



AIMING FOR THE ENTREPRENEURIAL UNIVERSITY: ORCHESTRATING INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH THROUGH A BOOK PROJECT

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Abstract

This paper offers insights into the process of knowledge co-creation, as well as reflections on how the actions undertaken by the implied parties added to their goal of becoming more entrepreneurial universities. The purpose of the reported research is to guide others that set forth to orchestrate capacity building by allowing co-operating universities to co-create new knowledge and publish it in the form of an anthology. The main purpose of the undertaken activities was to build capacity on how to understand and enact entrepreneurship. For a university to become entrepreneurial, it must acquire the kind of internal organization that allows it to be in a state of continuous change and adaptiveness, and that allows its members to become more effective. How one could carry this through into realization is still debated. This research also helps toward a deeper understanding on how universities could foster a sustained steady state of change by displaying a case from Norway and Sri Lanka where universities co-create knowledge in order to stay competitive. The conclusions and suggestion are derived through a case study methodology with elements of action research. During the reported process the project experienced meta-learning as it also gained capacity on how to create learning capacities. While arranging for this co-creation of knowledge we were able to reflect on how knowledge could be created and orchestrated in the intersection between two spatially different located universities. This research then also provides insight on how to co-create such capacities.

Keywords: Creating Knowledge; Co-Creation of Knowledge; Collaboration; Entrepreneurial University

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship education has to fit to the cultural and industry context in order to be useful for the graduate and the society (Hytti, 2008). The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor research project clearly indicates that different institutional structures influence entrepreneurial differently across countries and that this results in different kinds of entrepreneurial activities (Bosma et al., 2009). All too often are entrepreneurship education programs or syllabuses copied from a successful university without regard to the context of the copying or the copied university. In the search for educational programs serving the students need for entrepreneurship skills and the societies need for entrepreneurs, universities look for best practice in entrepreneurship education at other universities to copy from.

The paper is an example of co-creation of knowledge related to entrepreneurship. Co-creation is a cooperative, inter-organizational relationship that evolves in an ongoing communication process. As the universities involved

discussion and negotiation between the researchers and the other participators leading to unforeseen actions and conclusions (Andersen, Boud and Cohen, 2000).

Inductively oriented knowledge by participatory action research implies reflections on the actions undertaken. A high degree of orderliness is required in preparing for and ensuring completeness and purposefulness in these reflections, while holding on to and purify the emerging research content of each episode of action and involvement (Eden and Huxham, 1996). The reflection undertaken and presented by the involved researcher then has to be made evident for the reader in order to make the analysis convincing. These reflections have to relate to the problem solving method applied and to the research method used as well as on the findings or conclusions of the study.

A case study provides opportunities to explore and richly describe the existence of a phenomenon (Siggelkow, 2007). Data was collected through document studies, participatory observation, conversation and interviews while facilitating the process leading to the creation of the anthology. The data elements have been analysed using an interpretive approach guided by the propositions developed in the theoretical section in the paper (Yin, 2003). The internal validity of the conclusions is strengthened by pattern matching in comparing the empirically based pattern with the theoretically predicted one (Trochim, 1989) in a search for alternative explanations.

6. The Case: The Emerging of the Anthology

The anthology project started when UoN and UoR arranged a weeklong visit from UoN to UoR in Ruhuna in Sri Lanka. The visit included meeting at institutional level in Ruhuna in March 2009 where the details in the anthology project were discerned. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen the ties between the two institutions and the individuals representing the institutions. Human capital theory prescribes face-to-face meetings as a mean for strengthening human ties (Granovetter, 1973). The heads of the two institutions addressed the staff in mass meetings informing about the possibilities this project represent for the staff. A week later, an e-mail explaining the project and how to participate in it, was sent to all staff members in suitable faculties at UoR. The e-mail referred to the visit and presented project, asked for a brief abstract, approximately 3 pages, on their suggested research, delivered before 10th May 2009. The e-mail promised that we would find a Norwegian co-author for each paper. The first meeting then established the project, set forth a timetable and invited the staff members to participate. The editor of the anthology then invited staff at UiN to participate as co-authors on the suggested papers. This was done by e-mails, as information at mass meetings and as personal invitations.

