

Entrepreneurship Education Package at Undergraduate University Level

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Abstract

Although a considerable amount of information is available for students regarding entrepreneurship and the management of the smaller business, the approach in this research is to impart skills and knowledge by engaging the student in interesting tasks and activities which build on existing understanding by giving the student the necessary information to understand the relevance of entrepreneurship and the small businesses sector in a wider economic and social context, and to explore the environment in which entrepreneurs operate and the processes they employ; and by investigating the relevance of strategic management in the creation and planning of the entrepreneurial small business. The entrepreneurship education package in this research offers students the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to identify opportunities and to create a sustainable new venture through their course of study, which integrates theories with new participant-centered and action-oriented learning models.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Small Business, Enterprise Pathway, University Education, SMEs

1. Introduction

Research into the behavior of entrepreneurship and small businesses increased dramatically during the late 1970s and 1980s. During that time, the numbers of micro and small businesses have increased substantially, and their share of national sales and employment has grown accordingly (Stokes & Wilson, 2010). Also, the literature boomed, with written material published on virtually every aspect of the small business (Smallbone, 1990). Regular newspaper columns¹ began to give advice to small business's owners and information on their environment. In the UK, the outcome of the Committee of Inquiry on Small Firms during its two years of research, it commissioned many reports which have formed the basis for the large body of work carried out since, and represented one of the first significant attempts to assess the importance and functions of the small firms sector. The report recognized that small enterprises made a special contribution to the health of the economy and the government policies should encourage and support the sector (Bolton Report, 1971).

In the USA, Peter Drucker (1986), one of the most influential writers in an era when management theory was based on big business practice, acknowledged the new climate by welcoming the shift from a managerial to an entrepreneurial economy in which growth was being fuelled by small and medium sized enterprises with an estimated 600000 new businesses being started every year during the boom times of the 1980s. In the emerging economies were rapid economic growth and industrialization has been a feature of the two most populous nations on earth, China and India. China emerged from the economic disasters to undertake gradual reform of the system by increasing the role of market mechanisms within a controlled communist state. A key decision was the creation of Special Economic Zones in the coastal cities to encourage the expansion of international trade and co-operation (Anyansi-Archibong, 1989). These helped the industrialization process that saw the number of businesses in China increase (Small Business Trends, 2004). Also, the New Industrial Policy of 1991 in India changed the industrial system radically, encouraging the private sector and liberalizing the economy.

¹ For example, in the UK the *Guardian* introduced a 'New Business' section every Monday, edited by Clive Woodcock in the 1980s. Today, many papers including the *Sunday Times* and the *Daily mail* run a small business section and become involved in national awards and promotions for entrepreneurs.

This has allowed entrepreneurs to flourish and small businesses contribute 40 per cent on India's GDP and they are the second largest source of employment after agriculture (Stokes & Wilson, 2010). In Jordan's case, fortunately, Jordan does not suffer from a shortage of technology and engineering graduates. However, the bulk of these graduates have no direct knowledge of the business world, nor have they received education in business and management. The problem Jordan faces is potential entrepreneurs have little, if any, opportunity to obtain modern training in business and technological entrepreneurship. Despite this urgent need, there are no graduate or undergraduate programmes in entrepreneurship in Jordanian higher education institutions.

The principal aim of this research is directly addresses this problem and to provide a course of study in entrepreneurship and the management of the smaller business to the students who wish to start a business or for and practicing small business managers and entrepreneurs. The remainder of this study is divided into six sections. The next section provides a prior knowledge about entrepreneurship education at university level. Section three presents the theoretical approach and structure to entrepreneurship education. The fourth section describes the research location. The fifth section presents the university enterprise pathways. The sixth section gives the analysis followed by the conclusion section.

2. Prior Knowledge about Entrepreneurship at University Level

Prior to designing this new Entrepreneurship education package at university level, our research found that many technology entrepreneurs started working on their ventures without enrolling in management courses or pursuing business degrees; they learned by doing. While they eventually learned by trial and error, many false starts and redirections could have been avoided with more complete instruction and mentoring (Bawaneh, 2011; Zimelman & Albrecht, 2012). Unfortunately, the curriculum they needed did not exist, the comprehensive skill set they required – a combination of technology or engineering and business - was not available in college classrooms. So, this research directly addresses this problem.

3. The Theoretical Approach and Structure

Although small businesses are notoriously difficult to define from an external perspective, it is easier to identify the social and resource issues that differentiae running a small enterprise from those of a larger corporation (Curran & Blackburn, 2001), Small business have proven to be the key to economic growth and fuller employment Since the 1980s. During that time, the numbers of micro and small businesses have increased substantially, and their share of national sales and employment has grown accordingly (Small Business Trends, 2004). Many factors have contributed to this: the growth of the service economy (Curran, 1997), the use of information technology that has enabled smaller firms to match some of the economies of scale and international reach of the larger corporations, customer expectations for flexible products and services tailored more precisely to their needs (Curran and Blackburn, 1994), the use of subcontractors by large corporations refocusing on their core competencies (Goss, 1991), the reorganization of public services to include more private provision of services, the encouragement of an enterprise culture (Hannon, 2005), and the influence of "New Age" thinking in the values of society (Stokes & Wilson, 2010). However, the small business sector remains turbulent with high levels of "Churn" in the business stock and cause individual disruption but are indicators of an entrepreneurial economy (Bosma *et al.*, 2009; Barclays Bank, 2008; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007; Vale, 2006; Headd, 2003).

