

Teaching entrepreneurship: Insights into the students of the SEED programme and their perceptions of its non-traditional facilitation

Paul Pounder

Department of Management Studies, The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados

This paper describes student perspectives on aspects of the Student Entrepreneurial Empowerment Development (SEED) programme. This programme is concerned with the teaching of entrepreneurship in the Management Studies degree at The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados. SEED is usually taken in the first semester and the uniqueness of the programme is that there are no official lectures given by the faculty. The students are exposed to a series of presentations by entrepreneurs, faculty and entrepreneurial supporting agencies. A question and answer and discussion period follows each weekly session and is used to evaluate the involvement of the participants in the programme. In addition students prepare a business plan for their final project and this is judged by a panel of financiers. The final grade awarded in the SEED programme is based on quality of participation and presentations, plus technical abilities exhibited during group work. This paper gives insight into the students of the SEED programme and how they perceive non-traditional facilitators (entrepreneurs and service providers) as providing them with the key tools needed to be successful on their entrepreneurial journey.

Key words: entrepreneurship education, teaching, learning, training design, Caribbean

Introduction

During the last five years, The University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill introduced a series of management degree specialisations which would lead to greater concentration of the specialised area in the last year of the degree programme. During this time much was learned by the entrepreneurial faculty as it relates to how students learn and perceive entrepreneurship as a viable option. The University's experience led to the proposal of the Student Entrepreneurial Empowerment Development (SEED) programme, which can be described here as a co-curricular credit for entrepreneurship being taught at a traditional university in a non-traditional way.

The whole concept was in keeping with The University of the West Indies' Strategic Plan 2002-2007, where part of the strategic focus with regards to quality was an initiative to "assist students to develop entrepreneurial attitudes and skills"

(p. 21). This position also relates to the recent stance from various public and private entities that entrepreneurship could be a method of escaping Barbados' economic challenges.

The SEED programme was conceptualised and began in 2010 with 15 students and has now grown to 45 students. In the 2013-2014 academic year, the programme reached its enrolment capacity, as measured by the Department's ability to effectively administer it at the departmental level. The programme is now being lobbied to be a part of the wider university community where it would be a part of the new Entrepreneurship and Innovation Center being formed.

Pedagogical approaches to entrepreneurship

Appropriate pedagogical approaches involving effective method and approach, competent lecturer/facilitator, and teaching aids are very important in the learning process. The research has shown that there have been some arguments against the concept that entrepreneurial skills and/or traits can be taught. Anderson and Woodcock (1996) discuss the view that entrepreneurs are born not made as within each person are abilities necessary for success that cannot be taught, and these represent inherent capabilities. They also discuss studies which demonstrate the theory that "business ownership is not an academic exercise" (p. 20) and they cited several documented instances in which entrepreneurial education has had little or no effect on entrepreneurial success; this is an area that is now being further investigated by many entrepreneurial researchers.

There are also contrasting views which are based on the concept that these skills and aptitudes must be taught. Mars and Garrison (2009) take the view that entrepreneurship is highly academic and therefore feel that an entrepreneurial training or education programme should typically involve a highly regimented structure grounded in the traditional theories of business and entrepreneurship. They feel that skills such as problem-solving and analytical thinking can be taught via this method.

A third convergent view exists where theorists believe that individuals are born with certain qualities which, if correctly developed and nurtured, can transform a person into a successful entrepreneur. Van der Kuip and Verheul (2003) support this approach; hypothesise that successful entrepreneurship requires the development of certain already existent but dormant skills, and concur with Caird (1992) that those competencies which should be developed for the sake of entrepreneurship include communication skills, managerial skills, analytical skills, career skills, knowledge and attitudes. Communication skills which can be developed include the ability to effectively negotiate and persuade for beneficial contract or payment terms. Cultivating managerial skills would encompass instructing on methods of problem-solving, decision-making, organising and monitoring while developing analytical skills would include coaching on the assessment of data. Imparting the career skills necessary for entrepreneurial success would include career planning and 'self-awareness' and this should be coupled with knowledge of information

systems and general business practices (e.g. finance, marketing, leadership). Finally, the authors believe that the attitudes that are most apt for development are those which reflect flexibility, sensitivity to needs and outcomes and overall awareness of business opportunities and creative ways in which to use them.