The research reported in the anthology was supposed to be joint research between staff at UoR and UoN. As a result of this, most of the papers both have a Norwegian and a Sri Lankan author. We wanted the anthology to be more than another collection of single authored work on a given topic; we wanted the anthology to be a vehicle for communication and capacity building. When working together on this research, the Norwegians were invited to know more about the Sri Lankan context regarding their professional interest. Implementing action based research upon a theoretical understanding of a matter then needs an understanding of how the local context influences the outcomes of the action (Das et al., 2009). The Norwegian gain knowledge on the Sri Lankan context and insights on the usability on theories usually applied in their profession. The Sri Lankan built capacity to do research in their field of professional interest. The research was initiated and propelled by the Sri Lankan counterpart, while the Norwegian counterpart assisted and adjusted the progress ensuring the research quality. Such a methodology allowed the Sri Lankan counterpart to reflect upon the contributions and suggestions made by their Norwegian counterpart. Learning needs action, feedback and reflections (Dewey, 1916). The structure for collaboration outlined in the anthology project allowed for self initiated action, relevant and timely feedback and

it also provided room for reflections and thus learning on how to do research and report it in the format of a paper. Besides contributing towards skills in research and paper writing, the research anthology project also aimed for creating knowledge useful in the university classroom. A university teacher capable of doing his or her own research, is also more capable of judging the quality and contribution of others research. This implies that their teaching also becomes of higher quality. The involved university teachers are then better able to base their teaching on their own and others research relevant for their teaching.

The next milestone in the project was a weeklong workshop at UoR in October 2009. The purpose of the second workshop was to ensure knowledge on how to structure a paper, how to do insightful qualitative research, how to analyze qualitative data, how to write a paper and how reviewers read papers. Lectures were delivered on research methodology, research publication and the review process. There were also discussions on how to understand and respond to the comments from the Norwegian counterpart. Time was also set aside within the workshop for providing comments on how the received three-page abstracts could be developed into full fledged papers. The suggested Norwegian co-writer had commented on the submitted abstracts. The comment consisted on suggestions for how to formulate the research problem, further readings on how to understand and investigate the phenomena, and suggestions on methods to address the problem. These comments were then delivered orally and later on in writing at the presentation by the attending Norwegian professors. The Norwegian delegation consisted of four persons, two professors focusing on the qualitative research methodology, and two focusing on the paper writing process.

The Sri Lankan staff members engaged in the anthology project had at this point of time been provided suggestions and comments on their research. The next step was now to prepare a full length version of their paper (around 5-6000 words) by January 2010. Their counterpart in Norway was to review and comment on the full length paper. The communication regarding the papers was now directly between the Sri Lankan and the Norwegian counterparts. We then arranged a workshop at UoR in March 2010 enabling the Norwegian and the Sri Lankan counterpart to meet face to face and discuss their joint paper. This workshop also lasted a week. The Norwegian delegation was then 9 academics co-authoring the 30 papers scheduled to be discussed at the workshop. The authors were initially given some time to discuss their paper and adjust their presentations. Each paper presentation lasted 30 minutes, allowing a deep discussion on the actualization of the research topic, the theoretical approach to describing how the different element of the problem related to each other, the methodology to use in investigating it, how to analyse the data and which implications to draw from the study. The workshop in Ruhuna in March 2010 then allowed deeper discussions on how to develop the paper.

From this point, there was a joint authorship of the papers. Both the Sri Lankan and the Norwegian counterpart were responsible for developing this paper up to the standards of the anthology. The authors were provided a template for the papers, describing both content and layout as well as how to arrange the references. To further enhance capacity building among the participants, we arranged for several review circles on the full papers. The participants were urged to review two or three of the papers they were not involved in as authors. This ensured feedback on how to improve the paper, both regarding the suitable theoretical framework and the practical Sri Lankan implications of the findings. When the paper was accepted by the internal cohort of reviewers, the paper was then examined by reviewers external to the two institutions and to the project to ensure objectivity and rigorousness.

