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Nurturing Social Entrepreneurship knowledge through experience: An action research

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Abstract

This paper aims to reveal the practises of social entrepreneurship pedagogy that based on experiential learning. Social entrepreneurship is an important concept that should be understood and learn. The knowledge of social entrepreneurship should be conveyed smoothly and effectively to the tertiary education students. Those students should be able to differentiate the concept and process between social entrepreneurship and commercial entrepreneurship. However, the common practice in tertiary education employed the traditional approach and worse still the didactic approach which will not help the students to reveal their self-learning and creativity. Therefore, this study shares the best practises of social entrepreneurship pedagogy that utilised experiential learning and monitor the progress through action research. The action research in this study employed three main steps which are the planning, the action and observation, and the reflection stage for the first round. In the second round, the same process happened which are re-planning stage, action and observation, and lastly reflection stage. Three main themes have been found which are the knowledge absorption, the application and the appreciation of social entrepreneurship concept. The knowledge easily absorb through mind mapping on the wall. The understanding increase through application of creating and managing social enterprise. Lastly, the knowledge installed in unconscious mind when the social entrepreneurship is appreciated. This study shows that the experiential learning approach is suitable and effective in teaching and learning the social entrepreneurship course. Future research can employed this method and pedagogy in teaching other entrepreneurship courses.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, pedagogy, experiential learning;

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship area has becoming an important issue in entrepreneurship discourse and also in the practical world. The knowledge development is tremendous and astounding because the grant for social entrepreneurship research and the seed money for social enterprise start-up are mounting. The phenomenon indicates the important of social entrepreneurship to the world economic. Furthermore, the emerging of the concept ‘social innovation’ in current discourse also increases the knowledge value for studying social entrepreneurship. Therefore, entrepreneurship education is very important to suit the current discourse. Currently, the debate on whether entrepreneurship can be taught is irrelevant. The consensus in the literature indicates that entrepreneurship can be taught and the stream of literature has now shifted to the question of ‘what’ and ‘how’ (Lourenco and Jones, 2006). Furthermore, the focus for entrepreneurship education in Malaysia also has lifted from producing entrepreneurial graduate to graduate entrepreneur. Graduate entrepreneur can create job and with the sparkle of social entrepreneurship approach, the Malaysian economic can be prospered. Therefore, the design of curriculum in entrepreneurship education has to be changed and the pedagogical approach also has to be excited in line with current situation.

Hence, the number of programs in tertiary education that offer social entrepreneurship course in entrepreneurship education is also growing. A social entrepreneurship concept is different from commercial entrepreneurship. Therefore, the teaching and learning approach for social entrepreneurship has to be different. The pedagogical approach should be more on student centred rather than lecturer centred. However, most of tertiary education’s pedagogical approach still use didactic approach that is inappropriate in teaching entrepreneurship education since the entrepreneurship knowledge is complicated and abstract (Ismail and Ibrahim, 2014). Furthermore, it is difficult

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for the student to comprehend social entrepreneurship knowledge as the lecturer teaching using ‘chalk and board’. Therefore, this study is concern on how to nurture and inculcate the social entrepreneurship knowledge through creative and effective pedagogy?

2. Social entrepreneurship education pedagogy

Entrepreneurship education is a main concern for the educator in education industry since the emergence of knowledge economy and economy that based on innovation. One of the shifts that Malaysian’s education concern is to produce entrepreneurial and holistic graduates. Therefore the curriculum has to be embedded with the values and skills of entrepreneurial and holistic graduates. The students that went through the entrepreneurship program and courses offered has to be able to absorb the knowledge and able to practise it after graduation and in future career. Most of the literature on entrepreneurship education studies, share the best practises on the program that can inculcate the entrepreneurial attribute and skills (Mansor and Othman, 2011). Literature on entrepreneurship education that focuses on the pedagogy that relate to social entrepreneurship course is still scarce.

