information and data when completing individual assignments rather than working independently and alone;	10	16	18	34	22
When teaching entrepreneurship I try to get my students to adopt a particular mentality rather than be concerned about specific management techniques	12	21	14	22	31
When teaching entrepreneurship I try to get my students to solve problems by following methodical and rational procedures rather than through the student using his or her insights and personal intuition	31	46	9	9	5

Table 6
Motivation and commitment to teach Entrepreneurship

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel fully committed to my work as a teacher of entrepreneurship	9	7	10	49	25
I would be unwilling to exchange my current entrepreneurship teaching for teaching in other subjects	10	14	22	28	26
Teaching entrepreneurship really inspires me to give of my very best in the way of job performance	12	18	20	28	22
I have “volunteered” to teach entrepreneurship courses rather than my choosing to teach this subject	10	19	12	28	41
I use TED talks on entrepreneurship for my course teaching	1	5	0	72	22

I utilize crowd sourcing and other web sources for bringing in creativity and innovation in my teaching	1	6	9	41	43
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Table 7
Institutional support in teaching Entrepreneurship

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My institution is keen to develop entrepreneurship education	10	12	18	38	22
My institution has provided me with substantial amounts of training and staff development in relation to my entrepreneurship teaching duties	4	8	10	38	40
I would like to focus my entrepreneurship teaching on developing students' attributes of creativity, innovativeness, etc., but institutional resource constraints prevent me from doing this	41	28	9	12	10
My institution encourages me to develop in teaching entrepreneurship by sponsoring participation training seminars & conferences.	8	9	10	32	41

Results

To reveal a surprising and shocking result, 85% teachers engaged in teaching entrepreneurship at two major universities in Delhi and its affiliated colleges do not display any strong commitment to teach entrepreneurship and are willing to exchange the subject for some other subject of their choice. 60% of the teachers feel that their institution does not have any keen focus to develop entrepreneurship among its students. In relation to training and staff development for teaching entrepreneurship 70% teachers feel that they do not receive any support from their institutions.

Majority of the teachers engaged in teaching entrepreneurship in universities in a metro city Delhi are assistant professors and have less than five years of teaching experience with barely any corporate or consultancy experience and have never mentored or been engaged in entrepreneurial seminars or activities. A large proportion of teachers are from marketing and human resource background followed by finance who are teaching

entrepreneurship.

Traditional pedagogical tools of lectures are being used to teach this subject while only about half the teachers have described the use of case studies for teaching entrepreneurship. Role plays, management games, simulations, new venture creation exercises, heuristics, synectics which are creative and innovative approaches to enliven the entrepreneurial minds that are not being used by the teachers. Majority are not even aware about such methodologies and have never heard crowd sourcing as a means to enrich their course and teaching content.

There is a synergy that emerges on defining entrepreneurship by the educators. Owning and managing business, starting a new venture, dealing with practical aspects of running an enterprise is what defines entrepreneurship. Educators have placed an emphasis on the need of creativity and innovative thinking in being entrepreneurial but have no understanding in how could they ignite this creativity and innovation in thinking of their students.

Teachers feel that entrepreneurship is an academically rigorous and interesting subject, but have not explored any innovative or creative techniques in their teaching to display this trait of the subject as they continue to focus on traditional approaches concerning finance and marketing skill development in entrepreneurship. They have reported similar methods of teaching as they use in any other subject while teaching entrepreneurship in today's context too. though there is emphasis on utilising rational approaches to problem solving, but the focus on creativity of thoughts, innovation in ideas and seeking opportunities from market are missing in the approach to teaching entrepreneurship.

The motivation and commitment to teach entrepreneurship is not vibrant among the teachers engaged and this is one major responsible factor contributing to the lack of knowledge about new approaches like crowd sourcing, TED talks and simulations in this subject.

Institutional support is grossly lacking in teaching which accounts to a large extent to the dismal state of teaching methodologies and the lack of creativity in teaching which is essential as much is air and water to survive.

Conclusions & implications for Policy Makers

This paper presents the harsh reality of the Indian university scenario of teaching entrepreneurship in higher education specifically Indian universities engaged in business and management education. Majority of teachers teaching entrepreneurship have no commitment

to the subject and are teaching it just as any other subject which takes the very purpose of teaching this subject being lost. Policy makers need to specifically intervene to invest in training of teachers to make them aware of the latest happenings in the subject around the world and to adopt the best practices being used to bring about skill development. there is a need to design effective curricula with assessable outcomes based on blooms taxonomy so that the imparted knowledge is comprehended by the student and used for application and analysis for designing and implementing business ideas that can generate wealth for the entrepreneur, solve some social problems and at the end of all this evaluation can be done by the student on whether he/she has been able to learn some cognitive and thinking skills and the teacher can evaluate the understanding of the student through formative and summative assessments.

Limitations and Scope for Suture Research

This study is limited to the Delhi region and the teachers engaged in teaching entrepreneurship in business and management colleges of two major universities in Delhi, one central and one state. The limited nature of the study may have brought some regional results to the data, however this research has specifically talked of the university system in the Indian context as there is a wide difference in the quality of education at IITs and IIMs which are also institutors of higher education and universities which are the primary providers of higher education to the large masses of the Indian population and there is an emergent need to enhance quality of education at the university level as a focus directional framework is lacking and with this view the National education policy is being developed. this papers offers scope of future research to identify the areas of concern where desired result oriented approaches can be initiated with the objective of enhancing quality and developing skills as a knowledge initiative.

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