7. Budget and Incentives

The anthology project created incentives both at institutional level and at the individual level. The incentive for SIU was the human capital capacity built in Sri Lanka regarding research and education. The two universities were interested in the project because of its potential to deliver needed knowledge on conditions for doing business in Europe and Asia respectively. The new gained knowledge would inform and improve their education and teaching of their students. The staff at UoN and UoR also needed to be motivated toward this effort. To ensure incentives for the scientific staff at UoR a monetary incentive was put in place. A publication in the anthology was honoured by an equivalent of 400 € pr chapter. This award was shared among the Ruhuna staff that authored the chapter. This amounts equal to 1- 1 ½ month's salary. This was then in addition to the increase in personal intellectual capital as increased ability to write scientific papers, their increase in knowledge about the subject studied and their increase in reputation as a skilled academic publishing papers. The available budget was not sufficient to support any monetary incentives for the Norwegian co-authors. As engaging in writing papers together with a partner presumed not as skilled as oneself, usually involves more work than writing together with someone more skilled, we decided to add a small incentive for the Norwegians as well. The book project was in need for at least one physical meeting in order to strengthen the ties between the actors. The trip to Sri Lanka in March 2010 then became the affordable incentive for the Norwegian co-authors. When recruiting Norwegian co-authors we also emphasized the gain in intellectual capital this Norwegian-Sri Lankan research represented.

The costs associated with creating the knowledge recorded in the anthology included travel and accommodation for 3 workshops in Sri Lanka. There were 16 persons travelling that had to be accommodated for a week each, the costs also included local arrangements by the hosts, the publication reward to the Sri Lankan authors, and the cost of preparing the anthology. In addition to this, there is all the time devoted by the administration and the scientific staff at both the universities involved in arranging the workshops and conducting and reporting the research.

8. Success and Limitations

The anthology project has provided great opportunities for building relationships between young researchers, its deliveries is within time and budget restrictions and the stakeholders expectations are fulfilled. The research has provided new insights that will inform education, policymakers as well as it will improve practice among future businessmen. Even so, everything can be improved; this section provides some suggestions for improvements in processes where research institutions seek to elaborate on each other's competences and build further knowledge.

By addressing young staff we can expect the built capacity to last longer. On the other hand, engaging more experienced academics would perhaps provide deeper insights that would have a stronger impact on the educational and research trajectory of the involved universities. Incentives engaging also older staff need to be implemented in future co-operating projects in order to reap the full potential of such a project. Older and more experienced staff usually holds more influential positions at the university; hence they are able to allocate additional resources as attention, time and money to the project. The staff at UoR involved in the anthology project is mostly young staff, holding a MSc or an equivalent to this, they have a temporary position, and their assignments is mostly related to teaching. The incentive for the Sri Lankan authors includes a monetary publishing reward in addition to the gained knowledge and reputation. The monetary reward is to be paid when the anthology is published. The many requests for additional time when deadlines were due indicated that they were heavily engaged in giving lectures at their home university, allowing them to allocate little time for the writing project. If they find it hard to secure an income by their ordinary work, then the publishing reward should

be an incentive. On the other hand, the reward might have been seen far ahead in time, while the work of writing the paper an immediate action. Maybe some valued the immediate smaller secure reward now from giving lectures higher than the unsecure bigger reward coming at a much later point in time. A suggestion stemming from this insight could be to give some part of a publication reward at the point of handing in the abstract, another piece when the full paper was submitted and the main part at the date of publication. The Norwegian participators were younger staff holding a PhD. The incentive for the Norwegian could also be improved. Travelling to exotic Sri Lanka was interesting for a young academic, while an older and more experienced researcher would maybe regard travelling as a burden. This implies that the incentive scheme set up for the Norwegians attracted younger staff not as experienced as some of the older professors reluctant to participate.

One area for improvements that would show itself in enhanced research quality is stretching the process allowing more time for the participants to progress on the activities needed for doing research. The Sri Lankan co-authors was in charge of the writing process at the beginning, and there have been numerous excuses and requests for postponing time limits for handing in abstracts, papers and revised papers. This could be due to them being inexperienced in the academic style of paper writing. One remedy could be to arrange for another physical meeting between the co-authors from Sri Lanka and Norway. Maybe this meeting could be arranged as a scientific conference where also other researchers than those engaged in the project was invited to attend and present their work. The benefit of another forceful checkpoint regarding progress would then be weighed against the financial cost of arranging such a meeting. Attention from Deans, Rectors or Vice Chancellors is a signal of the importance for the institutions of the project. Such attention has been important in securing the project. These authorities were present at all the meetings and workshops. As the purpose of the workshops was to build relationships between the authors and commitment toward the paper writing process, we intentionally made the workshop programs for one week each. The first meeting established common grounds for the book project. The second meeting was a workshop where the research ideas were discussed in relation to how to do research and how to report in a paper format. The last workshop allowed the co-authors to meet in person and discuss details regarding their common work. The face-to-face meeting boosted the collaborative writing process. In order to facilitate rich communication and cooperation on the paper, we arranged the last workshops outside of the university campus area. This was a deliberate design; we wanted to maximize the attention toward the workshop among all participants. Spending time together builds ties. The budget did not allow us to take all the participants away from home to another location. We then arranged half of the second workshop at the university campus. We arranged for long lunches and dinners close to the campus where the co-authors could mingle and talk. The second half of the workshop we stayed at the tourist hotel where the Norwegians lodged. There we arranged beach parties and cricket games in between the academic sessions. We also arranged so that the Norwegians and the Sri Lankans performed folk tunes for each other. All this made it fun to work together and it took away the edge of distance between the co-authors.

