An Entrepreneurship Education Model For Trinidad and Tobago

Natasha Ramkissoon-Babawah

Entrepreneurial Studies, Department of Management Studies,
The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Eastern Main Road,
St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.

Abstract
This paper proposes an Entrepreneurship Education Model for the developing country of Trinidad and Tobago. While it is understood that entrepreneurship education is critical in creating successful entrepreneurs, it is equally important that a systematic structure built on the Best Practices and the First World experiences and research in entrepreneurship education programmes, developing country, Trinidad and Tobago, is based on programme objectives, curriculum development and programme evaluation. This study is significant because it is focused on an area that has a low level of research attention within the Caribbean developing country context and will therefore generate new knowledge and increase entrepreneurial capacity and the rate of human development. It provides a distinct opportunity to assess the efforts to promote the development of entrepreneurs utilizing the mechanism of entrepreneurship education in Trinidad and Tobago and proposes a model built on the Best Practices and the First World experiences and research in entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education programmes, developing country, Trinidad and Tobago,

INTRODUCTION
The Trinidad and Tobago Government has taken a deliberate strategic direction to develop the small business sector and promote entrepreneurship as an instrument of growth and employment generation, particularly in those segments of society hardest hit by recession, structural adjustment and the recent global economic crisis. The Small Business Enterprise Sector is perceived to be the engine driver to radically transform and diversify the local economy. In terms of the developing country context, this strategy echoes the research of Naude (2010) who has postulated that entrepreneurs play an essential role in driving the structural transformation from a low-income, traditional economy to a modern economy by creating new firms outside the household, absorbing surplus labour from the traditional sector, providing innovative intermediate inputs to final-goods producing firms, enabling greater specialization in manufacturing, and by raising productivity and employment in both the modern and traditional sectors. He further states that entrepreneurship education from a First World perspective. The expected outcome of this exploratory research would be an appropriate entrepreneurship education model for the twin-island state. This study would also be of a pioneering nature since there is a distinct research gap in this area of the Caribbean developing country context and would therefore contribute significantly to the knowledge in this area. An analysis of Trinidad and Tobago's current entrepreneurship development policy framework is provided in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2010 National Report which states that the existing framework has focused on the Coordination among Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) development agencies; Harmonisation of MSME policies and programmes; Providing access to credit and other sources of finance; Training and human resource development in entrepreneurship; Marketing opportunities and development; Institutional and infrastructural arrangement and other business development support services.

This strategy is in alignment with the research findings of (Neblett and Green, 2002) who theorized that Caribbean governments have attempted to develop entrepreneurship through programmes and policies which generally provide education and training, as well as easier access to venture capital. They further indicate that such programmes have had varying success due to factors such as the indigenous entrepreneur's somewhat limited entrepreneurial education and training, limiting attitudes and perceptions, as well as the respective government's
ability to implement and administer some programmes. However the GEM National Report of Trinidad and Tobago (2010) questions the overall impact these support structures are having on entrepreneurial activity in the country since according to GEM (2010), there is little no discernable entrepreneurial culture especially among the professional class and there is not a comparably high rate of business creation and growth.

In this regard the process of designing a robust entrepreneurship education model for Trinidad and Tobago becomes critical if the country is to achieve sustainable national development and increase its supply of local entrepreneurs. In addition, the findings from the GEM Trinidad & Tobago (2010) National Report indicate that there is the need for a shift to needs/competencies based training and education in entrepreneurship to allow for the promotion of entrepreneurship and business creation within Trinidad and Tobago.

**Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship Education:** What is entrepreneurship? Timmons (1994) has suggested that Entrepreneurship means the ability to set up and build something out of practically nothing; it is therefore an elementarily human, creative act. Another definition of entrepreneurship is provided by (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2004) who stated that Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Essential ingredients include the willingness to take calculated risks - in terms of time, equity, or career; the ability to formulate an effective venture team; the creative skill to marshal needed resources; and fundamental skill of building solid business plan; and finally, the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion. It has become accepted that entrepreneurship, can be taught effectively. The majority of business educators and entrepreneurship development professionals have evolved beyond the myth that entrepreneurs are born, not made. Peter Drucker, one of the leading management thinkers, has said, “The entrepreneurial mystique? It's not magic, it’s not mysterious, and it has nothing to do with the genes. It’s a discipline. And, like any discipline, it can be learned” (Drucker, 1985).

