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Involving the Entrepreneurial Role Model: A Possible Development for Entrepreneurship Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers and discusses an alternative way to delivering entrepreneurship education to students in higher education institutions through the involvement of a role model(s) in entrepreneurship teaching and learning. A previous study with students in an Indonesian university showed that the role model is in position to give positive influence to their entrepreneurial motivation, and furthermore, the choice for a future career as an entrepreneur. As a further development, this paper outlines a model whereby the appropriate role of the dominant entrepreneurial role models (who are parents, entrepreneurs and teachers/lecturers) are integrated one with the other and can be used as a source of an entrepreneurial learning process. The lecturer can take on the major task as the facilitator to encourage students to seek the appropriate knowledge about entrepreneurship in this integration whilst the other two constructs can take on their major tasks to act as sources of informal entrepreneurial learning (through social and active learning). Entrepreneurs in particular, can act as a 'business father or mother' to whom students can talk and with whom they can establish a longer informal relationship.

This paper argues that whilst this model can be implemented successfully it is critical that a suitable and proper institutional setting -in terms of curriculum arrangement -alongside the availability of supporting facilities and infrastructures be arranged and addressed to support it.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial role models, institutional setting

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has become an economic panacea seen as both generating employment and economic prosperity in developed and developing countries (Kuratko, 2005; Matlay, 2006). The growing interest in entrepreneurship teaching and research (Jones and English, 2004) simultaneously increased the enthusiasm of students for taking part in an entrepreneurship course. They have become the most popular course in the USA for college and university students, followed by small business management and new venture creation (Solomon, 2007). Entrepreneurship is offered as a specific subject of education to be delivered as it is believed that education plays an important role in the process of entrepreneurial capacity (Hannon, 2006). This importance can be seen in the 2008 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) which devoted their 2008 special topic to Entrepreneurship Education and Training.

Rae (2010) argued that universities and their provision of education and learning for entrepreneurship must respond to the new economic era and the subsequent global recession. To respond to this, entrepreneurship education should be prepared for all university students regardless of their majors in order to improve their competitive advantage, not only for themselves but also for the nations and societies in which they involved (Lee, Chang and Lim, 2005). Unfortunately, entrepreneurship is often delivered through a normative theory-based approach rather than the pragmatic approach that is more contextual, experiential and reflexive. So students are only equipped with knowledge *about* entrepreneurship to stand alongside their traditional business-management skills and knowledge (Taataila, 2010). Although scholars have developed and offered some contemporary ways for

entrepreneurship teaching and learning, they also have realized that several factors (such as teaching and learning facilities and infrastructures, social and cultural influences, and curriculum) matter equally much in entrepreneurship education (see the studies of Higgins and Mirza, 2012, Carver, et al., 1996, Souitaris et al., 2007, Aronsson, 2004, Fiet, 2000, Jones-Evans et al, 2000, Jack and Anderson, 1999, Gorman et al, 1997,). One thing in principle is that entrepreneurship education should be better schemed, and therefore, it needs a proper and suitable institutional setting to foster delivery.

This paper offers an alternative for delivering entrepreneurship as a part of the education for students in higher education institutions by arguing that the role model can be involved in entrepreneurship education – as it relates positively to students’ entrepreneurial motivation and the choice of a future career as an entrepreneur.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Despite the problem of a lack of consensus over the definition of entrepreneurship which has resulted in a lack of a suitable pedagogical paradigm for entrepreneurship education, some scholars have tried to define what is entrepreneurship education, for example, Heinonen and Poikkijoki (2005): “*entrepreneurship education is the activities aimed at developing enterprising or entrepreneurial people and increasing their understanding and knowledge about entrepreneurship and enterprise*”. Unfortunately, even this definition cannot resolve the question and debate about how entrepreneurship education should be carried out. In addition, Jones and Iredale (2010) also identified another problem that relates to entrepreneurship education. They identified the problem of terminology within the continuums of enterprise and entrepreneurship education by arguing that there should be a clear separation between ‘entrepreneurship’ education and ‘enterprise’ education as both of these display differences in their focus and objectives. In a research regarding the learning process in entrepreneurship education, Fayolle and Gailly (2007) have mapped the key dimensions of learning processes in entrepreneurship education and the alternative teaching models that can be chosen which are summarized in Table One. Combining these two approaches we conclude on the distinction between the entrepreneurship education and enterprise education continuum in Figure One.