Even though there is no real consensus on the issue, the literature has shown that some key aspects of entrepreneurship can be taught and much of the debate has now shifted to what should be taught and how it should be taught (Lourenco & Jones, 2006). Levie's (1999) study reflects on how courses are taught and places emphasis upon the importance of learning from: real situations; interactions by role playing and use of projects; and business plan development and presentations (Gibb, 2002). In inculcating the entrepreneurial spirit for education, enterprises require several innovations in the content; mode of teaching; assessment method; practical activities, and exposure to real working life. Indeed, educators are challenged with designing effective learning opportunities for entrepreneurship students (Solomon, 2007). These issues were analysed and indoctrinated into the development of the SEED programme.

Literature on informal teaching/learning

Theoretical discussions of informal teaching and learning styles have become part of the vernacular in entrepreneurship education. A sense of optimism suggests that an understanding of learning styles is one of the keys to understanding the experience for students exposed to entrepreneurship. There are several areas in the literature that speak directly to factors that impact positively on informal entrepreneurship education – all of which reflect on relationships and exposure to direct interaction with the entrepreneur and service providers. These can be viewed as both a direct and indirect contributor to education depending on their form and nature within an institutional context (Brindley & Ritchie, 2000). Student exposure through actively participating in live projects with complex issues is another form of informal teaching/learning. We can see instances of this when the student, under the supervision of a professor, acts as a consultant to carry out research, facilitate market studies, analyse financial data, and brainstorm as necessary to formulate solutions within the entrepreneurial enterprise successfully (Chan & Anderson, 1994; Brindley & Ritchie, 2000). Further, internships and placements can be designed to help students experience what it is like to work in an entrepreneurial environment so they can apply the theory and practical skills developed at university, while furthering their personal development (Kirby, 1998; Westhead, Storey & Martin, 2000). These forms of activity allow both participants to benefit via engagement (Wani, Garg & Sharma, 2004). From a practical perspective, the benefits of these forms of activity highlight that student awareness of entrepreneurship is raised and many of the perceived barriers to firm start-ups are overcome. The entrepreneurs also gain significantly through utilising additional resources and getting other perspectives that might not have otherwise been available. They also get a chance to test the market for potential employees.

The BSc. in Management programme

The Faculty of Social Sciences, UWI, Cave Hill, Barbados continues to attract a high number of applicants and accommodate large student numbers, and their graduates are usually in high demand in Barbados and the wider Caribbean region. The training received as an undergraduate student is rigorous and challenging, and courses are structured so that students might obtain the right mixture of practical and theoretical instruction in all of the degree options. Most final year students are required to complete a number of projects that involve liaising with industry or performing investigative fieldwork. The core aspects of the course load for the BSc. Management with Entrepreneurship specialisation is shown below, with the co-curricular course COCR2070 - SEED being highlighted as part of the programme.

By immersing students in the SEED entrepreneurial experience it is envisioned that an informal classroom experience led by successful entrepreneurs and service providers will provide students with all of the key tools they need to be successful on their entrepreneurial journey. The guest speakers from the business community that are brought in throughout the semester come from various industries and it is expected that they will share their experience and advice on all aspects of a business start-up. Also, for those hoping to gain 'real world' experience before starting their own ventures, SEED is expected to provide them with many networking opportunities available through breakfast and lunchtime seminars as well as coaching sessions that should result in internships and consultant research opportunities for the students.

BSc. Management with Entrepreneurship specialisation

The BSc. in Management with Entrepreneurship specialisation emphasises a management perspective in the first two years and an entrepreneurship perspective in the final year - covering classes on topics such as: new venture management; an introduction to entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial finance; creativity and innovation management for entrepreneurship; social entrepreneurship for sustainable development, and co-curricular course COCR2070 – SEED.