Previous literature has categorised entrepreneurship education pedagogical approach into two main categories which are the traditional and alternative teaching approach (Lourenco and Jones, 2006). Traditional approach utilise didactic approach or lecturer centred approach that focuses on lecturers’ role (Lourenco and Jones, 2006). Students only utilise the existing data from the journal and books and method used are lectures, text books, seminars and assignments (Hytti and O’Gorman, 2004). Alternative teaching approach utilise student centred learning. The active participation on learning process is bound by the students. The method used are accessing a website and watching electronic gadget (Hytti and O’Gorman, 2004). Table 1 shows the list of pedagogical approach according to the traditional and alternative approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Entrepreneurship education pedagogical approach</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.1. Traditional Approach</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Guest speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Case studies</td>
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<td>• On-site visit</td>
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<td>• Research paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Thesis/dissertation</td>
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<td>• workshop</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>1.3. Alternative Approach</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Experiential learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Problem base learning (PBL)</td>
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Adopted from (Ismail and Ibrahim, 2014; Ismail; Mansor and Othman, 2011).

Based on the literature review, I have suggested that the social entrepreneurship courses should employed experiential learning approach. Experiential learning was built on the work of phenomenological philosophers such as Dewey, Lewin and Piaget (Sternberg and Zhang, 2000). Experiential learning is defined as a process of knowledge transform through direct experience or lived experience that change a person’s way of thinking and behave (Experiential Learning Association; Kolb, 1984; Kolb and Kolb, 2005 cited in Ismail and Ahmad, 2013). Entrepreneurial skills are learned better in challenging environment that is set by the lecturer (Bagheri and Lope Plhie, 2009). In sum, entrepreneurship education especially in teaching social entrepreneurship course should
employed experiential learning approach in order to comprehended and apply the entrepreneurship knowledge and skills.

3. Methodology

3.1. Method

McNiff and Whitehead (2011) coins out that the objective of action research is to investigate and evaluate the work or practises. This objective is in line with Halim et al. (2011) whom agreed that action research is about teacher research that aim to improve practices and share the experience with other people. In sum, action research is ‘a constructive enquiry, during which the researcher construct his or her knowledge of specific issues through planning, acting, evaluating, refining and learning from the experience’ (Koshy, 2010: 9)

Model of action research has been introduced by several researchers. Majid (2010) in her study about adults learners’ learning through their diversity which employed action research method suggests that the stages of action research are divided into four elements namely reflection, planning, action and observation. Conversely, this approach is different from action research that has been employed by Othman and Mansor (2011). Othman and Mansor (ibid) utilise five stages which are plan, implementation, assessment, reflection and redesign. On the other hand McNiff and Whitehead (2011) state that action research has five stages which start with observe, reflect, act, evaluate and modify. Based on the mentioned elements, action research has fundamental concepts which are plan, act and reflect. Therefore, this action research employed the framework by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000 cited in Koshy, 2010) that suggested the action research spiral which contain plan, act and observe, reflect, re-planning, acting and observing and reflecting.

The participants for this research are the students who registered Social Entrepreneurship course (ACS 3063) as one of their majoring course. They are undergraduate students for the program degree Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Commerce) with honours. Pre-requisite course for this is Fundamental of Entrepreneurship. Therefore, they have a basic knowledge about the concept of entrepreneurship and undergo the practises of preparing business plan. The aim of social entrepreneurship course is to equip the students with knowledge and skills of social entrepreneurship, social business and social entrepreneur. One of the assessments for this course is the Social Entrepreneurship project. Social Entrepreneurship project is designed base on experiential learning process. The students are divided into several groups and they have to create a social enterprise. The profit that they gain will be donated to the charity.

The data sources are captured from short notes, reflective journal and project report. Photograph and video presentation also is one of data sources. Short note indicate the status of social entrepreneurship knowledge at pre-stage of learning; reflective journals indicate the post stage of learning on social entrepreneurship. The other data sources are used as evidence in the context of triangulation to understand the whole phenomenon of social entrepreneurship learning. Therefore, the short note and the reflective journals are the only data sources that are analysed. Thematic Narrative analysis is used to analyse the short notes and reflective journals.

3.2. Action and data collection

3.2.1 Planning stage

I had started with course learning outcome and the expected knowledge the students should gain. I had given them the course outline, in order for them to have some framework for the course. As a consequence from my action, I had strategies the project, so the student can learn and understand social entrepreneurship concepts. First strategy is to give students the tacit knowledge about social entrepreneurship. Second strategy is to frame student to form their own social business. The last strategy is to make student understand the different between social and commercial entrepreneurship with their mind, heart and spirit.

