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Are we committed to teach entrepreneurship in business School?

An empirical analysis of Lecturers in India, Singapore and Malaysia

Introduction

Large numbers of universities around the world have been offering courses related to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship development with the objective of promoting entrepreneurship as a career choice among student fraternity. With this, since last three decades, it is found that larger numbers of researchers are working on the field of entrepreneurship education internationally (Hill et al., 2003). However, with this increased demand in the courses related to entrepreneurship and sound research in the area, it has been also observed that traditional entrepreneurship researcher or faculties who are not specifically trained to teach entrepreneurship are less effective in dealing with the subject (Hopkins and Feldman, 1998). Although we can observe the proliferation of management degrees and interest in the field of entrepreneurship education, very less is known about the perception of business lecturers regarding the subject of entrepreneurship, dominant pedagogy, their commitment to teaching and institutional support.

Educators' teaching behaviours in many ways contribute to effectiveness in executing their duties as educators. Therefore, one of the prime question that still remain unanswered in the

literature of entrepreneurship research is related to lecturer's commitment for teaching entrepreneurship and institutional support received by them for discharging their duty as 'entrepreneurial teacher and mentor'. A broader review of literature suggest that there is a dearth of empirical study which tries to understand that what is the commitment of lecturer for teaching entrepreneurship and how they perceive the institutional support for the same. Therefore, the present research study would make an attempt to understand that how academic staff of management institute of three South Asian nations, namely India, Singapore and Malaysia that are teaching entrepreneurship feels committed for the same and the level of their institutional support in discharging their duties.

Review of Literature

Teaching Entrepreneurship

Brantley and Davis (1997) considered entrepreneurship education as one of the most import and influential force that determines the health of the economy. In this regard, Brantley and Davis (1997) have opined that effective entrepreneurship education fosters entrepreneurial attitude among students and influences them to start their own venture. Various scholars have opined that entrepreneurship education is made-up of a set of programmes oriented to inform, train and educate anyone interested in entrepreneurship and create awareness for starting a new business (Bechard and Tolohouse, 1998). Hood and Young (1993) also opined that entrepreneurship education is concerned with preparing individuals for the creation and successfully administration of profitable enterprises, thus contributing to the economy and regional

development. From business management perspective, entrepreneurship education enables students to understand the purpose, structure and relationship of the business with other stakeholders of the society (Cheung, 2008) and entrepreneurship education from early age can influence students to starting their own business (Waldmann, 1997). On the same line, Kolvereid and Moen (1997) also found that a entrepreneurship graduate has higher intention of starting a business rather than a business management graduate. Despite this fact, Hindle and Cutting (2002) opined that “Empirical tests of key propositions are in short supply and badly needed as demonstrations of the efficacy of entrepreneurship education programs.”

Clark et al. (1984) conducted a study to found out the relationship between teaching of entrepreneurship and its contribution in new venture creation process and he found out a positive relationship between the two. In the same vein, Ronstadt (1987) suggested with stating that “strong indications exist that an entrepreneurial education will produce more and better entrepreneurs than were produced in the past”.

With this, recently the debate is centred around various pedagogies that are available to an educator and to find-out its relevance and contribution in developing and sharpening entrepreneurial potential among target respondents. Lecturers around the globe are primarily dependent on lecturers, business simulation and new venture project development as major pedagogies for entrepreneurship courses. Hills (1988), on this line, opined that “entrepreneurship course features considered most important were development of a business plan project and entrepreneurs as speakers and role models. Cases ranked next in importance followed by lectures and assigned readings”. Along with this, various teaching methods that are predominantly used

to teach entrepreneurship includes interaction and interview with entrepreneur, interning with a start-up entrepreneur, simulations for start-up exercise in class and project based learning. With this, it was also found that various assignments or written projects, in-class presentation, small talk by invited entrepreneur, business plan competition, etc. are also some of the frequently used technique. Based upon this, Sexton and Upton (1987) to have more of semi-structured or flexible approach in teaching entrepreneurship and “pose problems which require novel solutions under conditions of ambiguity and risk” (p. 25).

