

‘AN INVESTIGATION TO IMPROVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODULE IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN CYPRUS’

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Abstract: Considering the ‘good relationship’ of entrepreneurship with the economy, it is very clear that the countries should pay a great deal attention to entrepreneurship education and be careful about the approaches and policies they implement regarding the issue. At this point, as a high school teacher caring about education and considering the role of entrepreneurship, it was not surprising to start my research journey by asking whether there is an entrepreneurship education in vocational and technical high schools in Northern Cyprus and how relevant it is to the context of Northern Cyprus and if not relevant how it could be improved. Having searched on the matter, I have found out that entrepreneurship is taught as an elective lesson at grade 10 students. It is one of the courses under the professional development courses. Entrepreneurship module is the material of the course and it has been developed through the project of Vocational and Technical Education System Project (MEGEP). Analysing the current entrepreneurship module with the purpose of seeing how relevant it was to the Northern Cyprus environment, I have found out that although general descriptions are discussed, the main focus in the module was on the entrepreneurship in Turkey. So, it needed to be re-designed to make it more workable for the unique environment of Northern Cyprus. Thus I have defined the title of this project as an investigation to improve entrepreneurship module in vocational and technical high schools in Northern Cyprus.’ The main aim of the project is to identify the needs of the entrepreneurship module that is taught at vocational and technical schools in North Cyprus and to develop a framework to teach entrepreneurship effectively. First of all the project will try to do a need analysis for the entrepreneurship module. The data will be collected from teachers, students and experts, and a framework will be formed with the light of this output. After designing the new framework, the module will be taught at the vocational and technical high schools for one semester. At the end of this semester, the teachers suggestions, ideas will be taken and the recommendations will be done. Thus the aim of this project is to see the combination of theory and practice at the same time, collect data form the real situation and contact with the people who are directly related to this subject.

Action Plan methodology will be used in this project as it includes improvement, its nature to combine theory and practice and its benefits to my professional growth and development. In order to do it, the data will be collected from grade 12 students of vocational and technical high schools, subject teachers of entrepreneurship module, the members of the committee (who approved the teaching of the module), the chair of department of the School of Computing and Technology at Eastern Mediterranean University and the top executives of the civil society organizations such as Cyprus Turkish Building Contractors Association, Union of the Chambers of Cyprus Turkish Engineers and Architects, Cyprus Turkish Union of Bank Employees, Cyprus Turkish Accounting Union, Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Industry, State Planning Office. The project is important as it will not only include and collect theoretical data, but also will include practical data regarding entrepreneurship as well. This project is significant for the Ministry of Education and Culture as it will determine the needs of the current entrepreneurship module and restructure it in the context of vocational and technical schools in

North Cyprus. It also will map the policy makers and experts of the ministry. The findings of the project will be a light for the experts to form and implement new policies regarding the entrepreneurship education in vocational and technical high schools based on North Cyprus context. The re-structured module will satisfy the needs of the students and teachers, and will create more beneficial learning environment for entrepreneurship as the students and teachers as main actors will be involved in the project.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship module, vocational and technical schools

Introduction

One of the biggest problems of Northern Cyprus is unemployment. Especially young people have been suffering from this problem. Due to this problem they cannot make decisions and plans for their future. Of course the job opportunities in the public sector are limited and insufficient in providing jobs for every single person living in this country. Certainly, this is not only the problem of people only but also the problem Northern Cyprus. Because considering the long term effects of this situation, the stability and the lack in the diversification of jobs, will be a risky factor for the economic development of the country. Entrepreneurship, with its feature of turning creative ideas into the real, will be the best solution for the current unemployment problem. Its positive aspects will be felt in the economy in the future. Thus, we as a country must have a module which is very practical and appropriate for the Northern Cyprus environment in order to educate well-equipped entrepreneurs who would be responsible for building the future.

