

THE GREAT DEBATES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ADVANCES IN THE STUDY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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ADVANCES IN THE STUDY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH VOLUME 27

THE GREAT DEBATES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2017

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78743-076-1 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-78743-075-4 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-78743-261-1 (Epub)

ISSN: 1048-4736 (Series)



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INTRODUCTION: THE GREAT DEBATES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION EXPLOSION

Entrepreneurship education has been emerging and growing over the past 30 years (e.g., Brush et al., 2003; Dickson, Solomon, & Weaver, 2008; Gartner & Vesper, 1994; Katz, 2003, 2004, 2008; Kuratko, 2005; Solomon, 2007; Solomon, Duffy, & Tarabishy, 2002; Solomon & Fernald, 1991; Solomon, Weaver, & Fernald, 1994; Vesper & Gartner, 1997, 1999). While the studies always note a variety of obstacles and challenges at the time, they also document a remarkable rate of growth and development in the curricula and related campus-based programs devoted to entrepreneurship and new venture creation. The number of colleges and universities offering courses related to entrepreneurship has grown from a handful in the 1970s to thousands across the globe today (Kuratko, 2017). Large numbers of universities now offer majors, minors, concentrations, certificates, and master's degrees in entrepreneurship. Some of the more prestigious research universities have developed Ph.D. programs to prepare the next generation of entrepreneurship scholars. Over 700 universities across the globe have created centers and institutes, and a growing number are launching academic departments, co-departments, and schools (Morris, Kuratko, & Cornwall, 2013).

The popularity of entrepreneurship education has been tied to the potential for enhancing levels of innovation and economic growth in society. By educating students for start-up or corporate entrepreneurial activities, either upon graduation or at a subsequent point in their careers, policy makers believe that it is important for economic growth (Charney & Libecap, 2000; Kolvereid & Moen, 1997; Menzies, 2004, 2009; McMullan & Gillin, 1998; Upton, Sexton, & Moore, 1995). To date, the large majority of these educational programs have

been centered on business school students and the related business school stakeholders (Finkle, Menzies, Kuratko, & Goldsby, 2013; Kuratko, 2017).

In recent years, there has been a movement to spread entrepreneurship education into schools and colleges across entire campuses (Cone, 2004; Gatewood, 2009; Thorp & Goldstein, 2010). Some of the more visible initiatives were facilitated by a number of large grants from the Kauffman Foundation in the first few years of the twenty-first century, but many of these programs waned once the funding was exhausted. Other efforts have been more modest and sporadic, sometimes lacking clear purpose or strategic direction. The challenges have been significant, ranging from funding needs and staffing challenges to coordination and control difficulties as well as overt skepticism or resistance from deans, department heads, faculty, and staff. Morris, Kuratko, and Pryor (2014) provided a clearer conceptualization of the university-wide entrepreneurship concept, together with a richer understanding of factors contributing to its successful implementation and sustainability.

THE CONCEPT OF DEBATES

However, as with any discipline that grows exponentially as entrepreneurship has done, there arise numerous ideas with differing opinions about their value. It may be about certain educational tools or specific concerns about the entrepreneurship degree itself. All of the positions taken on the different issues have caused a series of “debates” to begin. In 2015 at the Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centers Conference, the conference director, Michael H. Morris of the University of Florida, initiated a platform for the various debates to be presented. Because the debates drew the largest attendance of any sessions at the conference, the organizers of the conference decided in 2016 at the University of Rochester and the Rochester Institute of Technology to continue the platform for more debates. Again, the sessions were well attended and hugely effective in bringing out the views more clearly.

After the 2 years of debates being verbally presented, the concept of a volume to print some of the key points of these debates arose. The volume editors, Donald F. Kuratko and Sherry Hoskinson, extended invitations to all of the presenters in the debates to submit a written analysis of their position on the particular issue being debated. While not every presenter accepted the invitation, a number of excellent entrepreneurship scholars and teachers did step up and accept the invitation. Their work is the product of this current volume.

