OPTIMAL FRAMEWORKS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR SUCCESS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Aim of the Study

To be successful, entrepreneurship educators must make sense of processes, situations and information that involve ambiguity. Exploring a new venture idea is an uncertain undertaking that creates many ambiguities in and of itself. Educating entrepreneurs in how to best explore their new venture ideas is equally fraught with ambiguities. To overcome these uncertainties, the entrepreneurship educator must understand entrepreneurial decision making, develop a mental model of how the process and environment works (sensemaking), enable entrepreneurs to develop their business model and communicate the same to gain support, partnership, or patronage (e.g., partners, employees, investors, potential customers, and suppliers) (sensegiving) (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995). This mental model is the subject of entrepreneurship education around the world (Zott, Amit, & Massa, 2011; Bieger and Reinhold, 2011; Burkhart, Krumeich, Werth, & Loos, 2011; Krumeich, Burkhart, Werth, & Loos, 2012) and as such becomes a focal point for entrepreneurial education programs (Maritz, 2017).

Under the assumption that entrepreneurship can be taught (Drucker, 1985; Valerio, Parton, & Robb, 2014), there is an ongoing debate in the academic literature and practice circles with respect to the ideal methods to teach entrepreneurship effectively and efficiently for successful outcomes beyond the classroom (Zott, et al., 2011; Bieger

and Reinhold, 2011; Burkhart, et al., 2011; Krumeich, et al., 2012; Maritz, 2017). While there is no clear evidence for when to utilise one framework or another, or any combination of frameworks, whether to develop a proprietary program or choose an 'off-the-shelf' education program solution, it is a challenge for all university program managers, learning designers, content developers, and facilitators. The aim of the study is to map impacts of entrepreneurship education beyond the classroom, with a view to understand the ideal configuration of entrepreneurship education frameworks for different and distinct geographical and cultural areas, according to various program factors (such as participant demographic, experience, program duration/intensity, objectives and prescribed aspirational program outcomes.

Methods

Taking an entrepreneurial decision-making perspective, through the lens of sensemaking/sensegiving, and using an interpretivist methodology, the study undertakes macro-, meso-, and micro-level analyses of Entrepreneurship Ecosystems, Entrepreneurship Programs and Frameworks, and the Entrepreneurship Educators who develop and deliver them. The study analyses the use and integration of a variety of entrepreneurship education frameworks available for implementation in entrepreneurship education programs. Using multiple case study design, six selected case studies represent diversity of geography, culture, institution, resources, participants, programs, venture stage, and local ecosystem. Central to a purposive sampling strategy, this study maintains a cross-sectional focus including eight discrete organisations:

1. MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
2. QUT, Brisbane, Australia
3. Kyushu University, Japan
4. Nangyang Technological University,
5. National University of Singapore
6. Sasin Business School, Bangkok
7. Harbour Space, Bangkok/Barcelona
8. University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

Data collection involves in-depth case interviews with several key informants (program directors, managers and facilitators) per institution in a cross-sectional study.

Results

Practice- and learning-oriented academic frameworks available to entrepreneurship educators (Four Steps to the Epiphany, cf. Blank, 2005; Business Model Canvas, Osterwalder, 2005; Lean Canvas, Maurya, 2010; Lean Startup, Ries, 2011; Design Sprint, Knapp, Zeratsky et al. 2016; 24 Steps of Disciplined Entrepreneurship, Aulet, 2013; Ecological Frameworks, Jones, 2013; Entrecomp, Bacigalupo, Kampylis et al. 2016; Startup Strategy Compass, Gans, Stern et al. 2019) were identified. Whilst the emergence of Design Thinking, Customer Discovery, the Business Model Canvas and Lean Entrepreneurship have created some common language for learning and doing in early-stage venture development, this research develops a guide on how to design and

execute entrepreneurship education from the perspective of entrepreneurship educators for measurable impact beyond the classroom. This study conceives of a holistic, contemporary, and comparative framework recommendation, ideal for the contemporary entrepreneurship educator, including commercial and sustainability logics and their measures.

Conclusions

Despite high levels of interest and attention that frameworks in business model innovation have received, the construct still represents ‘a slippery construct to study’ (Casadesus-Masanell and Zhu, 2013, p. 480). The ‘fuzziness’ is caused by conceptual inconsistencies in the entrepreneurship education frameworks themselves (Spieth, Schneckenberg et al. 2014), which sit somewhere between economics and business strategy without a solid theoretical anchoring in either (Teece, 2010).

We identified the entrepreneurial ecosystem as a primary site where the entrepreneurial process takes place, identifying how entrepreneurship educators draw from the entrepreneurial ecosystem to inform program design. We introduces entrepreneurship education frameworks from a configurational perspective that accounts for complex causality of conjunction, equifinality, and asymmetry. We show how sensemaking of entrepreneurial decision making occurs when university entrepreneurship educators from different geographic and cultural areas interpret, incorporate, and apply entrepreneurship frameworks, and deal with the ambiguity in differences between those frameworks. We identify how optimal program success measures are defined and

implemented in the context of leading entrepreneurship education organisations across the world. We explain the ways in which university entrepreneurship educators incorporate entrepreneurial decision making (through sensemaking, sensegiving and sense receiving) and choose how to best combine strategy and frameworks for the purpose of creating and delivering effective entrepreneurship programs that result in measurable, positive impact beyond the classroom.