Entrepreneurship is today's key instrument on bringing developments to the economy by giving chances to everyone who could think creatively, organize his/her plan appropriately and put them into the action. There are many approaches on the definition and description of entrepreneurship. This is emphasized in most of the articles which are published in the field of entrepreneurship. Freeman and Soete (1997, in Dodgson, 2011) maintain that there are a lot of definitions about innovation and entrepreneurship. Similarly when Augustin-Jean (2010:319) writes that 'the definition of entrepreneurship itself is subject to debate', he is emphasizing that there is no one correct definition. Spencer et al. (2008) expresses that despite the increase in interest in the field of entrepreneurship, a universally recognized definition has not been produced yet. Gartner (1990, in Seikkula-Leino, 2011) asserts that the meaning and foci of entrepreneurship show differences in various contexts. Of course, this uncertainty about its definition may seem like a far possibility to reach to an agreement about it however there is one important point about entrepreneurship that most of the authors would come to an agreement about it. This would be explained as the positive relationship of entrepreneurship with economic growth.

Regarding the above mentioned issue, many authors (Schumpeter, 1936; Hayek, 1937/1949; Casson, 1982) believe that even though there are many different factors that drive an economy, entrepreneurship has been accepted as a main condition of positive economic movement (cited in Aoyama, 2009). Equally, Carree & Thurik (2003, in Koster and Rai, 2008) explain that entrepreneurship is mostly recognized to be a necessary source when long-term economic development is considered. Likewise, many authors (Baumol, 1968; Stevenson

and Jarillo, 1990; Wennekers and Thurik, 1999; Van Stel and Carree, 2004) state that attention paid on entrepreneurship lies its acceptance as an activity that is valuable for the growth of economy (Spencer et al.,2008). According to Lundstrom and Stevenson (2005, in Hadjimanolis, 2007) entrepreneurship is accepted as a necessary factor in a knowledge-based economy in order to support the fields of employment, economic development and innovation(Stel, Carree, & Thurik, 2005).This relationship is also stated in the web page of the summary of the EU legislation. In that report, entrepreneurship is mentioned together with the word ‘creativity’ and it is defined as one’s creative capacity in order to realize the opportunity and to follow that opportunity aiming at producing new value or economic achievement. It is further explained that the creativity is emphasized because of its role in bringing competitiveness to the environment of enterprises. It is stated that new entrepreneurial movements would promote productivity and would put pressure on the improvements of efficiencies of the organizations, markets, sectors, etc...Then the outcome would be the competitiveness in the economy, which would mean new enterprises, new job opportunities and decrease in the unemployment rate (europe.eu, 2007). Thus, all those mentioned proves that, in today’s world, countries which consider economic development cannot ignore ‘entrepreneurship.’

As a result, considering the ‘good relationship’ of entrepreneurship with the economy, it is very clear that the countries should pay a great deal attention to entrepreneurship education and be careful about the approaches and policies they implement regarding the issue. At this point, as a high school teacher caring about education and considering the role of entrepreneurship, it was not surprising to start my research journey by asking whether there is an entrepreneurship education in vocational and technical high schools in Northern Cyprus and how relevant it is to the context of Northern Cyprus and if not relevant how it could be improved.

Having searched on the matter, I have found out that entrepreneurship is taught as an elective lesson at grade 10 students. It is one of the courses under the professional development courses. Entrepreneurship module is the material of the course and it has been developed through the project of Vocational and Technical Education System Project (MEGEP).

Analysing the current entrepreneurship module with the purpose of seeing how relevant it was to the Northern Cyprus environment, I have found out that although general descriptions are discussed, the main focus in the module was on the entrepreneurship in Turkey. So, it needed to be re-designed to make it more workable for the unique environment of Northern Cyprus. Thus I have defined the title of this project as an investigation to improve entrepreneurship module in vocational and technical high schools in Northern Cyprus.’

Aims of the Study

The main aim of this project was to improve the current entrepreneurship module in order to develop a good framework for vocational and technical high schools in Northern Cyprus. Besides the main aim, the project sought to foster entrepreneurship and to present a guide that would assist policy makers and the other researchers who planned to conduct a project in the field of education and entrepreneurship. Considering the aim of the project, the main research questions addressed to the followings:

RQ1. What are the deficiencies of the current entrepreneurship module?

