



FIVE PILLARS FOR INNOVATIVE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM (PART II)

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Abstract

Business management education was formally recognized at universities with the establishment of the first business school in France in 1819 (Hayes, 1993) and it has now grown and started being popular at universities in 1980s (Macfarlane, 1995). However, during last five decades the business management education has been subjected to severe and continuous criticisms that in brief Business Management education is not fit for the purpose. Even-though there are enough literature that discuss those issues separately, no single research that discusses multiple issues of Business Management education has been found by the author to-date. This research has synthesized the literature relating to those criticisms and identified five major underlying issues revolved around those criticisms. Hence, the discussion of all those important issues simultaneously under one stop shop is a timely need and especially useful for revisit of Business Management Curriculum belongs to business management educators for the purpose of upgrading or redesigning of Business Management Curriculum which is warranted in a dynamically changing environment. However, having considered the importance of the insights derived from the contents of each of the issues two of them have been discussed in the article published as part one (Liyanage, 2017) and the remaining three issues are discussed in this article.

Keywords: Business management curriculum, Integration, Interdisciplinarity, Sustainability, Employability, entrepreneurship, Technology.

Issue 03 out of 05: Technology Gap

Information is considered as a fifth factor of production and the information as a technology has grown more advanced and today all sizes of business organizations, micro, small, medium and large organizations thrive their business with the information technology online system, off line system, business desktop, laptop to smart phone, single user systems to multiuser systems. The wide use of IT by all sizes of business organization demands new IT skills and knowledge from the business management education such as Financial spreadsheets, Business graphics, Word processing, Presentation, Small business systems, Database management systems, Computerized accounting packages, Communication software (e-mail, file transfer, web browser), Office automation, Supply chain management, Enterprise resources planning, Evaluation of entity's IT assurance needs, Organization and management of own system and organization of system resources, Safeguarding the system against unauthorized use such as virus, spam, and spyware, Operating systems, Statistical analysis and forecasting packages, Utility programs such as text editor, folder manager, file compression, backup/recovery, Decision support system, Management Information system. Hence, Information technology is a key component of today's business world and business management education as well (Alavi et al., 1995 ;Alavi et al., 1997 and Bilimoria, 1999 cited in Benbunan-Fich, 2001). Accordingly, the evolving information technology demands from business management students the knowledge and skills pertaining to almost all the aspects of the business.

However, the business management students cannot define the technology requirement of the society to which they enter into (Bessagnet et al., 2005). The society in the dynamically changing world defines the necessity of technology by its own decision makers, agendas and outcomes and the context of society influences the value of integration to be supplied by the higher education institute. Consequently, neither the higher educational institute nor the business management students are able to make decisions, prepare agenda or set outcomes instead of developing technology savvy business management students by integrating technology into their curriculum and pedagogy. In this regard, there are two aspects of integration of technology in the business management education, namely, teaching of business management with technology and learning business management with technology. Even-though the integration of information technology for learning process can be done with traditional core courses of business management program and separate IT modules included in the program, the integration of technology into the traditional core courses is rather neglected than the inclusion of separate IT modules. Stephens and O'Hara, (2001) pointed out that despite of the fact that there is a colonization of technology in management education, the frequent approach to business management students is that they are offered a single information technology course which is inadequate.

However, such integration has to address both common issues of IT relevant to business management students and the business management disciplines such as general management, accounting (Chen et al., 2008), information system (Gill & Hu, 1999 cited in Stephens, C. S., O'Hara, M. 2001), Human resource management, marketing (Benbunan-Fich et al., 2001) and operations management. The integration of enterprise system into the various courses of business management by curricular and pedagogy is recommended for understanding the integrated nature of the business organizations and usefulness of information technology for carrying out efficiently and effectively processes of the business organizations (Fedorowicz et al., 2004).



The integration of information technology for improving the teaching is also essential not only to be different but also to be a catalyst for transforming educational processes in the competitive market (Ferrell, 1995&Smart and et al., 1999 cited in Benbunan-Fich 2001; Leidner&Jarvenpaa, 1995). The use of collaborative information technologies which facilitate operational efficiency by communication and collaboration improves personal, inter personal and organizational effectiveness between the students and the higher education institute. However, Chelliah and Clarke (2011) point out that the nature of the classroom cannot be changed by the technology itself unless the technology is integrated into the curriculum.

