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Entrepreneurial Education in the MBA Programme of Wuhan University of Technology: A Case Analysis

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Wuhan University of Technology (WUT) is located in Wuhan, the largest city in Central China and a Chinese famous "River City".

The University has three main campuses, namely, the Mafanshan Campus, the Yujiatou Campus and the South Lake new Campus, with a total occupying land area of 267 hectares.
WUT was merged on May 27th 2000, from the former Wuhan University of Technology (established in 1948), Wuhan Transportation University (established in 1946) and Wuhan Automotive Polytechnic University (established in 1958).

WUT is one of the leading Chinese Universities accredited by the Ministry of Education and one of the universities constructed in priority by the "State 211 Project" for Chinese higher education institutions.
Currently, WUT has about 5,570 staff members, including 650 professors, 3 academicians of China Academy of Engineering and 3 academicians of China Academy of Science. The University owns 23 academic schools, 9 state key disciplines, 74 Doctoral programs, 135 Master's programs as well as 82 Bachelor's programs.

Besides, over 36,000 undergraduates, 16000 postgraduates (including Master and PhD students), and 327 international students are studying at WUT.
The aim of this paper is to describe the design and proposal introduction of a new MBA programme with entrepreneurship education at Wuhan University of Technology.

The paper is set out as follows:

First, the local and global importance of entrepreneurial education.
Second, a review of the extant literature provides support for the chosen curriculum.
Third, the choices of teaching and delivery strategies that support a contemporary approach to entrepreneurship education.
Finally, the outcomes will be considered with possible future amendments to the new entrepreneurship.
The growing literature on entrepreneurship education tends to argue that a different learning environment is required to support the study of entrepreneurship within a university setting (e.g. Gibb, 2002).

Basically, a teaching style that is action-oriented, encourages experiential learning, problem solving, project-based learning, creativity, and is supportive of peer evaluation.

It is believed that such a process best provides the mix of enterprising skills and behaviours akin to those required to create and manage a small enterprise.
* Students are looking for a style of business education that will provide them with the transferable skills needed to succeed in an increasingly divergent business environment. (Cooper et al., 2004)

* Students today are demanding integrated programmes that teach practical skills for starting and expanding business enterprises (Farrell, 1994).

* Entrepreneurial education emphasises imagination, creativity, and risk taking in business whereas traditional business schools tend to over-emphasise quantitative and corporate techniques at the expense of more creative skills (Porter, 1994).
Why Entrepreneurial Education is important (contd)

Entrepreneurship education at Wuhan University of Technology will provide and promote innovation in this university.

It consists of three key elements:
1. Strengthening student’s ability to generate ideas and undertake research
2. Accelerating the commercial application of these ideas
3. Developing and retaining skills.
Choosing a Curriculum

While what is taught about entrepreneurship in universities varies; there are areas of general agreement that entrepreneurship needs to be defined more broadly than business management because it includes creativity, risk taking, and innovation.

Entrepreneurial education can be viewed broadly in terms of the skills that can be taught and the characteristics that can be engendered in individuals that will enable them to develop new and innovative plans. It focuses on the expertise that is used to conceive of and commercialise a business opportunity.

The skills taught in traditional business education programmes are needed by entrepreneurs as well, but that curriculum generally addresses important functions of running a business rather than the elements of creating one.

As such, the nature of the contract between university and student is generally about knowledge and not personal development (Gibb, 2002)
Taking from the literature and a survey of 128 university entrepreneurship programmes worldwide by Vesper and Gartner (2001), the objectives illustrated in Table I are adopted as the basis for building a curriculum structure of the design and proposal introduction of a new MBA programme with entrepreneurship education at Wuhan University of Technology.

The following step is to determine the best way in which to package a curriculum structure programme to achieve maximum penetration at minimum cost.
* Choosing a Curriculum (contd)

* The proposal of the new MBA programme with entrepreneurship education at Wuhan University of Technology is a full-time 24-unit degree over three years.

* The first year consists of six compulsory core units plus two nominated elective units that lead into the various majors. Students then go on to complete an eight-unit sequence in one of the majors.