Although Figure One has clearly demonstrates the distinction, one thing the scholars have in common is the principle that the entrepreneurship education should rely on the adequacy regarding the objectives, characteristics of the audience and the existence of the institutional context that can influence contents and the constraints of entrepreneurship education. The tension to be resolved should not be to find which terminology is the most suitable for use – but rather to explore and to focus on what are those suitable teaching and learning methods that will be effective in delivering the course(s), be it either entrepreneurship or enterprise education. Related to this, there does seem to be an informal understanding between scholars that the ‘learning’ approach which accommodates the formal and informal learning possibilities will be more successful in entrepreneurship education rather than the ‘teaching’ approach. Rae (1999) when considering a basic approach to entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial learning for university students argued that the sources of entrepreneurial learning should be active, social and formal. He further proposed that there should be changes to the content of the courses from ordinary business skills-knowledge and understanding to the development of the students’ entrepreneurial skills, attributes and behaviours. This is also supported by Gibb (1996) who said that the process of learning should also be shifted from the traditional learning processes into an “*entrepreneurial learning processes*”. Thus, the challenge for entrepreneurship education is to establish, develop and maintain a system of learning (and assessment) that can add to the traditional ways of learning and developing its students with the skills, personality attributes and behavioural characteristic of the enterprising, or entrepreneurial, individual (Kirby,

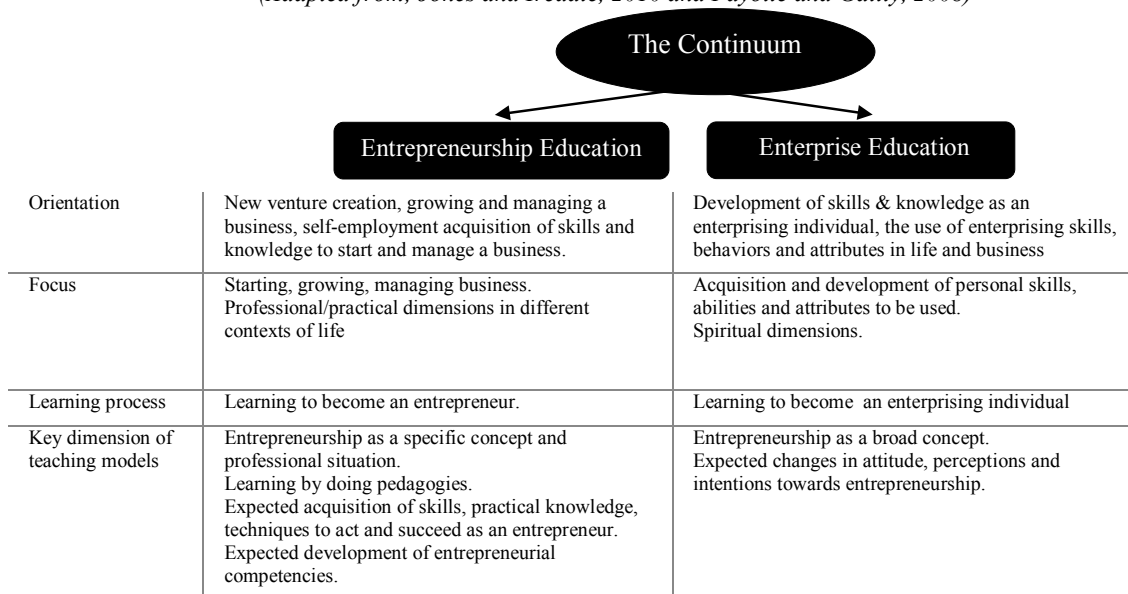
Table 1

Key Dimensions of the Learning Processes in Entrepreneurship Education (*Adapted from Fayolle and Gailly, 2007*)