Hence, the integration of information technology for knowledge and skills into the business management program by the curriculum and pedagogies is today not an option for the higher education institutes but may only be a choice of the higher education institute compromising the degree of the quality of the students developed by the higher education institute depending on circumstances inherent to the higher education institute such as the availability of infrastructure facilities, values and belief of the higher education institute, capabilities of academics, resource availability, the intensity of the competition. In this regard capability of the students is not a determinant of integration of technology because the students who are subject to the development process are able to cope up with their education decided by their stakeholders of higher education specially because of the new generation of students who were born after 1980 are called “Digital Natives”, Prenski,2001 & 2010, ‘Net Generation’, Tapscott, 1989, ‘Nexters’, (Zemke et al., 2000)and the ‘Millenials’, (Howe and Strauss, 2000) (all cited in Gaith, 2010) are technologically savvy generation. They are active learners rather than the passive learners with the technology and use communication technologies to access for information (Frاند, 2000; Oblinger, 2003; Prensky, 2001 cited in Ghaith, 2010). These students who are different from previous generations are frequently victimized by more traditional educational philosophies and practices but they are exposed to technology demanded by the dynamically changing environment.

However, there are two important discrepancies with regard to the use of technology among students. They use technology differently in their lives due to various factors such as socio-economic status, cultural backgrounds, gender and discipline specialization (Kennedy et al., 2006; Oliver and Goerke, 2007) and a notable proportion of the new generation does not have access to technology and therefore they use technology insignificantly (Ghaith, 2010). These discrepancies among management students for the access of information technology can be alleviated by the higher education institute with the usage of information technology for teaching and their learning process during the period of education.

Issue 04 out of 05: Entrepreneurship Gap

The objective of business management at higher education institutes (HEI) is to prepare students for being employed at entry level employment opportunities in the labour market still plays a major role in graduate employability (Campbell et al., 2006). Such preparation of graduates for being employed in the labour market is the traditional role of the HEIs and It is required to reform this traditional role in the globally changing environment to prepare the graduates for being self-employed as a new objective of HEIs(Fletcher, 1999; Kirby, 2004; Hartshorn and Hannon, 2005&Nurmi and Paasio, 2007cited in Lorencο et al. 2013).This need has arisen to bridge the gap widening between graduate job market and the increasing number of graduate output. Lorencο et al. (2013 citing Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2007) stipulated that nearly one fourth of graduates have been struggling to find a fulltime employment even after three and half years from their graduation and further cited High Fliers Research (2012) pointing out that the stiff competition of the job market is unable to provide jobs for current graduates and one of the three applications for jobs is from the old graduates.

In these circumstances, the graduate entrepreneurship at HEIs has been considered as the panacea for the unemployment of graduates (Ahmed, 2013) because of many inherent benefits such as job creation, poverty alleviation, improvement in the living standards, creation of goods and services for the satisfaction of increasing population, bridging the gap between the technology and satisfaction of human needs, participation of private sector for national economy (Eze&Nwali, 2012). Matlay(2011) points out two important aspects of graduate entrepreneurship that they positively contribute for the recovery of recession and they positively contribute for reducing the level of unemployment by being self-employed and providing employments for others (Hannon, 2007;Herrmann et al., 2008; Gibb et al., 2009; Volkmann et al., 2009; Gibb, 2010 cited in Lorencο et al., 2013).

However, a crucial question in respect of entrepreneurship education is that if the entrepreneurship can be taught or not since it is a form of activity(Ronstadt, 1985; Hynes, 1996; Jack and Anderson, 1999 and Peterman &Kennedy, 2003cited in Roffe, 2010). On this premise, Adcroft et al., (2004) points out the two ends of the arguments in this unresolved debate that Chaharbaghi and Wills argue that “Entrepreneurs cannot be manufactured, only recognized” on the basis that certain characteristics and character traits of the successful entrepreneurs such as risk taking, creativity, leadership etc. cannot be taught. At the other end, Kerby argues that entrepreneurship can be taught “but not by using the traditional pedagogic teaching methods”.



Despite of the unresolved argument that entrepreneurship cannot be taught, It is becoming popular around the world since the first entrepreneur course was taught by Myles Mace at Harvard Business School in 1947(Kuratko, 2005), which has instilled entrepreneurial spirit. Solomon (2007) pointed out that there is a remarkable growth of entrepreneurship education by 1500 higher educational institutes around the world during fifty years from 1955 to 2005. Kuratco (2005) further articulated that a leading author claimed that the younger generation of 21st century is the most entrepreneurial generation since the industrial revolution and further pointed out that it has been closer to gain the full legitimacy. Katz (2008 cited in Solomon, 2007) argues that it has now reached full maturity and there is no debate with regard to the legitimacy of entrepreneurship education at HEIs (Jones &Penaluna, 2013; Jones, 2011 cited in Henry, 2013; Adcroft et al., 2004). The establishment of positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial activities (Weaver et al, 2006; van der Sluis et al, 2005 cited in Roffe, 2010) have paved the way for the legitimacy of entrepreneurship education.