Lecturer's Commitment for teaching Entrepreneurship and Institutional support

This question is very necessary in today's era, because lecturers dealing with entrepreneurship have completed their specialization in other disciplines ranging from marketing to finance to operations management. However, to effectively deal with a multi-faceted subject like entrepreneurship, a lecturer need to possess minimum required knowledge and understanding of various subject in management and other disciplines (Bennett, 2006; Binks et al.,2006; Tan & Ng, 2006) and it has been opined that this act as one the major hurdle in effectively teaching of entrepreneurship (Sexton & Bowman, 1984).

With this, one another problem observed in entrepreneurship education field is that there are chances that the lecturer who is dealing with entrepreneurship subject may not have been acquired required training to deal with the subject (Sexton and Bowman, 1984). Because of this, it is very likely that a person dealing with a multi-disciplined subject like entrepreneurship would rather concentrate or build upon concept or methods originating from a specific subject and thus

not provide sufficient justice to subject at hand (Bennett, 2006). Moreover, there are also chances that lecturer may have been asked to teach the subject of entrepreneurship that he/she may not have preferred to and this may have resulted into their hostile attitude towards the subject itself (Bennett, 2006).

Moreover, few researchers have even pointed out that lack of entrepreneurship as a discipline with well-defined scientific content (Kiro and Carrier, 2005) and therefore, lecturers quite often face difficulty in scouting and acquiring required content that fits well with the subject and philosophy of entrepreneurship education (Seikkula-Leino 2006).

In addition to this, as illustrated by Myrah and Currie (2006), the educational institute must also be ready to provide the required infrastructural support for teaching the subject. It is possible that unknowingly, institute may give lower priority to teaching of entrepreneurship subject by not providing required infrastructural support like small class sizes or lack of equipment or facilities for simulating new venture creation environment (Fiet, 2001). As per Bennett (2006) also, institute need to provide complete support to lecturers for adopting innovative teaching methods, partnering and receiving active mentorship support from entrepreneurs and providing seed funding to the students to kick start 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 the human resource as one of the key needs in this context.

Methodology

The data reported in this paper were collected as part of a large study designed to explore the understanding of business lecturers towards definition of entrepreneurship, approaches to entrepreneurship education, teaching and learning methods used by them to teach entrepreneurship, commitment to teach entrepreneurship, university support for teaching the subject and programmes offered to impart entrepreneurship education. The convenience sampling method was employed and it was decided to design the sampling frame for the investigation comprised of lecturers who are working at graduate or post-graduate level in the university set-up in the three South Asian countries namely India, Singapore and Malaysia. Totally 232 business lecturers responded to the survey of which one hundred sixty two were from India, and seventy were from Singapore and Malaysia.

A structured non-disguised questionnaire was designed to gather the data required for this research. Prior to administering the survey, a pre-test was done for first draft of questionnaire with two lecturers from researcher's own university, three lecturers who teach the subject at post-graduate level at other post-graduate institute and two independent subject expert. In pilot study, the questionnaire was delivered face-to-face so as to detect any error or change of wording, if required. The constructs of the study were adopted from Bennett (2006) and were measured on likert-rating scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) was used to measure the responses. The Cronbach coefficient alpha is used to test the reliability of various

constructs of the questionnaire. This measure is widely used in research to measure reliability and is equivalent to the average of all the split half correlation coefficients. According to the recommendations made by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), if the alpha value is greater than 0.5 or reaching 1.0, the measuring instrument is having high reliability. The Cronbach Alpha value for the first construct, i.e. institutional support was found to be 0.787 while for approaches to teach entrepreneurship, the same was found to be .736 which indicates that the reliability for those items satisfactorily met the Nunnally's (1978) threshold.