The overall focus of the degree encapsulates leadership, strategic management, managerial and organisational aspects of the entrepreneurship field. In addition, the programme leverages knowledge and abilities of research faculty in other related programmes. Applicants to the programme are expected to develop a firm understanding of entrepreneurship field including focuses on competence; entrepreneurial behaviour; marketing; organisational theory, strategic management, and international business. In addition, students receive training in statistics and research methodologies. At the end of the programme it is expected that students should be able to show creativity and be innovative in identifying windows of opportunity; conducting research and analysis; interpreting financial data, and being aware of moral and ethical practices.

SEED co-curricular course

The SEED co-curricular course is offered as an optional course in the first semester of the academic year at the Department of Management Studies. This course was originally conceived for students who wanted to expose themselves to entrepreneurship as a viable option but wanted more practical exposure to the rudiments of business start-up and innovation. It was also envisioned that students not taking traditional business courses that were enrolled in other faculties (such as Law and Medicine) might also take advantage of the SEED programme. The primary benefit of non-business students participating in the SEED programme is that they will develop well-organised access to sources of specialised expertise. Other obvious benefits include the cross-fertilisation of student and faculty ideas between the other departments and the Department of Management Studies – some of which might lead to spin offs or licensing arrangements if deemed commercially viable and feasible. Expected synergies with respect to the training and development of student skill sets and knowledge base may also be significant. Further, in the long run, participation in the programme should play an increasingly important role in national and regional economic development for non-business students as they develop awareness and skill sets for innovation and new venture creation.

The structure of the BSc. Management with Entrepreneurship specialisation is highlighted above with the identification of the SEED co-curricular credit shown. The course is offered Wednesday evenings from 1:00pm-4:00pm across the whole semester (typically 12 weeks). As some students are enrolled outside the Department of Management Studies and as the enrolment numbers grow within the department, it is envisioned that classes will be run in parallel at least one other day in the week. The course has been offered since the 2010-2011 academic year and is still evolving.

The course organisation

During the 12 weeks of the programme there are no 'traditional' classes where the lecturer teaches the subject matter. Instead, students are exposed to a series of presentations by independent entrepreneurs, faculty and individuals from entrepreneurial supporting agencies. The areas covered are as followed:

- Defining entrepreneurship and small business ownership;
- Listing the characteristics of an entrepreneur;
- Evaluating the various types of business structures
- Identifying the personal skills, knowledge, ideas and opportunities needed for success;
- Conducting market research;
- Developing a comprehensive business plan;
- Categorising the organisations that assist small business development;
- Assessing the legal requirements for establishing and running a small business;

- Assessing the various mechanisms available to finance a small business; and,
- Outlining a strategy for accessing a network of locally based entrepreneurs and representatives of the organisations that assist small business development.

The rationale behind the course organisation is to allow participants to be exposed to experienced practitioners in the field who will present 'real world' issues and solutions based on their knowledge and familiarity with the subject area.

Sessions

Each week a three-hour session is conducted covering one topic. The format usually entails a feature presenter who delivers on the topic for approximately one hour followed by a question and answer segment and workshop style exercises. As a rule, the final hour of the day depicts a 360 degree reflective learning slot which is student-centred, practical, interactive and impactful. The 360 degree learning slot is potentially the most important and rich part of the session as it allows for each student to reflect on what was discussed and try to adapt this to their own personnel situation. Students are expected to not only speak to their case but also to discuss and reflect on other student scenarios being discussed. During this session it is expected that students build personal efficacy; connect with peers through deliberation; act in response to other student's decision making criterion, and critique solutions. The participation of each student in this 360 degree learning stage is evaluated by the coordinator and contributes to the overall final assessment of each student. Student attendance is paramount in this model as it is clear that the learning process cannot take place without the students' physical presence – so absences are discouraged as much as possible. The overall goal here is to help students develop the experiences and expertise necessary to handle several variations of business scenarios.