The pages ahead will unveil some of the most interesting perspectives on topics of great interest in the entrepreneurship education world today. For example, topics such as the benefits of entrepreneurship experiential teaching

methods; the genuineness of entrepreneurial ecosystems; pursuing or avoiding a degree in entrepreneurship; the business plan vs. the lean startup approach; the gazelle versus portfolio arguments in policy development; and where should entrepreneurship centers be controlled? Without the diligent work of the authors, this volume could not have been possible. The following scholar/teachers provided the excellent and provocative material in this volume:

Michael H. Morris, *University of Florida*: “Why Content and Lecture Matter in Entrepreneurship Education”

Jaime L. Williams and Richard J. Gentry, *University of Mississippi*: “Keeping It Real: The Benefits of Experiential Teaching Methods in Meeting the Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education”

Alex F. DeNoble, *San Diego State University*, and Ted D. Zoller, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*: “Is the Business Plan Really Dead and Should it Be?: A Case for the Lean Startup Approach”

Xaver Neumeyer, *University of North Dakota*, and Andrew C. Corbett, *Babson College*: “Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: Weak Metaphor or Genuine Concept?”

Donald F. Kuratko and Elise N. Hudson, *Indiana University*: “Gazelle Solution vs. Portfolio Thinking”

Alexander Zorychta, *University of Virginia*: “Aspiring Entrepreneurs Should Not Major in Entrepreneurship”

David Y. Choi, Jason F. D’Mello and Darlene Fukuji, *Loyola Marymount University*: “Valuing a Bachelor Degree in Entrepreneurship – The LMU Experience”

Jeanne M. Hossenlopp, *Marquette University*: “Should University Entrepreneurship Centers be Controlled Centrally? Lessons Learned from Transitioning from a Business School to a Centralized Center”

As one can see, this collection of documented debate articles represents some unique and challenging perspectives to examining the issues surrounding entrepreneurship. However, it is in that uniqueness of these perspectives where we believe a significant contribution is made to advancing our knowledge of issues that are being debated today. Entrepreneurship is a dynamic discipline growing in importance every year so the debates presented in this issue stand on the forefront of making a deeper impact for the challenges that confront tomorrow’s entrepreneurship educators. Let the debates begin!

Donald F. Kuratko
Sherry Hoskinson
Editors

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CHAPTER 1

WHY CONTENT AND LECTURE MATTER IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Michael H. Morris

ABSTRACT

There are those who suggest the experiential and action-oriented nature of entrepreneurship makes traditional content-focused lecture a less appropriate pedagogical approach when teaching entrepreneurship courses. This chapter challenges such suggestions, arguing that the lecture should be the centerpiece of entrepreneurship education, augmented by experiential learning tools and other pedagogical approaches. Such a blended model, when built around the lecture, has the potential to greatly enhance learning, improve student retention, encourage student thought and reflection, and better develop entrepreneurial skills and competencies associated with the entrepreneurial mindset. The chapter also summarizes the nature of the content delivered through entrepreneurship courses, classifying this content into three general categories, and concluding that this core content is substantive, complex, and highly inter-related. These characteristics reinforce the importance of great lectures for moving entrepreneurship education forward.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education; pedagogy; lecture; experiential learning

The Great Debates in Entrepreneurship

Advances in the Study of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Economic Growth, Volume 27, 1–8

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ISSN: 1048-4736/doi:10.1108/S1048-473620170000027002

INTRODUCTION

It has become popular in some quarters to suggest that, when talking about how to teach entrepreneurship, the traditional lecture is dead, or should be. Critics view the lecture as an outdated or passé form of pedagogy; as a relic from an earlier, less enlightened and less technologically advanced age. I would like to suggest that these claims are not only deeply flawed but they can actually undermine the potential of modern entrepreneurship education.

First, let us consider the logic behind such bold claims — reasoning which arguably centers on a couple of different notions. Some would suggest that lectures are inherently boring and do not reflect how students (particularly millennials) prefer to learn — students want to *do* things. Others propose that lectures are somehow insulting to the student, as they assume the professor is the holder of much knowledge (somehow superior) and the student lacks knowledge (somehow inferior), and so a lecture is a means of transmission from one who knows to one who does not. The inference is that we need a more egalitarian approach, where the instructor is not a scholar or expert, but more of a coach or enabler. Alternatively, in the contemporary environment, it is assumed that everything a student needs to know is already on the Internet, and so the professor really has little new knowledge to add. Yet another suggestion is that entrepreneurship is inherently about action, and learning as you engage in action, and so students similarly need to learn by doing, not from a lecture.