3.2.2 Action and observation stage

To execute the first strategy, I had asked the students to write a short note on the definition of social entrepreneurship. Then they have to do some mind mapping to construct meaning from the reading and discussion.
The observation focuses on the knowledge changes. To execute the second strategy, the students are asked to develop a business plan for social enterprise and do the real business within the concepts of social entrepreneurship. The observation focuses on the application of social entrepreneurship throughout the business activities. To execute the last strategy, I had asked student to be philanthropy. The observation focuses on the change of emotion.

3.2.3 Reflect stage

The reflection focuses on the understanding of the students’ concepts on social entrepreneurship. Each stage are evaluated and justified on the objective achieved. The lessons learn from the successful and failure actions are noted.

3.2.4 Re-planning stage

I had redesign all the failure action and develop a new strategy and proceed with the successful actions.

3.2.5 Action and observation stage

I had taken the action that execute the new strategy and proceed with the unproblematic strategy.

3.2.6 Reflect stage

I had to reflect on the whole process and strategies especially on the strategy that based on the new plan.

4. Findings

4.1 Knowledge on social entrepreneurship

I had found that the students understand better the concepts of social entrepreneurship after doing mind mapping. Before they developed the mind mapping in the classroom, they have to read the articles and discuss with their friends in group work. However, they did not feel excited when I instruct them to draw on the A4 paper. From my observation, they felt bored and not excited to discuss with their friend. I learn that the A4 paper is too small for them that make them difficult to express themselves. In the next class, instructed them to draw on the wall. They had drawn the mind mapping on the wall and took picture on it. They look happy and excited that can be shown through the discussion that focuses on the wall mind mapping. It is indicates to me that the mind mapping and the wall are the place for them to express their creativity and the picture taken shows the act of knowledge’s appreciation.

4.2 Application of social enterprise

The concept of social entrepreneurship was further developed at this stage. The students were asked to create their own social enterprise at the small skills level. I had witness the emergence of knowledge understanding. For instance, some of the students had planned to get the suppliers from the commercial entrepreneur and sell it to the customers. From my observation, those student still did not understand the concept of social enterprise. Therefore, I had explained that they have to find product from marginalise people so their enterprise will have dual purpose which are to achieve social purpose by helping those marginalise people and financial purpose by gaining profit from the business. It is indicate to me that leaning by doing help the student to understand the phenomena of social entrepreneurship.

4.3 Appreciation of social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship not only relates to the mind of the learner but also the heart and the spirit of the learner. The feeling of sensitivity to the surrounding and the emotional intelligent increase after they saw marginalise people’s difficulties. For instance, they felt sad after visiting the house of single mother that in bad condition which they can saw the chicken running under the house through the rotten floor inside the house. The feeling to help this single mother by selling her food increased. From my observation, the student involvement in the real situation
increases the appreciation on social entrepreneurship concepts. It indicates to me that real life situation open up student, mind, heart and spirit.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Mind mapping is one of the tools for learning. It helps the mind to construct the concepts using one person understanding which help the person to be a creative person. The understanding increase when one person appreciates the knowledge and it became tacit knowledge that can be retrieved in the future by unconscious mind (Power and Dalgleish, 1997). Therefore, the knowledge of social entrepreneurship that decoded through construct is stored in unconscious mind. The tacit knowledge are utilised through the job practical by creating and managing the social enterprise that the group created. The action during practical training on social enterprise, open up their conscious mind. The conscious minds that link with their emotions make them aware on the other person difficulties which contribute to their motivation on helping the people. Pleasant emotions that students experienced during the project promote them to highly engage in activities and develop their entrepreneurial attribute and skills (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003 cited in Bagheri and Lope Pihie, 2011).

The whole experience on the project of social entrepreneurship has developed the understanding of social entrepreneurship’s concepts. In sum, experiential learning had nurtured the social entrepreneurship knowledge amongst social entrepreneurship students. This action research is qualitative research in nature, therefore it is not means to be generalised. However, my action, experience and strategy in teaching and instructing this course can be replicated.

References