In keeping with the perspectives of Van der Kuip and Verheul (2003), SEED is based on the concept that each individual has innate qualities which, when developed, can result in the creation of successful entrepreneurs. Therefore, developmental forums and workshops have been seen as a key part of the programme structure. This includes successful entrepreneurs speaking to participants about their experiences and practices as well as members of support agencies talking about the services they offer. Faculty members have also been enlisted in this effort to facilitate the dispersion of theoretical information and suggestions or examples of its application in areas of business such as legal structures, business plan development, finance, marketing and human resource development. The delivery style employed is very interactive using PowerPoints to develop theories and formulate a foundation for focused discussion. Further to this, the programme also mirrors the perspective that presenters should see themselves as facilitators rather than the traditional 'teacher' type authority figure. This is in keeping with

the approach suggested by Liesner (2006) that those imparting entrepreneurial knowledge should view themselves as “service providers” and the students as “customers.”

The course assessment

Notably, there is no final exam, but there is a steady workload throughout the course with participatory work due in every session. Some of the assessment is individual, and some is in groups. Students’ business plans and presentations are assessed by academic faculty as well as entrepreneurial and financial representatives from partner organisations. The evaluators are given choices, if the presentation is a resounding success the student can be given a passing grade and the possibility of funding from the sponsor; they can also give the student a passing grade without possibility of financing; and finally if the plan is not acceptable, they can fail the student. From an ethical stand point, the UWI Code of Ethics, which is concerned with the well-being of students, overshadows the course assessment. While from an external ethics point of view, financiers and other judges sign a confidentiality agreement. External evaluators also observe wider implications of their role as judges and take into consideration the impact of their business practices, such as who they loan to or invest in, and the implications for society and the environment.

Student demographics and perspectives

The SEED programme welcomes applications from undergraduate and graduate students registered at the UWI who wish to be exposed to entrepreneurship education. Persons who usually get involved in the programme are those who are interested in starting their own business or enhancing their existing business and genuinely feel that the information and activity engagement offered through the SEED programme is going to fulfil their entrepreneurship requirement. The programme is open to members across all the various faculties (Humanities and Education, Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Medical Sciences, and Law); however the majority of the students who participated have come from the Faculty of Social Sciences. Further, students envisage they will be effectively exposed to brainstorming business ideas, new venture creation and learning how to prepare and distinguish a compelling value proposition. Students also hope to acquire adequate guidance by mentors from faculty, small business advisers and the business community. It is important to know if having non-traditional facilitators (entrepreneurs and service providers) is perceived as providing the students with the key tools they need to be successful on their entrepreneurial journey.

This research assessment of the SEED programme is based on the demographics and views of the class of 2010-2011. The class contained 45 students and all participated in the research. Information was collected through a questionnaire which was completed at the end of one of the sessions. An overview of the participant profile is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

Variable	Item	Frequency
Gender	Male / Female	14 / 31
Marital status	Single / Married	33 / 12
Children	Yes / No	12 / 33
Academic status	Student / Alumni	38 / 7

The majority of the respondents were female (31) and most of them were single with no children. While it is noted that the impact of single parent households is a significant impediment to many aspiring entrepreneurial women, the current status of participants suggest that marriage and parenting are not major hindrances at this stage. The findings show that females in the programme are able to play vital roles in the entrepreneurial and economic movement. However, it must be recognised that single-parent income households may place these parents at considerable disadvantage as they may have fewer opportunities to generate income and may have fewer assets to leverage as collateral for capital investments in entrepreneurial ventures.

The participants on the programme were mainly enrolled in the Department of Management Studies or with a joint degree with the Department of Management Studies (see Table 2). This generic make-up of the participants might be a shortcoming as it makes it difficult to identify any statistically significant differences in any of the variables relating to the profile of respondents and their academic programmes. However, while studying for a number of academic subjects can allow for a satisfying foundation for entrepreneurship to take place; it can also stifle creativity and the innovation required to be entrepreneurial. Nevertheless, the true value of the SEED programme is that it builds on existing knowledge and its focus is on practice, tools, experiences and policy.