In these circumstances, the Entrepreneurship education is a well grown tree with well grown branches now. It is able to produce more and better entrepreneurs than it produced in the past(Ronstadt, 1987 cited in Solomon, 2007). It closely relates to Enterprise education, another version. Even-though these two terms are interchangeably used (in this article too), entrepreneurship education broadly means enterprise education too (Henry, 2013). However, the distinction between these two types of education can be observed by the policy documents. Accordingly, Enterprise education is defined as “equipping students with an enhanced capacity to generate ideas and the skills to make them happen” and Entrepreneurship education is defined as “equipping students with the additional knowledge, attributes and capabilities required to apply these abilities in the context of setting up a new venture or business” (QAA, 2012, p. 2 cited in Jones &Penaluna, 2013). However, both of these two types of education can be used to instill culture of enterprise among all the students regardless of their education discipline at the higher education institute(Henry, 2013).

The entrepreneurship education or enterprise education is taught at HEIs in two formats, as a Standalone entrepreneurship programme, as a separate discipline or entrepreneurship education by way of few modules as an integrated education with another discipline. The integration of entrepreneurship education with other disciplines is a well grown branch now. Within a few decades it has, by integration, colonized easily business management discipline and later almost all other disciplines at HEIs. The difference between these two depends on basically with the extent of course contents. The entrepreneurship is an intra-disciplinary concept intrinsic to the development of all students but there is no one size fits all the students across different discipline (Gibb, 2002, 2009; Collins et al., 2004 cited in Lorenzo et al. 2013). In integrated entrepreneurship education with business management students or non-business students, there are limited resources than the standalone entrepreneurship programme and therefore the educator has to set the objectives accordingly.

However, the business management students are available more resources than the non-business students for entrepreneurship education. And there is a great relationship between some courses of business management programs and the entrepreneurship program (Block and Stumpf, 1992 cited in Solomon, 2007) despite of the fact that the business management program and the entrepreneurship program have their own identities, the business management program is the closest program with the entrepreneurship program providing business management students a competitive edge for entrepreneurship education. For non-business students, Lorenzo et al. (2013) pointed out that UK higher education institution has developed three entrepreneurship units that are used by different faculties to teach entrepreneurship education for non-business students who represent 86% of total student population in the UK.

According to the literature there are two types of entrepreneurship education which is used by HEIs, namely, education about entrepreneurship and education for entrepreneurship. In the first type of entrepreneurship education, descriptive knowledge of entrepreneurship by traditional pedagogical approach is provided without facilitating to be an entrepreneur. Gibb (1987, 1993, and 2010 cited in Lorenzo et al., 2013) criticizes the education for entrepreneurship as over emphasis theory and functional knowledge as an ‘end’ rather than a ‘means’. In contrast to the traditional mode, the education about entrepreneurship, the education for entrepreneurship provides not only the theoretical knowledge but also facilitations for contents to be applied. Gibb (1987, 1993, 2010 and Smith et al., 2006 cited in Lorenzo et al., 2013) argue that the education for entrepreneurship educates students helping to be entrepreneurs through the process of ‘doing’ by a constructive learning pedagogy. It appears that the traditional approach, education about entrepreneurship is more comfortably used by HEIs but education for entrepreneurship by an enterprising approach is more effective for promoting graduate entrepreneurship (Gibb, 1987; Plaschka and Welsh, 1990 cited in Lorenzo et al, 2013).

The difference between these two approaches prevails between pedagogical approaches. In the enterprising approach, the contents of entrepreneurship are taught linking with the real world entrepreneurship. The pedagogies used by HEI should be able to develop creative and innovative mindset of students to be entrepreneurs (Solomon, 2007). Some pedagogies for entrepreneurship education are simply traditional management courses with a new label (King, 2001 cited in Solomon, 2007).



Many scholars point out that the new curriculum should include the entrepreneurship education beyond a mere label (Matlay, 2006, 2011; Draycott and Rae, 2011 cited in Lorenzo et al, 2013) and the reorientation of curriculum is required because traditional pedagogies, say, classroom lectures with text book reading cannot make a successful entrepreneur (Singh, 2013) so that the graduate entrepreneurs are able to identify the opportunities in the market and able to find their own employment by being more enterprising (Draycott and Rae, 2011; Matlay, 2011 cited in Lorenzo et al, 2013). Hence, the challenge is to design a curriculum and pedagogies that are able to develop the students to be self-employed.

