VENTURE CREATION PROGRAMS: ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION THROUGH REAL-LIFE CONTENT (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

Martin Lackéus  
*Chalmers University of Technology, martin.lackeus@chalmers.se*

Karen Williams-Middleton  
*Chalmers University of Technology*

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Principal topic

Students with the intent to be self-employed require more action-based approaches to entrepreneurial learning, in comparison to traditional methods (Mwasalwiba, 2010). Action-based pedagogies potentially allow for learning from highly emotional critical incidents in the venture creation process, provided that action is paired with reflection activities (Cope and Watts, 2000). The aim of our study is to investigate a specific type of action-based education programs – higher education programs providing entrepreneurial education utilizing active creation of new ventures as the primary learning vessel. The purpose is to better understand the structure, components, impact and learning outcomes of these programs. Thus, the paper asks the question: What are the defining characteristics of a venture creation program?

Method

Building from previously conducted research reviewing entrepreneurial education programs in Northern Europe, a definition for venture creation program (VCP) is proposed as entrepreneurship or business educations at a higher education level with the on-going creation of a real-life venture as their primary learning vessel and thus part of formal curriculum. Using this definition, a study is designed to identify and investigate potential VCPs from the regions of Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific. Through literature, verbal reference, internet resources and snowball sampling, a population of VCPs are identified and then interviewed via telephone in order to further assess applicability relative to the proposed VCP definition. In addition, a website (www.vcplist.com) is created as a receiving point for programs self-identifying as VCPs. Documentation and interview data of the initial population is then used to compare and contrast characteristics, methods and practice of the programs relative to the definition and to each other in an attempt to identify defining characteristics of VCPs.

Results and Implications

The results show that VCPs are rare, and of those found, the majority are newly established. Some reasons for this scarcity and novelty have been identified, related to obstacles such as design complexity, legitimacy difficulties and resource requirements when establishing and facilitating VCPs. The results suggest that it could be beneficial to complement the initially proposed definition with a definition based on three constructs cognition, affection and conation as proposed by Gibb (2005) and Kyrö (2008). These insights have the potential of aiding researchers and practitioners engaged in developing entrepreneurial learning and entrepreneurship education.

CONTACT: Martin Lackéus; martin.lackeus@chalmers.se; (T): +46736551818.