'Entrepreneurship' is also an elusive term (Timmons & Spinelli, 2004; Hirsch & Peters 2002). It is commonly linked to Small business management because it involves the processes of recognizing opportunities and the development of new ventures, but entrepreneurs operate in a range of contexts including larger corporations and the public sector, not just small businesses.

Therefore, the environment for an entrepreneur is uncertain and just surviving is a major battle for many new businesses, especially in times of economic recession. The rates of new business formation are by no means uniform (see Keeble *et al.*, 1993) and vary according to *When, where, which* sector small businesses are set up in. The entrepreneur therefore needs to be alert to the changes taking place at the level of market, industry, use technology and national and international economies, while being ready to pursue opportunities even if the resources are not immediately ready to hand.

Entrepreneurs tend not to gather information through formalized research but through informal networking (Bragg & Bragg, 2005; Hill & Hultman, 2005). However, secondary research (e.g. internal source, competitor sources, personal contact) and primary research (e.g. surveys, group discussions, observation etc.) is important to assess the risk of new ventures and to make adjustments to the market environment for established businesses (Carson *et al.*, 1995).

Furthermore, SMEs need external help and support which categorized into three types: financial assistance, lightening the tax and administrative load, and provision of information and advice by the state or other agencies (Story, 2006; also see, Birley & Muzyka, 2000).

After getting the necessary information in a wider economic and social context, entrepreneur needs to know how small businesses are created, focusing on successful strategies for start-up and growth, business planning and formation to market entry. There are three key questions lie at the heart of the planning process: where are we now, where do we intend going, and how do we get there? Business planning is seen to be a process undertaken for a variety of different reasons. While it can serve as an extremely useful tool for internal analysis of a small business, the most common use of the business plan is to gain finance from some external source. Therefore for a business plan to be successful it needs to be structured appropriately. So, the basic format of the business plan is needed which gives an indication of the key factors for ensuring its success. While there is no one winning formula for writing a business plan, the entrepreneurial team should strive to display competence in their approach to managing the new venture, alongside a clear account of the particular strengths (experience, knowledge, contacts, etc) of the individuals involved (for details, see Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2011).

In choosing a route to market entry for a business opportunity, an entrepreneur has to make decisions that relate to the law. The first decision relates to the basic legal form of the business: limited company, sole trader, partnership or co-operative. The second decision relates to what legal protection can be gained for the intellectual property of the business. The legal status of a business has implications with regard to the following key factors: the degree to which the owners have liabilities towards the business; the records and accounts that are required to be kept; the procedures for setting up the business; the methods possible for raising money; the ways in which the business can be sold; the image or perceived status in the marketplace; the types of taxation and national insurance (Barrow, 2002). The legal form chosen depends on the circumstances of the owner and the needs of the business in relation to these key factors (for details, see Stokes & Wilson, 2010).

4. Research Location

It was decided to conduct the case study of enterprise pathway at undergraduate university level. Princess Sumaya University for Technology (PSUT) was chosen on the basis of ‘openness to society’ access in addition to the following reasons. PSUT is non-profit private Jordanian university and a centre of educational excellence both locally and regionally. Being nonprofit with a socio-cultural mission, it combines a public sense of social responsibility with the entrepreneurial drive of the private sector. It serves as a prime institution in information technology, electronics and business. It is owned by the Royal Scientific Society, the leading applied research centre in Jordan².

Furthermore, PSUT encourages creativity, and innovation both in its area of specialization and in related areas. After all, versatility, the drive for continual growth and critical thinking are the keys to leadership and marked influence. PSUT’s courses are designed to satisfy international academic and industrial requirements and standards. Courses are market-oriented, with a strong theoretical base, and are updated in line with advances in technology and business. Through special emphasis on laboratory work, internship programmes and graduation projects, students graduate with practical work experience that prepares them for their careers of choice.

PSUT, like other universities, is in the business of translating art into science, of taking things that one might learn by lengthy trial and error and creating the theoretical underpinnings that help students understand not just what to do but why things work that way.

² PSUT is governed by a hierarchy of councils and boards, at the top of which is its fifteen-member board of trustees, chaired by her Royal highness Princess Sumaya Bint El-Hassan. The board includes academics, scientists, bankers, and business leaders. It is charged with strategic planning, policy making, and monitoring progress.

The entrepreneurship education package at PSUT focuses on information technology applications in various fields of knowledge of enterprise education to contribute to the message of PSUT in research and development programs of study and development of new programs based on the integration of technology into various areas of knowledge.

PSUT graduates have outstandingly obtained the highest average amongst Jordanian universities in the efficiency examinations conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research for three successive years. In light of these achievements, PSUT graduates find suitable jobs immediately after graduation or sometimes before that.