An additional support for this view comes from a 10-year (1985 to 1994) literature review of enterprise, entrepreneurship, and small business management education that reported, “most of the empirical studies surveyed indicated that entrepreneurship can be taught, or at least encouraged, by entrepreneurship education” (Gorman, Hanlon, & King, 1997). Entrepreneurship education can also impact attitudes, and help people recognize opportunities and think creatively, and enable them to build leadership skills and confidence (Stevenson and Gumpert, 1985).

**Towards an Entrepreneurship Education Model For Trinidad and Tobago:** The broad rationale for advocating the introduction of entrepreneurship education programmes within the educational eco-system of Trinidad and Tobago is based on the premise that a germane inculcation of entrepreneurial awareness will improve the capacity and seedbed pool of future entrepreneurs. Within this context the entrepreneurial education inputs will serve as a key mechanism and function to build future entrepreneurial capacity and foster human development.

This equation can be simply expressed as:

\[
\text{Entrepreneurship Education} = \text{Increased Entrepreneurial Capacity & Human Development}
\]

Three fundamental thematic and action areas are suggested for an entrepreneurship education model – firstly the need to establish objectives to guide the programme, secondly an emphasis on relevant and appropriate curriculum development and approach and thirdly an evaluation methodology to correct variances and assess if programme objectives have been achieved. A representation of this proposed model is illustrated in Figure One as follows:

![Figure 1: The Main Aspects of an Entrepreneurship Education Programme.](image-url)

With respect to the development of Programme Objectives, the World Economic Forum (2010) has stated that the success of entrepreneurship educational programmes is dependent on the development of objectives to guide the initiative. As such the researcher recommends that this policy objective should embrace the concept of fostering
entrepreneurial awareness among the student population and build their latent capacity and interest in pursuing entrepreneurship as a viable life option. The entrepreneurship education strategy should permeate all three levels of the educational strata – primary, secondary and tertiary. This will yield continuous reinforcement of the entrepreneurial message and will allow for continuous skill development. In terms of Curriculum Consideration, it is important that the policy initiative capture the salient aspects that are needed to design a curriculum that is modern, relevant and capable of achieving core objectives. A study conducted by Ronstadt (1987) proposes that an entrepreneurial education curriculum should be designed so that potential entrepreneurs are aware of barriers to initiating their entrepreneurial careers and can devise ways to overcome them. He proposed a two-continuum model of a curriculum design for entrepreneurship education. His “structured–unstructured” continuum addressed various methods of transferring information and expertise; among the methods he discussed were lectures, case studies, and feasibility plans. He labeled his second continuum “entrepreneurial know-how/entrepreneurial know-who.” This continuum represented the belief that success in entrepreneurship is dependent not only on knowledge but the network of individuals with whom an entrepreneur is connected. He further argued that an effective entrepreneurship education programme must demonstrate to students “how” to entrepreneurially behave and should also introduce them to people who might be able to facilitate their success.

Further research undertaken by Laptip, Zahoa Said (2009) have indicated that in terms of overall curricula approach a process orientation adapted from Bloom’s Taxonomy can be utilized as a specific tool to guide entrepreneurial curricula development as represented in Table 1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The cognitive level of Entrepreneurship Education (Adapted from Bloom’s Taxonomy, Said (2009))</th>
<th>Descriptions of learning contents</th>
<th>Learning activities (What should the students know and do at this level?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Some sense of information of terminology, specific facts, ways and means of dealing with specifics, conventions, trends and consequences, classifications and categories, criteria, methodology, abstractions in a field, principles and generalizations, and theoretical structures.</td>
<td>Tell friends in group about successful entrepreneurs that they know. Write a short essay on an entrepreneur that he/she adores in the real life. Mix-and-match classroom activity for business descriptions and history of prominent entrepreneurs in various business sectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Conceptual understanding in translation, Interpretation and extrapolation.</td>
<td>Distinguish basic problems and potential of entrepreneurs. Discuss and distinguish for appropriate decisions and actions to be taken by entrepreneurs in various business circumstances. Sequence normal events in entrepreneur’s business activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply</td>
<td>Application of concepts in the use of abstraction in particular and in concrete situations.</td>
<td>To group entrepreneurs and their business characteristics by industry, business regions or specific timeframe. Discuss and outline business ideas and suggestions for entrepreneur. Identify the loopholes in case study discussions of a number of local and international entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Analysis of elements, relationships and organizational principles.</td>
<td>Identity major problems and specific potential that entrepreneurs faced in business. Compare workable business ideas with the incurring costs. Compare the major characteristics of entrepreneurs in various business sectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluation leading to judgments about the value of materials and methods for given purposes.</td>
<td>Debate about current issues of entrepreneurial interests. List out and rate the popular entrepreneurs in local and global business arena. Justify their rating.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The utilization of Laptip, Zahoa Said’s (2009) academic construct and model provides a valuable tool to engage the entrepreneurial curriculum content development process. The notable aspects of this academic model is that is blends the traditional learning theories from Bloom and incorporates an integral understanding of the core drivers of entrepreneurship. Moreover Laptip, Zahoa Said
(2009) has recommended practical learning methodologies such as case studies, creative problem solving and empirical research assignments within the curriculum scope, a strategy that has been reinforced by Volkman (2009). In terms of another Entrepreneurship Pedagogy Model Solomon (2002) has advocated that entrepreneurship education should be skills based and that courses in entrepreneurship education should entail creativity, new venture creation, business idea development and opportunity recognition, business planning, leadership, entrepreneurial marketing, entrepreneurial finance and growth management as well as soft skills like negotiation or presentation competences.