However, among entrepreneurship educators around the world there is little agreement regarding the course contents (Gorman et al., 1997 cited in Solomon, 2007). Solomon (2007) cited a collection of scholars who have identified entrepreneurial competencies to be developed by entrepreneurship education and he cited McMullan and Long (1987) and Vesper and McMullenn (1988) identified 'skill building courses in negotiation, leadership, new product development, creative thinking and exposure to technological innovation'. Hills (1988) and Donckels (1991) found 'awareness of entrepreneurial career options'. Vesper and McMullan (1988) and Zeithaml and Rice (1987) found 'sources of venture capital'. Vesper and McMullan (1988) found 'idea protection'. Ronstadt (1987) found 'ambiguity tolerance'. Hills (1988) McMullan and Long (1987) and Plaschka and Welsh (1990) pointed out 'challenges associated with each stage of venture development', Hood and Young (1993) and Scott and Twomey, (1998) held 'the characteristics that define the entrepreneurial personality'. And In this regard, various newer tools in addition to traditional tools such as classroom lecturers, tutorials, readings etc are used to achieve the purpose. Among the newer tools not only guest speakers, interaction with entrepreneurs, internship with entrepreneurs, case studies, new business plan project, business simulation etc. are used but also at the other end business plan competitions, business incubation centers are also conducted for achieving the very purpose of the entrepreneurship education.

The guiding principle of achieving the very purpose of entrepreneurship education is the setting of learning outcomes to teach entrepreneurial skills (Adcroft et al., 2004) to enhance the employability of graduates (Matlay, 2011; Lorenzo et al., 2013; Henry, 2013;) so that they are able to work in a volatile, complex and uncertain business environment for "attaining sustainable economic development and societal progress" (WEF, 2009 cited in Henry, 2013). However, Henry (2013) expressed the view that the learning outcomes should not go beyond the scope of entrepreneurship modules of the entrepreneurship education and cautioned citing Hannon (2006) that some of the learning outcomes are merely inserted rather than integrated in the curriculum such as economic and societal progress.

Issue 5 out of 5: Integrative Curriculum

Many educators, researches and business leaders showed their dissatisfaction of the undergraduates of business schools. Thomas (2007) argues that the students of the business schools should have skills, flexibility and training so that they are able to meet the demands of globalized and technologically changed new economy. As discussed above the globalized economy now demands business management students with employability, sustainability, entrepreneurship and technology interwoven with the subject knowledge and skills they learnt in their business schools. In this regard some critiques defend the functional base curricula and the other critique challenge the functional base curricular and prescribe the integration of curricular is the answer.

The functional base curricular in other words the silo based management education was first introduced after the Ford/Carnegie reports of USA in the 1950s and the Franks Report of the UK in the 1960s (Thomas and Cornuel, 2011). These reports recommended that the business management education has to fulfill two obligations, preparation of graduates for entry level position of labour market and foster them as well-rounded general managers (Buttermore, 2010). Campbell et al, (2006) argue that silo based management education used by many business schools is the best method of curricular that provides technical knowledge closely associated with the entry level employment opportunities of their undergraduates in the market. They further argue that functional experts produced by the silo based model have been demanded over the last century and will be demanded continuously in the 21st century also. Allred et al. (1996 cited in Campbell et al., 2006) pointed out that undergraduates begin their career as a functional expert such as accountant, chemist and computer specialist etc.

The functional based education is now more than six decades old and subject to its inherent weaknesses. The major argument against the silo based mentality is that the students are unable to understand how the business organizations operate in interdisciplinary manner in the business environment. A typical business organization divides its business activities into silos such as accounting, human resource management, general management/administration, marketing etc for ease of management but the business operates by cross functional teams in interdisciplinary manner. When these silos are taught as separate and distinct disciplines, students are taught the business in piecemeal manner but not holistically (Davis, 1995; Brozik et al., 2013). The rigorous allegation against silo based education is that they have contributed for global financial crisis in recent times (Portter and McKibbin, 1988; Dudley et al., 1995; Walker and Black, 1997; Stover et al., 1997; Michaelsen, 1999; Pharr, 2000; Hamilton et al., 2000 and Aurand et al., 2001 cited in Campbell; Bradshaw, 2010). Hence, teaching business management education based on silos is attacked as a disservice to students and employers (Chronicles of Higher education, 1984; Byrne, 1993 & Harvard Business Review, 1992 cited in Walker & Black, 2000).



Hence, Students should be able to understand various functions of the business and processes and how they are interactive with each other for achieving goals and objectives of the organization and finally how the business organizations shape the society and how the society shapes the business organizations. Otherwise the students not only feel but also experience that the business organizations in action are different from the business organization they learn in their education.