| Learning process | Key dimensions of the teaching model |
|---|--|
| Learning to become an enterprising individual | Entrepreneurship as a broad concept Focus on spiritual dimensions (know why and know when) Expected changes in attitude, perceptions and intention toward entrepreneurship Large diversity of audiences: students in business & non-business fields High importance of entrepreneurs as role models in the classroom |
| Learning to become an entrepreneur | Entrepreneurship as a specific concept and professional situation (independent entrepreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship) Focus on professional/practical dimensions (know what, know how, know who). Learning by doing pedagogies. Expected acquisition of skills, practical knowledge, techniques to act and succeed as an entrepreneur. Expected development of entrepreneurial competencies Main audiences: would-be entrepreneurs working or having a real and concrete entrepreneurial project |
| Learning to become an academic | Academic conception of entrepreneurship Focus on theoretical dimension Didactical educational model Discussion in the classroom of research issues Main audiences: PhD students, teachers and researchers Expected acquisition of theoretical and scientific knowledge |

Figure 1

The Continuum of Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Education (*Adapted from; Jones and Iredale, 2010 and Fayolle and Gailly, 2008*)



From the bundle of studies and research regarding entrepreneurship education amongst countries, Mwasalwiba (2010) summarised the general objectives of entrepreneurship education in various countries as comprising of: (a) increasing entrepreneurial spirit/culture/attitudes (34% amongst the recorded studies and research); (b) start-up and job creation (27%); (c) making a contribution to the society (24%); and, (d) stimulating entrepreneurial skills (15%). These objectives led to the possible choice of teaching methods, which can be categorized into traditional methods (comprising normal lectures) and innovative methods which are more action-based (Arasti, Falavarjani and Imanipour, 2012), or in another terminology, passive and active methods (Mwasalwiba, 2010). To name some detail teaching and learning methods in entrepreneurship, Pittaway and Cope (2007) through a Systematic Literature Review identified: the use of the classic approach (Benson, 1992); action learning (Leitch and Harrison, 1999); new venture simulations (Clouse, 1990; Kelmar, 1992);

technology based simulations (Low, Venkataraman and Srivatsan, 1994; Hindle, 2002); the development of actual ventures (Haines, 1988); skill based courses (Ullijn, Duill and Robertson, 2004); video role plays (Robertson and Collins, 2003); experiential learning (Sexton and Upton, 1987; Daly, 2001); and mentoring (Stewart and Knowles, 2003). Lourenco and Jones (2006) further strengthen that mixture and collaboration of traditional approaches (lectures and seminars) by discussing transmissive methodologies (Sterling, 2001:36) associated with the transfer of information through more enterprising and interactive approaches (company visits, in-depth discussions with real entrepreneurs, activities) which use transformative methodologies – so engaging learners in constructing and owning their learning – and so possibly providing the best learning style for nascent entrepreneurs. Arasti, Falavarjani and Imanipour (2012) found that case study and projects, (either group or individual), problem solving and a project for establishing new venture creation are the most appropriate methods for engaging students in entrepreneurship. Furthermore, reflecting on interactive approaches which use transformative methodologies, Kuckertz (2013) emphasized two possible prominent learning methodologies that may raise the entrepreneurial attitudes of students. They are firstly: the exposure of students in class to specific role models such as successful entrepreneurs (Aronsson, 2004, Souitaris et. al., 2007 and Carver, et. al., 2010). Related to the choice of role model entrepreneurs for students, Kuckertz (2011) further suggested that they are better to be: (a) younger entrepreneurs who are two or three years ahead of the student, and (b) those to whom students can easily relate. Secondly, project based learning (Gorman, et al., 1997) and learning by doing (Fiet, 2000), for instance, the involvement of students in actual start-ups or student consulting to entrepreneurs. As a possible further development in entrepreneurship education, Higgins and Mirza (2012) for example, suggested that entrepreneurial education should consider a more reflexive practice-oriented education agenda and approach that involve self-conception of what does it mean to be an entrepreneur.