Data Analysis and Major Findings

Background Information

Table I provides background information of the respondents. The result shows that of the sample respondents, almost 58 per cent were male (n= 135) while rest were female (n=97, 41.8%). In response to the question about highest educational qualification of the respondents it was found that 134 lecturers have completed their post-graduation (57.8%) while almost 42 per cent of the respondents have also completed their Ph.D. or D.Phil. (n=98). In response to their area of specialization, a significant amount of variation was found, wherein, highest number of lecturers have either Financial Management or Marketing Management background (25.9 and 24.6 per cent respectively) followed by Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management (n=35, 15.1%). This result indicates that those lecturers who are involved in teaching entrepreneurship are from varied backgrounds and more often do not have entrepreneurship as their core specialization.

The respondents' teaching experience figures show that more than 45 per cent of the respondent are with teaching experience of less than 5 years (n=104) followed by 72 respondents whose experience is between 5 to 10 years (31%). In response to their business experience, it was found that only about 19 per cent (n=55) respondents have the experience of starting their own venture and of them also only about 10 per cent are active entrepreneurs. On other hand, more than 45 per cent of respondents have never even intended to start their business and although 68 respondents intended to start their business (29.3%) but never took steps for starting. This represents that almost 75 per cent of respondents do not have first-hand experience of conceptualizing of a new venture.

-- Please include Table I here --

To find out that whether the respondent lecturers have attended any Entrepreneurship Development Programme or not, it was found that more than 170 lectures have never attended such programme (31.5%) while almost 25 per cent of lecturers do have attended (n=59). Lastly, to understand that how many lecturers are actually teaching or have taught modules or courses of entrepreneurship, 73 respondents are teaching modules of entrepreneurship (31.5 per cent) while almost 68 per cent of the respondents are not teaching or have never taught any modules of entrepreneurship (68.5).

Entrepreneurship teaching pedagogy

As shown in Table II, the respondents were asked to specify the pedagogical techniques they used when teaching entrepreneurship by ticking items from a list of various pedagogical techniques available at the disposal of entrepreneurship lecturer. It was found that lectures (95.8%) was the most frequently used teaching pedagogy followed by group project (84.7%), student business plan (77.8)%, written end of course exam (73.6%) and individual project (72.2%). On other hand, video cases was the least used pedagogy (26.4%) followed by oral examination (34.7%) and business stimulation (37.5%). This indicates that still entrepreneurship teaching is predominantly undertaken by traditional method of lecturing and project or exam-based rather than using new age experiential tool like business simulation games.

-- Please include Table II here --

Commitment for teaching entrepreneurship

Table III shows commitment of lecturer who teach the subject or who have taught the subject earlier. In statement 1, 84.8 per cent of the respondent have shown that they feel fully committed to teach entrepreneurship (n=61) and 34.7 per cent of the respondents feel that they will be unwilling to exchange current entrepreneurship teaching for teaching in other subjects (n=25).

-- Please include Table II here --

As show in statement 3 in Table III, more than 80 per cent of the respondents are willing to put in extra effort over to ensure that their organisation's entrepreneurship courses are successful. In the same vein in statement 4, almost 85 per cent of the respondents have agreed that teaching

entrepreneurship inspires to give very best in the way of job performance (n=60). On other hand, statement 6 shows that almost 58 per cent of the respondent have said that they are volunteered to teach entrepreneurship courses rather than they choosing to teach (n=41).

Institutional Support

Table IV, shows the perception of lecturer regarding institutional support received by them to teach entrepreneurship in their institution. As shown in statement 1, almost 50 per cent of the lecturer are agree that their institution is keen to develop entrepreneurship education (n=41). However, in relation to training and staff development, it is found that 38 per cent of the lecturers have not received the same while 36.6 per cent have received such a support (n=27 and n=26 respectively).

-- Please include Table IV here --

In statement 3 also, the lecturers perception regarding institutional resource availability is almost equally divided with 29 per cent of the lecturers feel that they are being constrained by institutional resources while 56.9 per cent of the lecturers do not feel any such constraints.

Testing the differences in perceived institutional support to teach entrepreneurship among the lecturers of India and Malaysia – Results of MANOVA and ANOVA

To understand that whether there is difference in the perception of the lecturer who teaches entrepreneurship in India and Malaysia in respect to the institutional support, it was decided to use multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). As there were only six lecturers from

Singapore, it was decided to only compare the perception of institutional support among lecturers of India and Malaysia only. Totally, there were 48 respondents from India and 23 respondents from Malaysia who were teaching entrepreneurship.