Table 2. Course of study

Course of study	Frequency
Accounting	3
Banking and Finance	3
Economics and Management	6
Economics and Political Science	3
Management and Entrepreneurship	6
Management Studies	12
Public Sector Management	2
Management with Psychology	6
Masters in Applied Psychology	1
Computer Science and Management	3
TOTAL	45

It is most likely that ‘Management’ students have been specifically pulled into this special entrepreneurial programme, thus potentially starving entrepreneurial growth in other programmes. Thus the potential capabilities of the students on the programme seem to be on the same level, with the difference lying in how interesting the students consider an entrepreneurial career option (a concept that is discussed below in relation to self-description, attitude to risk and overall interest in entrepreneurship).

When asked to describe their primary characteristics, two categories scored equally highly: the category “I am motivated by a need for achievement” and the category “I am creative and innovative in my approach to business” were each selected 24 times (see Table 3). This is in keeping with McClelland (1961), who states that achievement motivation should be considered above all else as a primary characteristic of an entrepreneur. These findings also relate to Schumpeter (1934) who posits that “entrepreneurship drives innovation and technical change and therefore generates economic growth” (in Shane, Locke & Collins, 2003, p. 259). Other characteristics such as power motivation and independence from a dependent situation have also been considered of major importance (Hornaday & Bunker, 1970).

Table 3. Self-description

Category	Frequency
I am motivated by a need for achievement	24
I am very organised	3
I am creative and innovative in my approach to business	24
I am technically oriented without much business experience	3

When the participants described their attitude to risk (see Table 4), the most highly selected category, “There is always a way to deal with risk” seems counter-intuitive. Considering that 31 of the 45 participants were female and that in Barbados cultural expectations of women affect the likelihood that they will start a business, these responses seem to suggest that the group was happy to take risks – whereas the literature points to women being generally more risk averse than their male counterparts. Further, the 18 results for risk being dependent on the situation also support the image of a group who are ready to take appropriate risks.

Table 4. Attitude to risk

Category	Frequency
Depends on the situation	18
There is always a way to deal with risk	24
Avoid risk at all costs	0
I am unsure	6

The main reasons selected by participants as to why they were interested in entrepreneurship were: “I enjoy challenge” and “I want to be independent” (see Table 5). Often the biggest challenge that one can enjoy as an entrepreneur is balancing workload with family time. The independence of being one’s own boss is therefore likely to be at the top of the list reasons when it comes to career selection. The selection of “I want to provide a product/service to society” was another popular response that lends to a more social type of entrepreneurship being formulated.

Table 5. Interest in entrepreneurship

Category	Frequency
I enjoy challenge	24
I want to make money	12
I want to provide a product / service to society	21
I want to be independent	24
I have an innate need for achievement	12

Participants were generally happy with the information they received throughout the semester and their perceptions of facilitators are presented in Table 6. This shows the vast majority of respondents were satisfied with the SEED facilitators as a whole; especially in relation to applicability, relevance and outcomes.

Table 6. Participants’ perceptions of facilitators

Category	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Yes	No
Speaker’s Performance	39%	53%	8%	0%		
Structure	40%	50%	10%	0%		
Quality	37%	50%	10%	1%		
Applicability and relevance					98%	2%
Objectives achieved					96%	4%

The favourable ratings shown in Table 6 substantiate the perception that there were more positive than negative aspects during the semester. The following can be mentioned as perceived positive aspects: speaker performance during sessions, the structure of sessions, and the quality of presentations in sessions. It is noted that training programmes for prospective entrepreneurs are needed in developing countries like Barbados where there are limited resources and limited supportive government policies; therefore making the SEED programme a step in the right direction. As a result, the participants seem to believe that a training programme which delivers entrepreneurial skills is important for a fledgling entrepreneurial venture and its success.

It is thought that the SEED co-curricular class will not only contribute to the knowledge and learning of its participants but it will also stimulate new venture creation and by extension it will also contribute to the social and economic development of the country through the provision and identification of new opportunities for prospective entrepreneurs having provided information and knowledge for the next business generation. Further, the realisation of the deliverables (knowledge, awareness, behavioural change etc.) which SEED derives from each cohort, are elements which could aid the UWI in its strategic intent of creating self-reliant graduates who could positively contribute to the Caribbean economies.