Beyond this, there are those who adopt an overly restrictive interpretation of lecturing, concluding it involves a one-way approach to communication, where the audience is simply engaged in passive learning — hence the lecture is assumed to conflict with the notion active learning. Here, active learning refers to “anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 2), and is associated with student retention.

Sadly, I worry that a growing number of faculty members have taken arguments such as these to heart. It amazes me how many entrepreneurship educators rely on various vehicles to avoid lecture and delivery of content as much as possible. As a case in point, I’ve seen faculty members extensively use group exercises where students, often absent any substantive background or underlying knowledge base, are formed into small groups and asked to engage in an exercise and/or come up with a solution to a problem. Large proportions of classroom time are lost to such exercises. They certainly can be fun and entertaining. Whether anything is learned is less clear. Then there are the educators who simply tell war stories about their own entrepreneurial journey, or those of others, assuming these particular stories from particular contexts enable students to learn concepts and principles that apply to entrepreneurial behavior in general. Still others teach exclusively with case studies, assuming that if you walk a student through actual problem solving in different scenarios enough

times, they will somehow master core concepts, principles, and frameworks. Another widely touted device is the flipped classroom, where the student is exposed to the material outside the classroom and then, when in the classroom, he/she engages in exercises, projects, or discussions applying the material. Lecture is still permitted here, but it is conveyed in short videos that are available online.

CONTENT: WHAT WE TEACH WHEN WE TEACH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

I am not advocating against the use of any of these tools or devices. Rather, I am suggesting that they are, at best, supplementary to what should be the centerpiece of the learning process, the lecture. It may be that those against lecture and delivery of content simply do not have much content to teach. Yet, new knowledge is exploding, particularly in an emerging discipline such as entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, the knowledge base of students, particularly as it relates to substantive content related to entrepreneurial behavior, is severely limited. To better appreciate the value of the lecture, then, let us first examine the content of what we teach in entrepreneurship courses.

While the content of a great entrepreneurship course is extensive, and many universities now offer 20 or more courses as part of full entrepreneurship curriculum, the essence of what is taught can be grouped into three general categories, as reflected in [Table 1](#). Here, we include business basics, core entrepreneurial content, and the entrepreneurial mindset, with examples of topics in each category provided.

The first of these categories reflects the inter-disciplinary nature of business creation, and addresses the functional areas of business as they apply to a new venture. So, the concern is with teaching how we determine prices, set up operations, segment the market, or manage cash flow, among many other topics, in a start-up company. This is probably the area receiving most of the attention in the entrepreneurship classroom, even though it is effectively re-teaching content one learns in other courses taught in a business school, but in a new or emerging venture context.

The second category concerns content related to the emerging discipline of entrepreneurship as the volume of research and the scale and scope of educational programs has dramatically grown over the past 30 years. The entrepreneurial process, which has emerged as the dominant paradigm in entrepreneurship teaching and research, is the cornerstone. Topics such as the nature of opportunity, business model innovation, entrepreneurial orientation, typologies of ventures, and the liabilities of newness and smallness become the critical fodder for the entrepreneurship classroom.

Table 1. The Core Content of Entrepreneurship.

Business Basics	Entrepreneurship Basics	Entrepreneurial Mindset
Setting up the books	Entrepreneurship defined	Opportunity alertness
How to sell	The entrepreneurial process	Risk mitigation
Hiring of staff	Characteristics of entrepreneurs	Resource leveraging
Forms of enterprise	Types of entrepreneurs & ventures	Conveying a vision
Cash flow management	Contexts for entrepreneurship	Innovating
Formulating strategy	Innovative business models	Passion
Market analysis	Entrepreneurial cognition	Persistence and tenacity
Setting up operations	The nature of opportunity	Creative problem-solving
Pricing	Ethics and entrepreneurship	Guerrilla behavior
Promotion & advertising	Seed and venture capital	Optimism
Financial statements	Bricolage	Learning from failure
Franchising	Lean start-up	Effecting change
Management control	Liabilities of newness/smallness	Adaptation
Cost analysis	How entrepreneurs learn	Resilience
Protecting IP	Entrepreneurial strategy	
	Entrepreneurial orientation	
	Entrepreneurship and society	
	Exit strategies	

The third category concerns the entrepreneurial mindset, or how to think and act in entrepreneurial ways. While teaching a mindset is not easy, and there are different views regarding the nature of this mindset, it does imply a certain set of attitudes and behaviors. As a result, the educator tends to be focused more on teaching competencies that enable the individual to pursue entrepreneurial behaviors, potentially in any context or aspect of life (Morris, Webb, Fu, & Singhal, 2013). The knowledge, attitudes, and skills associated with such competencies as opportunity assessment, resource leveraging, risk mitigation, and adaptation become the subject matter on which the educator concentrates.