RQ2. How can these deficiencies be improved?

RQ3. What kind of framework is needed to adopt to develop a good practice?

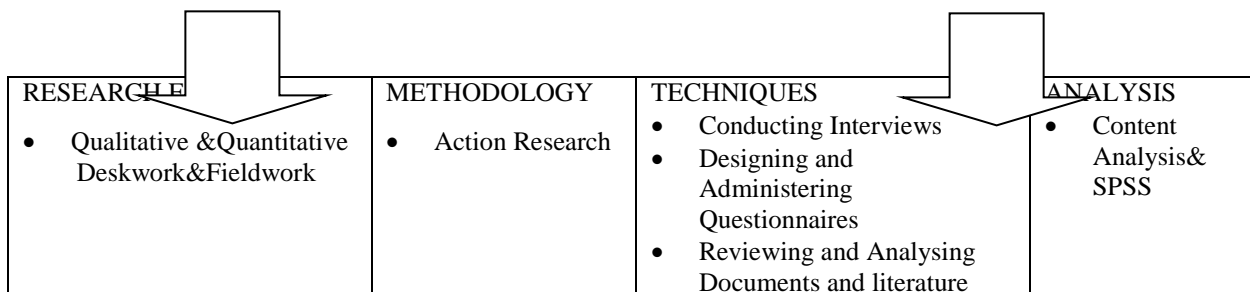
First of all, I have identified the deficiencies of the entrepreneurship module, in doing so I intended to find out how the deficiencies could be improved. In an effort to accomplish this, I have decided on the stakeholders of this project, have chosen my methodology taking the primary aim of the research into the consideration, then I have decided on the data collection methods and prepared data collection instruments. After undertaking my research following the action plan for my project, I have analysed the findings. The next step included the examination of the required changes and re-designing the module with the light of outputs. At the end, the new module was implemented at vocational and technical high schools and it was completed after the final edit with the suggestions taken by the teachers who used it in their classrooms.

All of the grade 12 students of vocational and technical high schools who had studied the current module when they were grade 10, teachers who had used the current module, the member of the committee that approved the module as a teaching material, the chair of the department of the School of Computing and Technology at Eastern Mediterranean University, the top executives of the civil society organizations including the chair of the Union of the Chambers of Cyprus Turkish Engineers and Architects, Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Industry, the representative of the state planning office and Deputy leader of EU VETLAM Project and Vocational Education Professional were the main stakeholders of this project. They have been selected as stakeholders as they were the right addresses to find out answers to the main research questions and to achieve the aim of the project.

Methodology

Table 1. Summary of Methodology.

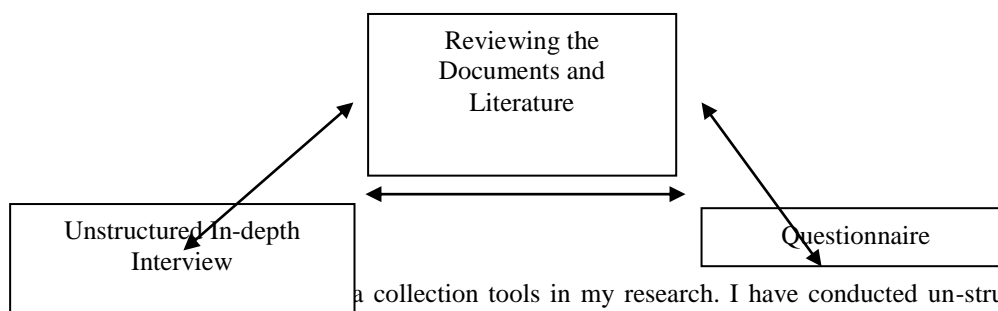
AIM	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to develop the module in order to develop a good framework for vocational and technical high schools in Northern Cyprus 	
OBJECTIVES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to gather information in order to identify the deficiencies and formulate solutions to improve those deficiencies to analyse the results to identify a good framework in promoting learning about entrepreneurship and to draw adequate conclusions and recommendations for policy actions 	