5. The PSUT's Case in Entrepreneurship

Based on the theoretical approach and structure in the previous section, the entrepreneurship education package at PSUT is intended to give a student one main source of reference on entrepreneurship education with the following two learning objectives:

- a. To develop an understanding of entrepreneurial behavior and the potential outcomes and benefits in any context.
- b. To evaluate the specific issues involved in creating, planning, developing and managing the entrepreneurial small business.

Therefore, the purpose of the entrepreneurship education package at PSUT is to provide students with a capacity to work independently and competently as entrepreneurs in a variety of settings that are critical to national and global socio-economic development. And PSUT in this enterprise pathway aims to develop students' knowledge of the business world and entrepreneurial skills to support them as they start their own businesses or contribute to the growth of other SMEs as employees. So, PSUT in its entrepreneurship education package encourages its undergraduate students to get out there and find the entrepreneur in themselves with the help of its enterprise pathways as shown in Table 1.

Table (1) Enterprise Pathways

Course No	Course Name & Description
1xxxx	<p>Entrepreneurship Prerequisite: (None) Credit Hours: 3</p> <p>This course focuses on the behavior and attributes of entrepreneurs who operate in a competitive environment. It will elaborate on the role of entrepreneurs in a competitive market and the role of government in the creation of a business environment conducive to entrepreneurship. The course will also highlight the relevance of attitudes, values and beliefs to entrepreneurial activity; the management of risks; the process of new product development; and the reasons for the high failure rate of new businesses. Students will be expected to prepare a business plan for a new business as their main objective by the end of the semester. The course will develop students' skills and understanding of the risks and rewards of entrepreneurial activities.</p>
2xxxx	<p>Entrepreneurship & Innovation Prerequisite: (1xxxx) Credit Hours: 3</p> <p>This course will focus on the role of entrepreneurs as the motive force in the innovation process. It will highlight the stages and types of innovation, the importance of innovation in modern knowledge based economies, and the role of entrepreneurs in developing innovation activities. The course will analyse the importance of the strategic window (identifying and analysing the gaps in the market, scanning for opportunity, positioning new ventures) and sources of finance for innovation activities. It will also elaborate on the role of government in promoting entrepreneurship and supporting innovation activities. Students are expected to consider setting up a new business and deal with all aspects of setting up a business (financial, managerial, marketing, legal, etc.).</p>

6. Analysis

Entrepreneurship is an elusive terms and it is commonly linked to small business management because it involves the processes of recognizing opportunities and the development of new ventures, but the environment for an entrepreneur is uncertain and just Surviving is a major battle for many new businesses. Therefore, the entrepreneur needs to be alert to the changes taking place at the level of market, industry, use technology and national and international economies by getting the necessary information, through formalized research and informal networking, in a wider economic and social context.

PSUT, in this regards, creates a new undergraduate package in enterprise pathway in Jordanian higher education by providing a two courses of study in Entrepreneurship and the management of the smaller business to the students who wish to start a business or for and practicing small business managers and entrepreneurs.

The entrepreneurship education package at PSUT is going parallel with the theoretical approach by provide a course focuses on the behavior and attributes of entrepreneurs who operate in a competitive environment. This course elaborates on the role of entrepreneurs in a competitive market and the role of government the creation of a business environment conducive to entrepreneurship. Also, this course develops students' Skills and understanding of the risks and rewards of entrepreneurial activities and to be able to prepare a business plan for a new business.

And the other course in the enterprise pathways at PSUT focuses on the role of entrepreneurs as the motive force in the innovation process. It highlights the stages and types of innovation, the importance of innovation in modern knowledge based economies, and the role of entrepreneurs in developing innovation activities. The course analyses the importance of the strategic window and sources of finance for innovation activities. It also elaborates on the role of government in promoting entrepreneurship and supporting innovation activities to allow students to deal with all aspects of setting up a business (e.g. financial, managerial, marketing, legal, etc.).

By the end of these two enterprise pathways students at PSUT will be able to have the necessary information to understand the relevance of entrepreneurship in a wider economic and social context, and to investigate the relevance of strategic management in the creation and planning of the entrepreneurial small business.

7. Conclusion

The economic development of a country like Jordan is closely linked to the development of the small and medium sized enterprise (SME) sector which forms the backbone of the economy. However, SMEs can only realize their full potential and economies if they are led by skilled, dynamic, and growth-oriented entrepreneurs, and if the economic and political environment is conducive to entrepreneurship. Therefore, PSUT was realized that being an entrepreneur is not restricted to people who start their own businesses and believed that an entrepreneurial spirit exists in all industries and at all levels of the career ladder, and then PSUT presented its enterprise pathways as shown in section 5.

By understanding the principles underlying both the theory and practice of entrepreneurship mentioned in Sections 3 and 5, PSUT students will avoid many errors and their success will serve as example to other aspiring entrepreneurs. As a concluding remarks, students who understand the fundamental principles underlying technology translation will be prepared not just for their first launch, but for a future rich with new ventures.

This study do not evaluates how entrepreneurial businesses work in practice through key functions of managing people, resources, marketing and money. This issue should be addressed in future research via case studies approach.

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