THE CONSTRUCT OF ROLE MODELS, ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATION AND A FUTURE CAREER AS AN ENTREPRENEUR

The concept of the entrepreneurial role model introduced by Gibson (2004) defined the role model, identified the dimensional approach of the role model, discussed characteristics that differentiate a role model from a mentor model or a behavioural model; and the reason why an individual is appointed to become a role model by other individuals. The definition of the role model as suggested by Gibson (2004) is “*a cognitive construction based on the attributes of people in social roles an individual perceives to be similar to him or herself to some extent and desires to increase perceived similarity by emulating those attributes*”

However, Gibson (2004) did not further clarify the impact and relationship between the existence of role models and individuals, especially to individuals’ entrepreneurial motivation and their possible future career to become an entrepreneur. The rationale and relationship between the construct of role model, entrepreneurial motivation (in particular students in higher education institutions) and possible future career as an entrepreneur was introduced by Rahman (2013). He identified several possible constructs of role model and found that some role models, indeed, have a positive relationship to entrepreneurial motivation and the future career choice to become an entrepreneur. This is shown in Table Two. In all matters, parents and entrepreneurs are the perfect people on whom the students can rely on for their future career and entrepreneurial motivation. The constructs of siblings, uncles/aunties and friends are in a moderate position to influence the future career of the student (meaning that siblings, uncles-aunties and friends can only give insights on entrepreneurial career but they have no ‘personality power’ to encourage the students to take any further actions into an entrepreneurial career). This circumstance has further led to the fact that these three constructs of the role model have no significant correlation to student entrepreneurial motivation. The ‘*ambiguous*’ position is shown by the teacher/lecturer as a construct of role model. On the one hand, the students think their teacher/lecturer is one of the people who can influence their future career but on the contrary, they think their teacher/lecturer have no correlation to their entrepreneurial motivation. This indicates one thing: reputation of the teachers/lecturers and their formal interrelationship with the

students can only give insights to the future career of the students but not markedly influence their entrepreneurial motivation.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF ROLE MODELS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

The previous study by Rahman and Day (2012) implied that there is a possibility to use the role model construct in the social environment of an individual. Strengthening entrepreneurial motivation will further lead to strengthening the traits and personality of aspirant entrepreneurs.

Table 2

The Influence of the Construct of Role Models to Student Future Career Choice and Their Relationship to Student Entrepreneurial Motivation

| No | Possible Degree of Influence for Future Career | Construct of role models according to their proximity to students | | | | | | Not Known Personally Successful Entrepreneurs |
|----|--|---|----------|------------------|---------|--------------------------|----------------------|--|
| | | Very Close | | Close | | | | |
| | | Parents | Siblings | Uncles / Aunties | Friends | Boyfriends / Girlfriends | Teachers / Lecturers | |
| 1 | Positive | √ | | | | | √ | √ |
| 2 | Moderate | | √ | √ | √ | | | |
| 3 | Negative | | | | | √ | | |

| No | Correlation to Entrepreneurial Motivation | Construct of role models according to their proximity to students | | | | | | Not Known Personally Successful Entrepreneurs |
|----|---|---|----------|------------------|---------|--------------------------|----------------------|--|
| | | Very Close | | Close | | | | |
| | | Parents | Siblings | Uncles / Aunties | Friends | Boyfriends / Girlfriends | Teachers / Lecturers | |
| 1 | Positive | √ | | | | | | √ |
| 2 | No correlation | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | |

