Innovative Approaches In Business Education

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Abstract. Together with the new developments in business, traditional business education is changing. Interactive games, creative class activities, mobile devices like iPads and tablets change the business education radically. In academic world and in business training there are very new and radical approaches. In this paper, new opportunities provided by new technologies will be analyzed and unusual teaching examples from Harvard University and other leading universities around the world will be presented.

Keywords: business education, innovative university, interactive learning, innovative academic education.

1 INTRODUCTION

The world is changing in many aspects driven by the forces such as technology, new market dynamics, and the culture of new generations.

The technology, primarily the platforms that use Internet is one of the main sources of change. From tablets to the smartphones are the things which are considered as impossible yesterday or a part of science fiction movies are not only possible but have become ordinary today. In their groundbreaking book "The Innovative University", Clayton Christensen and Henry Eyring (2011) claims that online learning as a classic disruptive innovation is changing traditional higher education. The blended combination of online and class education focusing on student needs, are improving the performance of learning and meet the demands of non-traditional, digital savvy learners (Cook and Grant-Davie, 2013).

There are again unusual market dynamics and collaboration between the competitors, suppliers and customers. The concepts like crowdsourcing (Jeff Howe, 2013), collaborative consumption (Botsman and Rogers, 2010) responsibility revolution (Hollender and Green, 2010) are shaping and changing todays' markets. Instead of experts, crowds of ordinary people are producing the content today; as in the example of YouTube. The retail companies try to act more responsible in every possible way and compel their suppliers to produce environmental friendly despite increasing the costs. By collaborative consumption concept, people are exchanging goods, apartments, books, bikes and cars. The free podcasts of esteemed university professors; free e-books on the market space are a few examples that reflect the change in the market dynamics.

The culture of new generations is making youth more active. They are not passive information receivers like television generations; they are the active generation of Internet, Facebook (Sheahan, 2005). So in order to engage them in courses, it is a good preference to adapt Facebook, blogs and similar site and applications on the Internet to the courses.

Based on these developments business education at the higher education institutions has started to change. Faculties are looking for new ways of teaching by using the online technologies and classroom activities (Resnick and Scott, 2004).

2 EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

High impact innovation requires an entrepreneurial mindset that views big problems as big opportunities. The academics with an entrepreneurial mindset are ready to embark on a journey without knowing the exact destination and is ready to fail in reaching for success (Thorp and Goldstein, 2010). Most of the innovative approaches in business education are in the trial phase. In this section of paper some examples will be given to illustrate the innovative approaches in business education. Later these approaches will be classified and interpreted to provide a general framework.

Harvard University is one of the leading universities in the business education. Harvard Business School is listed at the top of the business school rankings. Some of the examples given here will be based on the experience or interview, because there is no written reference for a specific class activity or game. First two examples are from Harvard University.

One of the group assignments is designing a paper plane that can fly to the furthest point at the campus in one innovation class at Harvard University. The groups of five compete for designing the best plane that can reach further than their competitors. First the rules of assignment are explained in the class. There is no specific shape for the plane, but other than five sheets of paper, glue, scissor and tape nothing else can be used as a material. The planes have to carry two coins safely until they land on. Any plane which landing without the coins are to be disqualified by the customer, who is the professor. After learning the rules the groups meet to discuss about the design alternatives, and search for the possibilities. After the group decides for a model, they make the plane and do test flights and get prepared for the big day. When the flight day comes, every group brings their plane model and tries to fly it to the furthest point in the campus area. An aircraft engineer is also invited to the flight day to approve the planes are made proper to the rules. After the realization of the contest each group makes a presentation about the phases in their plane design: research, conceptual design, design alternatives, making trial planes, test flights, final design and presentation.

With this assignment, instead of studying innovation theoretically group tries to do its own innovation and learn from the experience. The group naturally passes all of the stages of innovation by themselves. The nature of competition also provides a better engagement more than the grading of a professor. The groups study together out of the classroom. The need for meeting and the distribution of tasks help them to take responsibility and time management. The task rules provide a replica of business world. The groups have limited resources, a production team, a customer, a job to do, and competitors. These kinds of assignments are both fun and engaging.