The answer for the skepticism of silo model is to teach business management in interdisciplinary manner by an integrative curriculum. Davis (1995) defines the interdisciplinary management education as “the work that scholars do together in two or more disciplines, sub-disciplines, or professions, by bringing together and to some extent synthesizing their perspectives”. He further stipulates two underlying reasons for interdisciplinary management education. One of them is that the silo based education creates isolations among disciplines. Students tend to look at the business in piece meal manner and such isolation inhibits critical thinking of the student. The other reason is that the functional based education is so inadequate that the students are unable to face in the dynamically changing business environment (Davis, 1995). Accordingly, functional based education is able to produce I-shaped graduates who are unable to think outside the silos but integrative education is able to produce T-shaped graduates who are able to synthesis disciplines in solving real world business problems (Bajada and Trayler, 2013).

Accordingly, there is a strong relationship between the interdisciplinary management education and integration. Davis (1995) points out that the integration is inherent in interdisciplinary management education and defines it as “the degree to which the disciplines are woven together from two or more separate disciplines, or sub-disciplines, into a single larger discipline”. Ducoffe et al. (2006) point out that the integrated courses merge disciplines and teach the students how disciplines are interwoven with problem solving skills. The analysis of interrelation of disciplines with integrated courses by way of case studies and others, enhance the intellectual skills of the students by transfer of knowledge rather than transfer of information (Ducoffe et al, 2006). Many critiques demand that the business schools should break down silos and integrate traditional courses of undergraduate business management curriculum (Dudley et al., 1995; Stover et at., 1997; Walker and Black, 1997; Bishop et al., 1998; Michaelson, 1999; Hamilton et al, 2000; Pharr, 2000 & Aurand et al., 2001 cited in Campbell, 2006).

The most widely used method for integration of interdisciplinary management education is of integrative curriculum. The relevance of curriculum for integration was first authoritatively introduced by a report of American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and it required integrating interdisciplinary education by a relevant curricular stipulating the fact that “blur the boundaries between educational disciplines, cross disciplinary programs. Facilitate market relevance by encouraging boundary spanning teaching and thinking” (AACSB, 2002 cited in Buttermore, 2010). Even-though AACSB made such curriculum is used for MBA, it is used for undergraduate level too. But, functional base model is abundantly used and relatively small number of business schools have revised their undergraduate curriculum to make relevant for interdisciplinary management education by integrative curriculum with integrative techniques such as (cross functional) common body of knowledge (CBK), Capstone course, Case study with ERP, Supply Chain Management, New product development etc. DeMoranville et al. (2000 cited in Buttermore, 2010) pointed out that there is only 5% of AACSB accredited schools have significantly transformed their curriculum for integration. Athavale et al. (2008 cited in Buttermore, 2010) pointed out that in a more recent study, it has been found out that 23% of the deans of AACSB accredited business schools have planned to teach business management education with integrative curriculum of undergraduates.

There are many reasons for not being popular of integrative curriculum for undergraduates. Campbell et al (2006) argues that many business schools find incompatibility of integrated curriculum with mission of their business schools and they further point out two reasons with regard to the incompatibility, namely, cost to the teaching business management education with integrative curriculum is more than the benefits to the business school. The cost more than the benefit is not a decisive factor always which is a matter of fact depending on circumstances of each and every business school. The factors such as education funded by the government, sponsored by the government and the turnover of the business school, competition are more favourable factors to determine that the benefits are more than the cost. The other reason against the integrative curriculum is that the students have limited classroom time which is to be compromised between the depth of the specialization and new contents required for integrative curriculum. Hamilton et al. (2000 cited in Campbell, 2010) argues that the original intention of the course can be crowded out when teaching new things. These arguments are not tenable for an undergraduate degree extending for four or more years and even for a lesser period by eliminating duplication of the contents and by effective use of independent hours (out of the classroom hours) of the students.

Conclusion

Almost all the criticism against the business management education that business management graduates are not fit the purpose is based on five types of gaps in the curriculum, the ethical gap, employability gap, technology gap, entrepreneurship gap and the integrative gap. Bajada and Trayler (2013) pointed out what is required is to reorganize, restructure and deliver differently but not necessarily required to overhaul the contents of business management is applicable not only for bridging



the integrative gap but also for the rest also. In this regard, “The frequent three complaints/excuses that the behavioural and other changes that require to transfer knowledge, skills& attitudes is difficult in the classroom, the regulatory authority does not permit such modifications and such modifications compromise the knowledge contents to be delivered are rather illusionary than visionary business management education” (Liyanage, 2017).

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