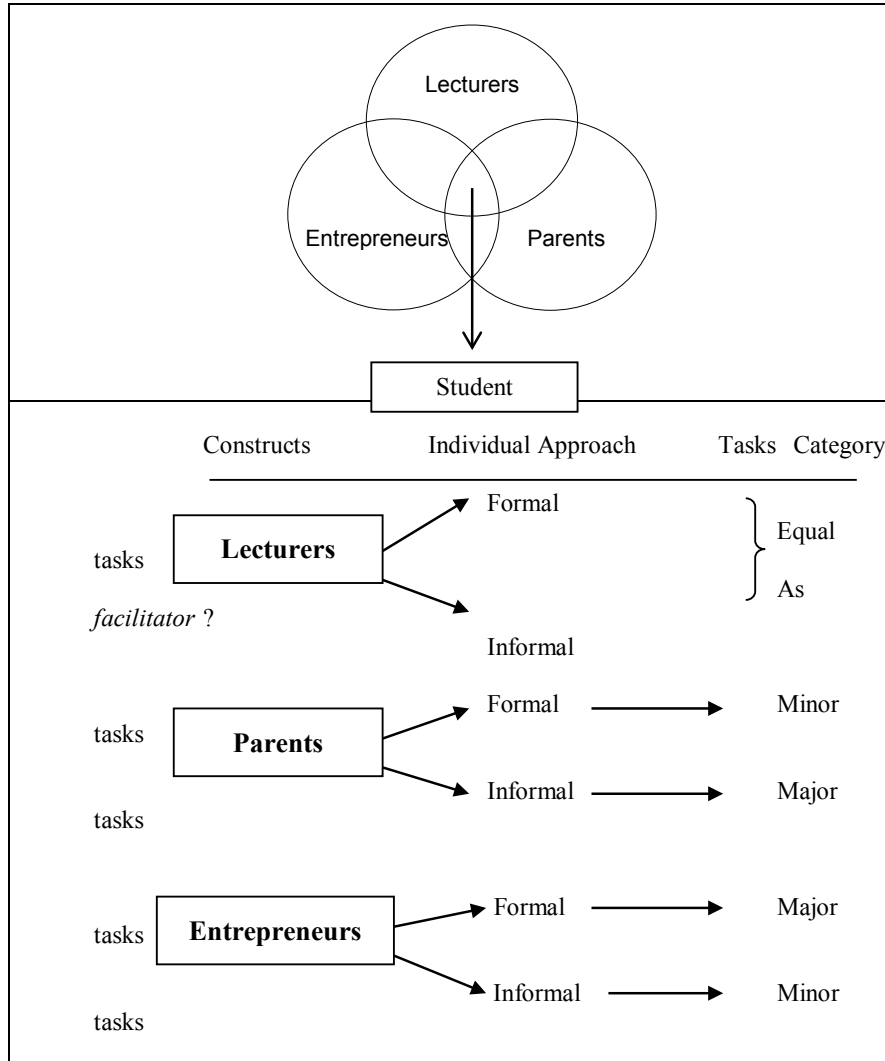
Consequently, the use of role model constructs in strengthening traits and personality of the aspirant entrepreneur should also be better *schemed* in suitable arrangements either in formal or informal ways. In a formal way, this will relate to the involvement of the role model construct in entrepreneurship education (teaching & learning, training, workshops and seminars), whilst in an informal way this relates to the consideration of the social culture in which norms, values and wisdoms are taking place. As argued by Kirby (2002), the challenge of entrepreneurship education is to develop a system of learning (and assessment) that complements the traditional ways of learning and developing students with the skills, attributes and behaviours characteristic of the enterprising or entrepreneurial individual. Edwards and Muir, (2004) further strengthened Kirby (2002). Therefore, an arrangement and possible scheme to involve and integrate roles of dominant entrepreneurial role models consisting of: (1) parents, (2) entrepreneurs, and (3) lecturers in entrepreneurship education can be identified. The roles can be seen as a possible *specific task* that can be carried out by each role model. Using *individual approaches* as the consideration, the integration of roles of the dominant role models with students can be viewed in the following figure.

