

Exemplar 4

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Can Entrepreneurship Be Taught?

The notion that entrepreneurship can be taught is highly debatable amongst various business enthusiasts as some argue that good entrepreneurs are born to be so while others tend to argue that an entrepreneurial skillset can be learned over time (Daley, 2013). My personal belief is that particular people are driven by an innate passion for entrepreneurship and it is this inherent attitude and mindset that enables them to apply the appropriate skills well. Although elements associated with the subject can be developed and enhanced through education and training, traits specific to a person must also be expressed correspondingly (Zheng, Liu & Cui, 2009). The careful 'science' of entrepreneurship involves the business and management functional skills which can be taught and acquired, however the 'art' of entrepreneurship lies in unique, creative and innovative attributes and abilities such as self-confidence and persistence. Through elaborating on the description of what entrepreneurship necessitates and exploring the two complementary aspects of the 'science' and 'art' of this process, it can be seen that successful entrepreneurship requires collective experience in the real world by relying extensively on individual intuition and qualities that simply cannot be taught, however comprehensive the education and training may seem to be (Gray & Field, 2006).

Herny, Hill & Leith (2005) raise the issue that defining entrepreneurship poses several challenges due to the large amount of ambiguity surrounding the multi-faceted field of study (Massey, 2011). This highlights the complexity involved in attempting to teach such an extensive concept that is frequently found to polarise opinions. Explanations linking the key fundamentals -consisting of an individual or entrepreneur, a market opportunity, adequate resources, a business organisation and favourable environment -have led to a concise definition currently agreed upon by many business experts: "A process brought about by individuals of identifying new opportunities and converting them into marketable products or services" (Schaper, 2014). This brief meaning emphasises the importance of entrepreneurs, striving to achieve business goals, requiring the distinctive ability or

'alertness' to recognise a potentially profitable opportunity and respond quickly and creatively to this. Three of today's greatest, pioneering entrepreneurs -Michael Dell, Bill Gates and Richard Branson – all decided to leave college to pursue their respective passions because they observed an opportunity that was not being utilised and consequently sought to capitalise on this (Demers, 2014; Gray & Field, 2006). They credit their accomplishments and entrepreneurial understanding to encountering perplexing trial-and-error situations through experimental and collaborative experiences, whereby they were only able to trust in their own refined knowledge and personal values. This self-sufficient and self-assured attitude has encouraged many entrepreneurs of the like to believe in themselves and combat the most difficult of challenges, through viewing them as learning curves, to make their dreams a realisation (Zheng, Liu & Cui, 2009). Examples resembling those above illustrate how the practice of entrepreneurship demands advanced skills one must uncover and cultivate within themselves, that are often best learned and applied in the real business world, beyond a teaching environment. Subsequently, it can be concluded that gaining a deep understanding of both the 'science' and the 'art' of entrepreneurship is stimulated most effectively by an individual harnessing their intrinsic propensity for the process of determining and exploiting an opportunity, combined with valuable and practical experience (Klein & Bullock, 2006).

Other features of entrepreneurship include being naturally self-motivated to create innovative value through taking risks and maintaining adaptability or bearing uncertainty in an ever-changing business environment. These typical behaviours enable certain people to overcome adversity or unforeseen circumstances, solve problems with a disciplined approach, and aim continuously towards improvements, as a result of strong self-reliance and determination (Massey, 2011). The charismatic talk-show host, Oprah Winfrey, is renowned for struggling through a severely traumatic upbringing and trying financial stress to take control of her life and aspirations, so as to become the inspirational entrepreneur she is known for nowadays. She had no prior business-related education

or experience and confidently believes in the idea of following one's instinct to discover where true wisdom manifests itself (Demers, 2014). In this instance, the admirable aptitude of entrepreneurs to rise above hardship and improve themselves in the process is showcased. Furthermore, a degree of leadership is necessary in order for efficacious communication of the entrepreneur's vision and organisation of a cohesive, operative unit. Gray & Field (2006) elaborate on specialised decision-making essential to entrepreneurial activities that also singles out individuals particularly well-equipped to perform in this area. Outlining these vital components of entrepreneurship often leads to a longwinded discussion that appears to spread vastly in every direction and cannot possibly be taught to completion. Accordingly, the expansive field of study requires exceptional and exclusive capabilities and attributes that unfortunately do not lie within each and every human being (Daley, 2013). As a result, a limited number of individuals truly possess the inherent desire to consistently achieve their dreams despite numerous setbacks and remain strong in the faith of their own abilities. Hence, it is a matter of evolving this discrete group's understanding of the business environment in which they will be immersed and providing them with a sufficient platform to develop from, rather than trying to instill an inconceivable ambition from the outside that can only flourish from within.

Demers (2014) conveys the poignant story of Steve Jobs, as this entrepreneur learned through unflinching hard-work and diligence in the face of overwhelming rejection and critical failures, due to his reliable entrepreneurial qualities and perseverance. He claims that his career success and more enriched creative thinking are due to his previous expulsion from the company he originally created -Apple. This can be reasoned by the fact that he seized this opportunity to re-experience the joys of starting a new company and went on to found a software company -NeXT - in addition to Pixar, as opposed to wallowing in his defeat. By acknowledging and accepting obstacles in a constructive manner, entrepreneurs such as Jobs are able to find meaning through the unexpected changes that follow and use this to their advantage (Zheng, Liu & Cui, 2009). The resilient character evident in

this case is not present in all people and cannot necessarily be taught either, instead it must be employed by oneself and established through real-life experiences when its genuine worth will be tested. Klein & Bullock (2006) elaborate further on how the process of new venture formation and the way in which entrepreneurship exists in the economy can be studied systematically in a formal teaching environment. However, it is not generally possible to teach discovery of opportunities, decision-making under uncertainty, and the nature of the entrepreneurial personality (Daley, 2013). Business management skills such as analytical thinking, accounting, finance and marketing are among the subgroups of entrepreneurship believed to be able to be taught directly while more critical abilities such as judgement, interpersonal skills and responsibility cannot be taught like so, since they are understood to be personal entrepreneurial skills and psychological characteristics (Hemy, Hill & Leith, 2005). Overall, the entire scope of entrepreneurship does not lend itself to being taught because of the clear distinctions constituting the 'science' and the 'art' of this line of work. The requisite 'art' entails naturally intrinsic capabilities that frankly cannot be learned.

Thus, the question of whether entrepreneurship is an innate ability or can be an acquired skill remains very disputable. Nevertheless, it is universally thought that although several aspects of the entrepreneurial process can be taught, many more cannot be. A fine balance exists between the 'science' and the 'art' of entrepreneurship and a selective group of people are capable of attaining this through individual insight and authentic experience in a realistic setting (Zheng, Liu & Cui, 2009). The significant factor differentiating entrepreneurs from everyday business people is the unique and integral passion driving them to persistently reach their objectives, react optimistically towards adversity and trust unequivocally in their own judgement. Without this dedication and devoting all their efforts towards one purpose, individuals cannot expect to fulfil their motives (Daley, 2013). This independent and committed mindset empowers the best of entrepreneurs to align their goals with reality and thrive sustainably where countless others have failed before.

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