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How to Teach Entrepreneurship: Traditional Lectures versus Experiential Learning

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship has become an important part of public policy of many states in the US. Hence, how to incorporate entrepreneurial education into higher education curriculum has become a hot topic of discussion. Even though entrepreneurship courses have been included into marketing and management curriculum in multiple universities traditionally, the recent focus on developing entrepreneurship as a source of economic growth and vitality resulted in a debate about how to educate entrepreneurs.

Experiential learning is another trend in the higher education that gained momentum in recent years. This approach has also been called as problem-based learning, inquiry learning, or discovery learning. The advocates of this type of instruction suggest that students learn better by discovering the fundamental and well-known principals of science when immersed in problem based inquiry contexts with minimal instructions. This type of education was found suitable for entrepreneurship students as the nature of the topic requires them to solve authentic problems by constructing their own solutions which eventually are expected to lead to new business ventures.

Like any other discipline in business, entrepreneurship has also its own content and tools. Moreover, it has multi-disciplinary underpinnings or elements based on business disciplines such as marketing, management, finance and accounting as well as non-business disciplines such as psychology, sociology and law among others. Therefore, as Morris and Pryor (2015) indicate that “it is difficult to understand or appreciate these elements or their interactions and impact experientially without first learning their basic nature and role.” As a result, one may suggest lectures may effectively facilitate shared learning for educating future entrepreneurs.

The objective of this special session is to revisit the pros and cons of different types of instructional methods in terms of effectiveness and efficiency in entrepreneurship education. Faculty are invited to share their experiences and learn from each other by joining the discussion on the impact of minimally-guided learning versus traditional lectures as well as how to design better learning approaches in the fast changing environment of higher education.

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