There are also games that can be played in one class in order to create a simulation of a business world. A game called Crimson Greetings is a game to bring fun to all kinds of learning (Broughton, 2009). The entire class is divided into two universes, in which six or seven teams of around ten students competed in building and running a greeting card business. The goal is to run the most profitable business. The teams have to purchase supplies, manage inventory, design and manufacture the cards, decide on price, and then sell the cards in a series of timed sessions over the next two days. After each session, each universe gathered with a professor to measure, evaluate, and discuss its performance. The first task of the groups is assigning the roles. Each member of the group takes responsibility for purchasing, designing, producing, selling and distributing. Each group starts with a budget to buy the supplies from the professor. Purchasing person makes a bargain with the professor to buy supplies for a lower cost. Then the design team tries to choose the best card designed which is

marketable to the customer and produced easily. After deciding the design, the group tries to produce cards in shortest time with minimum scrap. Besides they follow up the production productivity of the group. Finally professor as the customer of greeting cards examine the produced greeting cards and decide on the supplier.

In this game, in the classroom environment students become business people; they buy, produce and sell products. They experience the consequences of their decisions and learn to think as an entrepreneur. They discover the significance of negotiation; customer focused design, the budget management, time management, teamwork and so on. They also find out the problems of being a team and realize that how difficult is to make a collaborative decision.

At Stanford University, there is an entrepreneurship class "The Lean Launch Pad" that provides a real world, hands-on learning on what it's like to transfer successfully the knowledge into products and processes that benefits society. The course is not about how to write a research paper, business plan or NSF (National Science Foundation) grant. It's not an exercise on how smart students are in a lab or a classroom, or how well students use the research library. The end result is not a paper to be published or PowerPoint slide deck. Instead the entire team is engaged with industry; talking to customers, partners and competitors, as the team encounters the chaos and uncertainty of transferring knowledge into products and processes that benefits society. In that course getting out of the lab/building is what the course is about. It's not about the lectures. Students work in teams learning how to turn their research and technology idea into a product, service or process that benefits society. Students learn how to use a business model to brainstorm each part of an enterprise and customer development to get out of the lab/building to see whether anyone other than them would want/use their product. Finally, they see how agile development can help them rapidly iterate their product to build something potential customers will use and buy. Each week is a new adventure as they test each part of their business model and then share the hard earned knowledge with the rest of the class. Working within their team they will encounter issues on how to build and work as a team and professors help them to understand how to build and manage the startup team.

In this course again the students do not take lectures or do traditional coursework. They rather think and act as the real entrepreneurs. They do the market research, develop a business model, and find partners, suppliers and financial resources. They meet to share and discuss what they experience in creating their own start-ups. It is a real world simulation with little risk of loss, because they do not allocate much of finance. The students use their creativity, communication skills, and business knowledge to start their businesses. At the same time, they have to solve real world problems in a team setting and they confront the problems of collaborative decision-making.

In business courses blogs are also used. At Chicago University, for the leadership classes a blog page is used. The students become the members of the blog page and can create entries and comment on the other's entries. Each student is required to create at least an entry three paragraphs long to the blog page of the course about his/her opinions on a class meeting and write two comments for the original entries. Each student should find something to say original about the class meeting or the required readings. Comments minimum one paragraph long are written for the entries created by other students. In every class meeting, the most interesting entry is shown in the class and the student is honored.

By this system, the students discuss the course content on the Internet. They do think and discuss about the course content not only in the classroom time, but also through out the week. They focus on the course content and think about it. If one student is not the first student who writes the first entry, he/she should think something different than the other students. In order

to write two comments, each student reads the entries of other students. A comment is positive or negative, so the students take their position for an argument.

In Turkey, at Yalova University and at Bursa Orhan Gazi University, Facebook page is used at business courses. They use one Facebook page for the course work. Most of the students have already Facebook accounts and they are used to it. If one student does not have Facebook account or does not want to open one, for the coursework he/she opens a temporary one. All of the discussions happen on the Facebook. Each student of one course joins at the discussions by his/her notebook, tablet or smartphone. The friendly structure of Facebook gives opportunity to share photographs, YouTube videos, word documents and Slideshare presentations.

The Facebook platform gives a chance to the students to know each other better, discussing the course content and sometimes meeting coordination information. The Facebook stays active after the coursework finishes by the way, classmates do not lose their connection, and continue to share new business ideas and development on the same page.

Again at Yalova University and Bursa Orhan Gazi University, in the entrepreneurship and innovation course, students are required to open an account and sell one product over the Internet. Each student should start with a budget of 50 US dollars and should gain to 250 US dollars until the end of the term. Each student is free to choose the product. It might be a handcraft item, an old item from their possessions, or an item recently bought. Each week they report by projecting the eBay screen, what they do for their product in the classroom. They start with the product idea, the pricing and explain what they do for the competition. They do promote the product in social media like Facebook or twitter. If one student can sell his/her product, they continue to the business until the end of the term. The student who reaches or passes over the 250 US dollars target deserves an A grade.