Conclusion

The data derived from the student perspectives suggest that the SEED programme offers students the opportunity to pursue entrepreneurial education and gain a virtual entrepreneurial tool kit with basic management tools and techniques from a non-classroom experience. The format of the programme is important, and had the key element of having practising entrepreneurs share their experiences, whether successful or not, with participants. The mandate of the SEED programme, to infuse an entrepreneurial perspective throughout UWI, continues to gain ground. The literature indicates that it takes special learning procedures, a unique culture and an extraordinary focus, together with the establishment of vibrant relationships with relevant stakeholders for such a programme to achieve its goals. In analysing the participant data, the SEED programme, even though quite young, seems to be quite impactful.

References

- Anderson, A.H. & Woodcock, P. (1996). *Effective entrepreneurship: A skills based approach*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Brindley, C. & Ritchie, B. (2000). Undergraduates and small and medium-sized enterprises: Opportunities for a symbiotic partnership? *Education & Training*, 42(8-9), 509-517.
- Caird, S. (1992). Problems with the identification of enterprise competencies and the implications for assessment and development. *Management Education and Development*, 23(1), 6-17.
- Chan, K.C. & Anderson, G.C. (1994). Academia - industry fusion: Action learning for teaching enterprise. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 26(4), 28-32.
- Gibb, A.A. (2002). In pursuit of a new 'Enterprise' and 'Entrepreneurship' paradigm for learning: Creative destruction, new values, new ways of doing things and new combinations of knowledge. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 4(3), 233-69.
- Hornaday, J.A. & Bunker, C.S. (1970). The nature of the entrepreneur. *Personnel Psychology*, 23, 47-54.
- Kirby, D. (1998). Students in small business: An assessment of the 1994 STEP student placement scheme. *International Small Business Journal*, 16(3), 133-45.
- Levie, J. (1999). *Entrepreneurship education in higher education in England: A survey*. London Business School.

- Liesner, A. (2006). Education or service? Remarks on teaching and learning in the entrepreneurial university. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 38(4), 483–495.
- Lourenco, F. & Jones, O. (2006). Developing entrepreneurship education: Comparing traditional and alternative teaching approach. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 4, 111-140.
- McClelland, D.C. (1961). *The Achieving Society*, NY: D.Van Norstrand Co. Inc.
- Mars, M.M. & Garrison, S. (2009). Socially-oriented ventures and traditional entrepreneurship education models: A case review. *Journal of Education for Business*, 84(5), 290-296.
- Schumpeter, J.A. (1934, 1980). *The theory of economic development*. Oxford University Press.
- Shane, S., Locke, E.A. & Collins, C.J. (2003). Entrepreneurial motivation. *Human Resource Management Review*, 13, 257-279.
- Solomon, G. (2007). An examination of entrepreneurship education in the United States. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 14(2), 168-182.
- The University of the West Indies (UWI) (2006). *Strategic Plan 2007-2012*. Bridgetown, Barbados: UWI.
- Van der Kuip, I. & Verheul, I. (2003). *Early development of entrepreneurial qualities: The role of initial education*. University of Rotterdam.
- Wani, V.P., Garg, T.K. & Sharma, S.K. (2004). Effective industry/institute interaction for developing entrepreneurial vision amongst engineers for the sustainable development of SMEs in India. *International Journal of Technology Transfer & Commercialisation*, 3(1), 38–55.
- Westhead, P., Storey, D. & Martin, F. (2000). The Shell technology enterprise programme: Student outcomes. *Education & Training*, 42(4–5), 272–81.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all the participants who have taken the SEED programme at The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados for all their most valuable contributions and suggestions regarding the SEED programme. Many thanks also go out to the SEED coordinator Ayanna Young Marshall for her willingness to share information on the programme and to Aisha Lovell who facilitated one of the first SEED evaluations as part of her MSc. in Project Management.