The reality is that elements of all three categories are probably being taught in contemporary entrepreneurship courses. As the items within each category are often multifaceted, complex, and inter-related, with inter-disciplinary underpinnings, it would seem unrealistic to expect students to master such content by themselves (i.e., “I’ll just Google it”), or through readings or short videos viewed outside the classroom, or through in-class group exercises, stories, or experiential mechanisms such case studies and simulations. Lecture represents a primary player in helping students understand core variables, principles, concepts, and frameworks. It enables students to develop a richer appreciation regarding how to relate these elements to one another. That is, a

particular element of content is better grasped when it is related through a lecture to other material, concepts, tools, and frameworks. Moreover, it enables the student to appreciate the application, and associated implications, of a given concept within a wide variety of contexts.

THE BEAUTY OF AN ENTREPRENEURSHIP LECTURE

It is interesting that one of the most popular means of communicating new or novel ideas and perspectives in the modern age has become TED talks, where an “expert” simply speaks for 18 minutes. The most popular courses on many university campuses continue to be delivered by great lecturers. And the last time I checked, Nobel prize winners still give highly anticipated lectures when receiving their awards. While TED and Nobel talks are severely limited contexts for lectures, clearly the idea of a lecture being something to anticipate and enjoy is alive and well.

We must move past the stereotype of the lecture as staid and boring or formulaic. One should draw a distinction between bad lectures and the lecture as a bad pedagogical tool. Hence, it should never be a situation where the teacher (a) simply repeats (even if in some modified form) what is in a textbook or on some Powerpoint slides, or (b) lectures to show how smart he/she is, or (c) uses the classroom as a forum to share their latest scholarly research no matter how far removed that research is from the core subject matter of the course, or (d) provides an information dump such as the proverbial instructor who has his/her back to the students as they fill a whiteboard with tons of information. And it should rarely, if ever, be a one-way form of communication where the student is a passive learner. Researchers have clearly demonstrated lecture’s potential as a vehicle for active learning (Gauci, Dantas, Williams, & Kemm, 2009; Meltzer & Manivannan, 2002).

A lecture represents a highly effective art form. When done properly, it is a creative construction, an unfolding drama, an intellectual journey. While replete with logic, rigor, and substance, it can also be filled with intrigue, humor, excitement, joy, sadness, anger, and energy. It can be a form of dyadic communication, where both parties (teacher and student) are posing and answering questions, challenging the other party’s assumptions, making connections to other concepts and ideas, and learning from one another. The student is a partner who contributes to the lecture, helping to identify gaps, demonstrating misunderstandings and unique preconceptions and assumptions, introducing ways to extend the content, and bringing in examples and applications.

Additionally, lectures can include stories, illustrations, and applications. Students can be brought into these elements, and asked what they think about or would have done in a presented situation using a given concept or tool or

framework introduced through the lecture. As content is introduced, contexts can be added. Also, as rehearsal of information is important to its retention (Bligh, 2000), the lecture format allows for reinforcing a concept multiple times and in different ways over subsequent lectures.

Entrepreneurship especially lends itself to capitalizing on these possibilities. Venture creation represents a dynamic, uncontrollable undertaking filled with uncertainty and ambiguity, where things emerge, adaptation is ongoing, reality is being constructed in real time, learning is constant, and what one starts out creating is rarely what actually gets created. Key concepts, tools, and frameworks introduced through lectures can help bring order to what is otherwise chaos. Further, these characteristics of entrepreneurship provide significant opportunities to introduce intrigue, surprise, excitement, despair, creative friction, and related elements within a lecture. And when teaching entrepreneurship, one is ultimately teaching empowerment and transformation, but through a disciplined approach. Every student is capable of entrepreneurial behavior (something I fear far too many entrepreneurship educators do not believe). And the entrepreneurial journey is a highly personalized and idiosyncratic undertaking. Through a lecture, one is speaking to the individual student about the role of entrepreneurial behavior within their own careers and lives, and about their ability to make a difference by developing and nurturing their innate entrepreneurial potential. As such, entrepreneurship lectures can convey inspiration, motivation, self-efficacy, and the potential for someone with very little in the way of resources to create something that makes a difference.