The MANOVA and subsequent ANOVA results are shown in Table V, and it was found that there is no significant difference between the lecturers of India and Malaysia in response to institutional support to teach entrepreneurship (Wilk's $\lambda = 0.930$; $F = 1.691$; Sign. 0.177).

-- Please include Table V here --

Moreover, as indicated in Table V, the univariate F -ratios were also not significant for all the three dependent variables (Statement 6: $F = 2.350$, Sign. = 0.130; Statement 7: $F = 0.573$, Sign. = 0.452; Statement 8: $F = 0.220$, Sign. = 0.640). The mean score of the lecturers India and Malaysia have also shown that there is no statistically significant difference between the institutional supports received by them to teach entrepreneurship.

Course offered for Entrepreneurship education

To understand the status of course and modules offered by the institution for entrepreneurship development, respondents were asked to show the status of their present institution. From Table VI, it is clear that almost 80 per cent of the institution do not provide post-graduate degree, undergraduate degree, diploma or certificate programme in entrepreneurship.

-- Please include Table VI here --

On other hand, more than 70 per cent of the respondent have said that their institution organize occasional seminar in entrepreneurship and more than 76 per cent of the respondents have said that it is covered in one or more existing course which mainly focus on another form of business activity. In the same vein, 182 respondents have said that entrepreneurship is taught in one more dedicated course or modules (80.2%).

Conclusion and Implications of the study

As lecturers are one of the prime influencing forces on the students to enlighten their entrepreneurial path, it is very necessary for entrepreneurship education research fraternity to understand that how committed the academic cohort feel towards teaching entrepreneurship and level of institutional support in the same. In response to the first question, i.e. commitment of lecturers to teach entrepreneurship, it was found that almost eighty five per cent of the respondent have shown that they feel fully committed to teach entrepreneurship and almost thirty five per cent of the respondents feel that they will be unwilling to exchange current entrepreneurship teaching for teaching in other subjects. This can be found as one of the most positive sign for the development of entrepreneurship education in these three countries in the years to come. If the lecturers feel duly committed to teach entrepreneurship and are ready to put in extra efforts to teach the subjects, the chances of influencing the students behaviour positively to start the venture increases that results into active entrepreneurship culture within an institution. However, in relation to imparting training to the lecturer for teaching entrepreneurship, it was found that substantial number of lecturer have not received any such training. This is one of the areas that require immediate attention and if such training provided, it would definitely lead an

institutional to better impart quality education for developing competent entrepreneurs in the time to come. In the same vein, almost fifty per cent of the lecturers are agree that their institution is keen to develop entrepreneurship education. However, in relation to training and staff development, it is found that almost thirty eight per cent of the lecturers have not received such a support.

In adopting various pedagogical tools to teach entrepreneurship, it was found that lecturers still prefer the traditional tool for teaching entrepreneurship, while the non-conventional tools like, video cases and business simulation exercises are still at its infancy. Looking at importance of these tools suggested by various earlier researchers (Hofer et al. 2010), it is highly recommended to use these non-conventional tools as well with right blend of lectures and class participative exercises so as to have balanced educational and practical development of the student.

When comparing institutional support received to teach entrepreneurship between the lecturers of India and Malaysia, MANOVA results indicated that there is no statistically significant difference. Moreover, the mean results are significantly positive which indicates that academic institutes in these countries are ready to provide academic and infrastructural support to the lecturers in these countries to teach entrepreneurship.

Lastly, to understand the status of course and modules offered by the institution for entrepreneurship development, respondents were asked to show the status of their present institution. In response to this, it was found that almost 80 per cent of the institution do not provide post-graduate degree, undergraduate degree, diploma or certificate programme in

entrepreneurship. This surprising result asks for the attention of all the educational and public policy institution at earliest, as large number of earlier studies have found that the courses which are dedicated especially to entrepreneurship are in a better position to deliver the expected result in form of formation and success of business from nascent entrepreneurs (Fiet, 2001).

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