This system is more than the simulation, because the students definitely decide on a product, prepare an introduction of the commercial, determine a price and a shipment method. Besides the student should position the product by considering the competition. In addition eBay has some costly rules, so the students have to create the right composition to sell the product with the right cost. The students learn from each other, because each student's entrepreneurial attempt is discussed in the classroom.

Training evaluation is another important part of education that new developments shape. The smartphones and their applications are available to measure students' grasp of the curriculum, but also to determine the effectiveness of presenters, teachers and trainers. A well-written, compellingly presented survey or quiz at the end of a seminar or course, or even a pop quiz mid-way through can validate instructors' methodologies as well as quantify individual and collective retention of the material being taught. If a gap in the material is revealed, adjustments to the curriculum can be made. And this is very easy to do by a system based on smartphones and tablets. Traditional paper surveys and quizzes require too much time and effort. Papers should be distributed, collected, read and evaluated. These steps take hours of time. On the other hand, in the days between administering a paper survey or quiz and getting the results back, the course has forged ahead, sometimes widening the learning gap that could cause some learners to fall behind. There are companies like QuestionPro.com and SurveyAnyplace.com, which provide these kinds of services for universities and training companies.

Using mobile devices to evaluate training provides crucial feedback instantly. Creating quizzes that learners take by using their own smartphones and tablet computers gives educators and trainers an instant, automated way to determine if an important course topic has

been correctly understood or not. With clear, instant feedback, an instructor could literally re-address in the middle of a class the area the quiz revealed to be misunderstood by a majority of the class. Mobile surveys and quizzes also resolve the issue of the time and expense of having to print paper-based evaluations and having to grade them manually.

These are a few examples to provide a clue about the innovative approaches in business education. The examples are chosen to illustrate some different types of innovation in business education.

3 CLASSIFICATION OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

According to the above examples four different innovative approaches in business education can be figured out. These are:

- The Games
- Learning Business by The Real Life Experiences
- Social Media Supported Course Activities
- Mobile Device (Smartphone and Tablet) Supported Activities and Evaluations

Academics may prefer to use more games in classes in order to attract the attention of students. At the same time, these games may help to think, design, decide, and lead. The games in the group settings may also contribute team understanding. By the games certain functions of business become visible like purchasing, negotiating, producing, selling, meeting and so on.

Learning Business by the Real Life Experiences is also very innovative option for business education. Starting up a company helps student to confront real life problems and prepare the student to cope with these problems. Opening a business on the Internet also provides an opportunity for decision-making. In both versions of this method, the feedback comes from the market, in other words the market, not by the professor, does evaluation of the students. The students also learn from each other's business performance. Under the normal conditions there will be more than one business in a class and this will provide students an opportunity for observing other businesses.

Social Media Supported Course Activities are student-friendly. The social media is the indispensable part of new generations' life. So when the course work is implanted in social media, the students become easily engaged in the coursework. Not limited with the business education, the social media is useful for all kinds of university education. The limits of usage of social media are developing together with the media itself. The names of the available services are not important, because they can change in time. Today they are Facebook or Google+, but in the future the name of the service might be different; but they will be social media.

Mobile Device Supported Activities and Evaluations provide unlimited opportunities. Again the mobile devices are useful in all fields of university education. Students have mobile devices and smartphones. For every course, an application can be developed and students can use this application for the course work. They interact with the class and take quizzes or examinations. It is very easy to follow the progress of one student by the systems based on smartphones. The smartphones and tablets also remove the necessity to be in a building. Anywhere with the Internet connection, even a beach or the top of a mountain can turn into a classroom. Mobile devices will totally change the physical class understanding in future. Todays' mobile devices are smartphones, tablets and notebooks. Again the name of

technology is not important, it can change in time, and it might be iWatch or Google glass or something else. The important thing is the mobility of the device.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The methods used in business education have changed over the years due to the implementation of technology and the integration of advanced training models. The university professors can no longer teach students the way they themselves were taught.

In today's academic setting traditional way of teaching should leave its place to interactive learning based on games, real life situations, social media supported course activities and mobile device supported activity and evaluations.

Because of the change in perception and the diffusion of new technology, professors must engage students with more interactive classroom activities and cutting edge technology and move away from the obsolete methods of traditional academic education.

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