At this point in time the researcher has primarily focused on introducing entrepreneurship education within the formal education system of Trinidad and Tobago. However the researcher acknowledges that there will be a need to address those potential entrepreneurs out of the educational school net and to also consider developing capacity amongst groups less likely to engage with entrepreneurship such as women or specific ethnic enclaves such as Africans. There is also the necessity to give owners of small scale business ventures the skills and capacity for innovation, growth and development as a starting block to develop entrepreneurial capacity.

The final component of Evaluation has been included in the proposed model for Trinidad and Tobago since according to Fayolle, Gailly and Lassas-Clerc (2006) there has been a multiplication of entrepreneurship education programmes (EEP) and with increasing resources being allocated for these initiatives there is a need to develop a framework to evaluate the design, implementation and outcome of these programmes. Block and Stumpf (1992) have developed an EEP evaluation model that is time and criteria based and is represented in Table 2 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing of Evaluation</th>
<th>Evaluation Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During the EEP</td>
<td>Number of students enrolled &amp; number of courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortly After the EEP</td>
<td>General interest/awareness of entrepreneurship, Awareness to act, Development of entrepreneurial self-diagnosis abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between zero and three years after the EEP</td>
<td>Number of ventures created, Number of entrepreneurial positions sought and obtained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between five and ten years after the EEP</td>
<td>Sustainability and reputation of the firms, Level of innovation and capacity for change exhibited by the business enterprise established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years after the EEP</td>
<td>Contribution to society &amp; the economy, business performance, level of career satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This model can be adopted by the educational stakeholders to conduct an assessment and evaluation of the entrepreneurship education programmes in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition the author further recommends that within time as evaluation competencies are developed for this specific context the simultaneous assessment of several EEPs can be undertaken in order to identify the link between specific programmes characteristics (pedagogical approach, objective, profile of teacher, content, etc.) and the effectiveness of those programmes, and use those comparisons in order to improve the design and implementation of the Entrepreneurship Education Programmes.

A limitation of this study was the scarcity of research material that focused on a specific entrepreneurial education curriculum and an appropriate pedagogical approach within the Caribbean context. This information could have been contrasted and synthesized with the international or First World constructs to aid in the analytical process. Further research directions can include an investigation into the delivery of entrepreneurial education programmes within Trinidad and Tobago with attention to the issues of culture, social inclination to entrepreneurial learning, the utilization of a role model approach and national certification process and procedures. This research should be conducted in tandem with expertise from the discipline of Education and Humanities to ensure a systematic and high yielding research process and results.

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship education is the first and the most important step for embedding an innovative culture and generating a new wave of entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial individuals and organizations that would redound to the socio-economic development of Trinidad and Tobago. While the Government proactively seeks to unearth the entrepreneurial talents of its people there must be a robust framework to guide, design and evaluate the entrepreneurship education initiatives to ensure there is judicious use of resources and measurable outcomes. The proposed model presented in this paper can be that critical platform to mould and create successful, sustainable and innovative entrepreneurs for Trinidad and Tobago.

REFERENCES