CONCLUSIONS: CONNECTING THE DOTS

Based on this discussion, I believe the trend in entrepreneurship education should not be toward less reliance on the lecture format, but rather, on even greater use of lecture in all its different forms. At the same time, I am a big advocate of experiential learning and the building of deliberate practice into both the classroom and co-curricular programming. There is great value in role plays, games, problem-solving exercises, case studies, simulations, interviews of entrepreneurs, consulting projects, entrepreneurial audits, and a whole array of other experiential learning tools. But again, lecture must be the centerpiece.

Consider the student who is launching a business in a campus-based student incubator, arguably one of the most intense and comprehensive forms of experiential learning in entrepreneurship education. The learning potential here is immense. Yet it is learning that is (or might be, as it is possible nothing is actually learned) induced through trial and error experience. Unfortunately, by itself, it is also highly inefficient and incomplete learning, and learning that may not translate into contexts other than the particular type of venture the student

is trying to launch. Further, it can lead the student to learn or conclude things that are actually wrong.

Or, alternatively, let us consider a classroom context where students are expected to solve cases, another form of experiential learning. The student may learn a lot about the company and industry that is the subject of the case study, and is given a real-world context where analytical skills and creative problem-solving can be developed. However, one might question how much he/she is able to appreciate the implications of various aspects of the context for how analysis and problem-solving are approached. For instance, understanding the implications of the fact that it is a lifestyle, managed growth or aggressive growth context, one with low or high entrepreneurial orientation, one with more munificent or turbulent external environments, involves a novice versus experienced entrepreneur or a single founder versus a team, and any number of other critical variables can be critical not only for the quality of what the student comes up with, but the extent to which anything that is generalizable is learned from the experience.

But now consider how the learning potential of this student incubator, or case study, or most any other form of experiential learning might be greatly enhanced if it were actually augmenting course lectures. Many of these experiential learning exercises assume either that the student already has an understanding of core concepts, tools, frameworks, and related learning content, or that they experience itself will someone how convey the underlying concept or content. My experience is that they do not have the extant knowledge, and the applied exercise does not inherently produce the knowledge. The student exposed to well-designed and creatively delivered lectures built around core content and substance is able to learn more and learn more efficiently from experiential learning approaches. They are likely to see more possibilities in a given scenario. They will understand more of the “how,” “why,” and “when” questions that surround a given decision, approach, or course of action. They will better appreciate the ways in which context informs the application of given tool or concept. And through lectures and student engagement, these learning points can also subsequently (after the experiential activity) be reinforced.

Of course, the use of lecture can always be improved, especially in an age where students very efficiently share lecture notes with one another from year to year. More than simply updating content to reflect the latest knowledge, the script or plot should regularly be reinvented, new stories and examples should be added, and the nature of student engagement in the lecture should be revisited. The interplay between lecture and student assessment before and after quizzes and exams is another area requiring ongoing creativity and thought. As evidence suggests attention spans can wane even as the best lecture gets longer (Wilson & Korn, 2007), lectures might be designed in shorter time increments, and broken up with experiential activities, YouTube videos, and other vehicles for applying and reinforcing core content. Technology elements can greatly

enhance the power of lectures, such as the ability of students to anonymously vote as the lecturer raises questions or presents options.

In the final analysis, what is being proposed here might be considered a blended learning approach, but one predicated on a foundation of solid lectures. This position is also consistent with the notion of student learning styles (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), and the fact that a given approach to lecturing or the use of a particular experiential learning technique can more heavily impact a given learning style (Schindehutte & Morris, 2016). On balance, then, a lecture-centered blended approach can be an especially effective vehicle not simply for delivering a body of critical content, but for promoting student thought, changing attitudes, and developing skills – all critical objectives of entrepreneurship education.

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