Figure Two shows that students are positioned in the centre of integration between the three dominant role models and they can take benefits from this integration. Tasks that should be done by each of the dominant role model are categorized into two categories: (1) *major tasks* and (2) *minor tasks*. The lecturer in this integration is in an important position as a *facilitator* who can facilitate the involvement of the two other dominant role models (parents and entrepreneurs). They may have a major task to encourage students to seek the appropriate knowledge in entrepreneurship and to become aware of entrepreneurship as a possible choice for their future career, and further, identifying and appointing possible and suitable role models who can share their experience in the classroom and establish a longer informal communication and interaction with students. As Aronsson, (2004), the role of educators is to foster entrepreneurial attitudes of their students, and so is less about changing

them directly, but rather increasing awareness of entrepreneurship as an alternative career choice and creating an environment that can foster entrepreneurial behaviour. As a general qualification, the lecturer is better being a person who engages in business and management practice, or at least, who is aware of it. Most importantly, the lecturer needs to show and express a willingness to explore new frameworks of knowledge transfer and development. The major task of entrepreneurs is to expose the real world scenarios of becoming an entrepreneur, offer continuous practical assistance and advice and be ready to be a '*business*' father or mother' with whom students can establish a longer and an informal relationship.

The entrepreneur is appointed by the students as their role model through their recognising and considering that they have a solid reputation as an entrepreneur and possibly, charisma. Therefore, it becomes important that this entrepreneur would be better to be an educationally empathetic person; still relatively young; has had the business since establishment; and has a strong commitment to give their time and share their experience to guide the student. It is hoped that parents who are entrepreneurs get involved in this model as they are the most influential role model for students. The major task of parents can be related to developing and improving student awareness regarding entrepreneurship as a possible future career, to give insights about other work and jobs (apart from just being an employee) and to support the choice of the future career by students. As students appointed parents as their role model based on the reason of charisma, it would be important for them to offer an informal approach (communication and interaction) and in a longer timeframe to raise student awareness. Parents should be wise in their counsel and communicate and interact with students with respect for their plans for their future life. Therefore, parents who can act as friends would be needed in this task.

Figure 2
 Role Integration of Dominant Entrepreneurial Role Models in Entrepreneurship Education



Interesting issues are raised for managing role models within the classroom. We have to manage a complex selection of role models; some of them will exert a physical and contemporary influence, (the guest entrepreneur). Others will have played a role in an environment outside of the classroom and their influence may be both now and in the past, for example, parents. So the educator needs to not only draw upon contemporary and previous influences but also to manage a range of internal and external influences whilst taking into account their relative impact on the student. Of course, an entrepreneurship (education) orientation has already made common the bringing of entrepreneurs into the classroom, however this is usually only for a limited and contained period of time. This paper implies that there should be more frequent interaction between students and entrepreneurs in the classroom. Such will allow the creation of the *closure mechanism* between students and entrepreneurs, whereby students will adopt and appoint entrepreneurs as their role model. There should also be a tripartite and close interpersonal relationship between teachers/lecturers-parents-entrepreneurs in guiding those students who have entrepreneurial projects, interests and motivation. Close cooperation between universities and actors (role models) would be a sensible route to choose, including actors outside of the traditional classroom network both in reach and time. If parents are a large pre-university influence then should we reach out to them, and incorporate them, prior to their children attending university?

CONCLUSION

As our previous study, we found that students react positively towards the existence of role models for their entrepreneurial motivation and their future career to become an entrepreneur. We found that the constructs of parents, entrepreneur and teacher/lecturer are the most likely persons who can influence their entrepreneurial motivation and a future career in entrepreneurship. We believe that this could be used as an alternative way in entrepreneurship education and an associated entrepreneurial learning process by arguing that the involvement of role models will also be effective in entrepreneurship education. We offer a model where the role of dominant entrepreneurial role models is integrated in entrepreneurship education for students in higher education institutions – in which every role model has its own specific major and minor tasks. However, arrangements should be made for a proper, and suitable, institutional framework and setting to support its implementation, particularly in terms of curriculum arrangement alongside the availability of supporting facilities and infrastructures be arranged and addressed to support it.

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