I have discarded others and used action research. There were three reasons behind that. The first one was about its nature in bridging the gap between theory and practice. I believe that this is an important point as bridging the gap between theory and practice increases its applicability and acceptability as it doesn't isolate the real context from theory while trying to bring improvement to practice. It takes the authentic world into

consideration as it is, enabling the researcher to produce concrete and adequate solutions to the problem. The second reason was, it is about taking steps towards change and bringing development to the systems. My personality who always looks for bringing developments to the systems it belongs to, is very much associate with the action research considering this feature. The third reason was, its having a collaborative nature. In my opinion the significance of this lies on, involving the voices of people working cooperatively together in order to improve a situation and bring workable developments. This nature of action research is linked to work based program as the researcher attempts to bring changes to the work place.

In order to reach reliable and valid results in the findings I have used combination of three research techniques which are reviewing the documents and literature, interviews and questionnaires as shown in Figure 2.



... a collection tools in my research. I have conducted un-structured in-depth interviews with the teachers, successful entrepreneurs, the top executives of the chambers, the representative of the state planning office, and the deputy leader of EU VETLAM project. I have administered questionnaires to the students and reviewed the documents and literature.

Significance of the Study

This project is significant as it puts great deal of contribution to the education by bringing a change with the re-designed entrepreneurship module which could also be identified as the evidence of achievement for this project.

I have collected information from too many sources while conducting this research. In order to collect all these information I visited relevant institutions and reached the data considering the ethical considerations. Besides theoretical richness of the project, I collected data from all relevant partners who could be identified as the best sources of practical information. Thus this study is important as it covers both theoretical and practical data which improved the level of authenticity of the new module and made it more usable and real for the Northern Cyprus business context.

The project did not only fulfil the needs of the teachers and the students and build more effective learning environment, but also it fulfilled the needs of the business world and the entrepreneurs. Therefore this project closed the gaps between the real business environment and the class environment.

This project is important for the future and economic development of the Northern Cyprus. With the new module, young entrepreneurs, who were more aware of the Northern Cyprus business environment, would be graduated. Therefore it is not only an investment for today but it is also beneficial for the future.

Research Findings

Analysing the interviews and the questionnaires, the findings could be summarized in the table below:

Content	<p>-Northern Cyprus and Entrepreneurship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectors in Northern Cyprus • Real life stories of entrepreneurs in Northern Cyprus • The Skills(Ability to telescope, future orientation, opportunity and goal oriented) • Laws in Northern Cyprus • Procedure for establishing a business in Northern Cyprus • Needs of Northern Cyprus • Module that includes examples from Northern Cyprus • Module that considers the people, geographical structure and the level of the students <p>-Feasibility studies -Information about an entrepreneur -Presentation of the role and the importance of entrepreneurship and - CV writing techniques - Professional development -Knowing yourself</p>
Method	Inviting entrepreneurs to the classroom and organizing visits to workplaces
Structure	<p>-Explaining topic point by point makes the subjects confusing for students -Topics are explained in a detailed way</p>
Activities	<p>EU practices Content base</p>
NEW MODULE	

After I have determined the content, I have made my plan about collecting the necessary data. I have visited all the institutions, used web-sites and searched on the books. In order to re-design the module in a correct format, I have followed the guider of how to write a module. After I have re-designed the module, the teachers have used it in one semester and I have made last changes according to the results of the interviews. In these interviews all of the teachers expressed in different words that the new module is a good work.

Conclusion

The results of this study constitute a rich setting of future developments for Northern Cyprus Education System, specifically for vocational and technical high schools. It has provided considerable feedback for the policy makers of Ministry of Education and Culture in Northern Cyprus in this field. Overall the research conducted provided valuable findings and identified the areas that require changes in order to create a more beneficial learning environment and sustainable economic development in Northern Cyprus.

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