9. Reflections and Advices

The theoretical framework and the data indicate that in order to orchestrate collaborative learning one needs empowered actors striving to reach a common goal. This is a project where independent organizations join forces on a common project. We see that establishing common goals and communicating these to the actors increases their willingness to invest time and effort in the project. As the organizations are universities and the individual actors are scientific staff, publishing research is one of the measures of personal success. Hence we see that the goals of the project align with the goals of the individuals and there is a good fit between the individuals own personal goals and the goals of the work activity. The project tried to offer means of increasing the individual felt

competence in performing the task of writing a scientific paper. Lectures on scientific methods, paper writing, and responding to reviewers were offered along with co-writing together with more skilled academic writers. As the basic research idea stemmed from the Sri Lankan counterpart, they were given a high degree of self-determination. They were able to determine for themselves if they wanted to contribute, define the topic and could decide on how they wanted the paper to progress. As the Norwegian engaged in the paper, the Sri Lankan lost some impact power. The Norwegians had to bring the theory to the table, and had to secure the scientific accuracy and format to the paper. This was intentionally; we wanted the Sri Lankan to learn by riding along on this part. On the basis of the discussion on collaboration, empowerment and orchestrating related to knowledge creation along with the empirical data presented, the following proposition is stated:

Proposition 1: In order to orchestrate collaborative learning one needs empowered actors striving to reach a preset goal.

We are also able to present some advices derived from the process of creating the knowledge materialized in the anthology. The reflections and advices relates to the process of orchestrating independent actors toward generating new knowledge. The co-authors have to meet face to face. In order for the Norwegians to give good advices on which theory that would explain and predict (Bacharach, 1989) a given phenomena, they need to get a good grip of the context where the theory is to be applied. This they get from experiencing Sri Lanka first handed and from deep discussions with their Sri Lankan co-authors. In order for the Sri Lankan to make full use of the advices, there has to be some interaction between the co-authors. This interaction strongly benefits from a rich communication, and rich communication is best facilitated in face to face settings. The content for the discussions would then be how to improve the paper. Arranging two physical meetings between the Sri Lankan and the Norwegian co-authors would have ensured some additional opportunities for interaction between the authors.

Management involvement is crucial. In order to get this involvement and dedication from university leaders, a mutual understanding has to be reached on the goals, means and timelines of the activities of the project. We documented the agreement in a contract describing which party that was to take what action in which timeline. Such a project needs to be allocated sufficient resources. The resources needed are both monetary and related to knowledge. The present project would have benefitted from a budget that allowed two face to face meetings between the authors. Likewise, the project would have benefitted from an engagement from senior professors from both the universities. Finding and persuading reviewers are not always an easy task. The dedication from the university leaders helped in keeping the project members attention on the joint effort: doing good research and summing it up in a paper for the anthology. The incentive system could be adjusted in a way that kept the income more timely aligned with the effort. On the basis of these reflections, another proposition is stated:

Proposition 2: In order to achieve efficient processes in orchestrate collaborative learning one needs management attention, physical meetings, sufficient time allocated, infrastructure arrangements and engage experienced researchers.

It is also necessary to stress the importance of sound methodology and research design. Some of the rejected work is rejected because the writers did not allow their Norwegian co-authors to interfere on how to gather data and which data that needed to be gathered. One another advice to the co-authors of future joint programs would be to not postpone work; it could end up not being done! Acknowledge the importance of complying with the deadlines! An advice for the orchestrator of such a program is to allow time for reflections among the co-authors.

It is action and interaction that brings the actor upwards the learning ladder (Krathwohl, 2002). The best advice is that of doing it fun for all the parties involved. Fun is maybe the best engine for having work done.

Acknowledgement: The author would like to thank Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) for financing the project that made this research possible.

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