* The remaining eight units may be taken as electives, but most students use them to complete a second major.
*Choosing a Curriculum (contd)*

*The following curriculum structure presented in Table II is adopted for the major in Entrepreneurship incorporating the objectives previously identified.*

*Therefore, only four new units were required to mount the Entrepreneurship major. The first two units are offered in Year 2 based on the personal development objectives, and the second two units are offered in Year 3 based the enterprise development objectives.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>* New units</td>
<td>Organisational Behaviour</td>
<td>Business Logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foundations of Entrepreneurship*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurship and Innovation*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>Project Evaluation and Planning*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Principles of Marketing</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship and Creativity*</td>
<td>Strategic Management, or Electronic Marketing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II Course structure of the entrepreneurship major
* Choosing a Curriculum (contd)

* **Foundations of Entrepreneurship unit** provides an introduction that focuses on the nature of entrepreneurship and its role in business.

* **Entrepreneurship and Creativity unit** covers a range of creative problem-solving methods including problem definition techniques, idea generation methods, and the evaluation and implementation of creative ideas.

* **Entrepreneurship and Innovation unit** concentrates firmly on the process of commercialisation using the resource-based view of entrepreneurship.

* **The Project Evaluation and Planning unit** is a project-based capstone unit for the Entrepreneurship major.
Choosing a Teaching and Delivery Strategy

* The process associated with delivering the four new units outlined above, the teaching strategy still discussed.

* Inasmuch as there is no unified theory of entrepreneurship, the first step in developing a teaching strategy is to try to identify a conceptual framework.

* Why not teach students to think like entrepreneurs by designing a teaching strategy based on the entrepreneurial process itself?

* It is essential to have established a conceptual framework for studying entrepreneurship; afterwards the next step is to design a matching delivery programme.

* The delivery programme is based on a model called student-centred learning in which students have a great deal of autonomy over how they learn, when they learn and where they learn.
* Choosing a Teaching and Delivery Strategy (contd)

* It includes collaborative activities, goal-driven tasks, intellectual discovery, activities that heighten thinking and activities that provide practice in learning skills.

* The main objective is to create an environment in which students are encouraged to engage actively with the entrepreneurial process rather than simply read about it.

* It is the needs of the learner that ultimately shapes the nature of the delivery process.

* The delivery process that enables the students’ personal development inline with the future requirements needed to start and run a small enterprise.
* Preliminary Assessment of Outcomes to Date

* The University experience so far reinforces its commitment to this style of teaching because it positively shapes the students’ belief in their ability to take control of the future.

* There are, however, specific issues relating to the desired outcomes of the programme that need further consideration.

* The transformation to student-centred, active, group based learning from traditional, lecturer-centred, passive learning call for a dramatic and sometimes uncomfortable shift in the approach to teaching and learning.

* Perhaps, this initial uncomfortableness will appear and it will share equally by both lecturers and students.

* However, beyond this period of role adjustment, both the lecturing team and students appear excited and enthusiastic about participation in the proposal of the new MBA programme with entrepreneurship education at Wuhan University of Technology.
Conclusion

Entrepreneurial education is a teaching style that is action-oriented, supportive of experiential learning, problem-solving, project-based, creative, and involves peer evaluation. For sure, the results will reinforce the University commitment to this style of teaching.

However, just as entrepreneurship is not easily defined, neither are the motivations and expectations of students enrolling in the proposal of the new Entrepreneurship Major.

Given that popularity of the proposal of the entrepreneurship at the MBA programme at Wuhan University of Technology is likely to increase, the challenge remains deliver a programme that is relevant to differing needs of students.
**Conclusion (contd)**

*I believe we are at a point in time when the gap between what can be imagined and what can be accomplished has never been smaller.*

*We must remember that “tomorrow belongs to those who have vision today! It is our time, it is our vision, it is our leadership role.*

*As John F. Kennedy once said, “It is time for a new generation of leadership to cope with new problems and opportunities. For there is a new world to be won.”*
Thank you for your kind attention