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Teaching together in entrepreneurship education: live case method

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Abstract

Case method is widely used in business and entrepreneurship education. Different from the traditional textbook cases that are based on an analysis of history, live case method is receiving increased attention. We suggest that venture creation courses are a form of live case method where students can learn from their own venture creation processes. As extant entrepreneurship education research has mainly focused on students' perspectives, we address the omission of sharing entrepreneurship educators' perspectives by focusing on team teaching in a live case situation. Team teaching has not been previously addressed in entrepreneurship education research despite several benefits it can bring. This chapter presents benefits and challenges of interactive team teaching based on the literature and interviews with team teachers in a Finnish start-up course. The chapter targets entrepreneurship educators and scholars interested in and/or encouraged towards team teaching in higher education. We provide concrete advice for educators on how to enhance team teaching.

Keywords: team teaching, live case method, start-up, higher education, entrepreneurship education

Introduction

The working environment for entrepreneurship educators in higher education is challenging as educators are asked to maintain an experiential, entrepreneurial climate (Solomon, 2007) and simultaneously to work with heterogenous students from multidisciplinary backgrounds (Huang-Saad et al., 2020; Pardede, 2015). Live cases in particular represent the challenge of addressing and working with real problems in real time. Team teaching is seen as an effective way to alleviate related challenges. It is a situation where two or more instructors collaborate to design, implement, and evaluate a certain course or courses (see Anderson & Speck, 1998), and it has become a common practice in entrepreneurship education. However, it is still presented as an innovative method which differentiates from 'standard practice' involving one teacher responsible for a particular course or module (Carpenter et al., 2007; Minett-Smith & Davis, 2020; Murata, 2002). The interest and push towards team teaching in several disciplines in higher education reflects an increasing strong,

multidisciplinary demand for effective learning and cooperation across higher education institutions (HEIs) in multiple locations (Minett-Smith & Davis, 2020).

Previous research has shown that team teaching brings several benefits. For educators, team teaching can provide increased emotional and professional support and learning, and decreased workload (Baeten & Simons, 2014; Helms et al., 2005). Challenges are related to compatibility issues of team teachers, power relations, and increased workload among others (Anderson & Speck, 1998; Helms et al., 2005). For students, team teaching increases the amount of support and provides better learning outcomes (Baeten & Simons, 2014). Particularly in entrepreneurship education, team teaching can help students to deal with uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity included in education (Etivick et al., 2003; Kindle, 2007; Richardson & Hynes, 2008). This is particularly pertinent when using live case method. Further, team teaching is an opportunity for students to observe teamwork and decision-making in working life (Helms et al., 2005). Unfortunately, team teaching in entrepreneurship education has remained largely unaddressed by scholars. In all, we should know more about educators' perspectives on teaching and learning (Hannon, 2018; Neck & Corbett, 2018) and establish practices to share the know-how and educational experiences of entrepreneurship educators (Dominik & Banerji, 2019; Lee et al., 2018).

We address these needs by presenting a conceptual narrative of the benefits and challenges of interactive team teaching when applying live case method in higher education. We ask, 'What are the benefits and challenges of interactive team teaching when applying live case method in entrepreneurship education?' This chapter proceeds as follows. First, we discuss our foundations, a live case of a Finnish higher education start-up course that has been organized in collaboration with educators from multiple HEIs. After that, we present the pedagogical development approach—team teaching setting. Consequently, benefits and challenges of team teaching are discussed with empirical illustrations of experiences from two team teachers, Johnny and Danny. We conclude by suggesting good practices for enhancing team teaching and avoiding pitfalls. The chapter targets particularly entrepreneurship educators and scholars interested in and/or encouraged towards team teaching when live case method is applied in higher education.

Foundations: Start-up Course as Live Case

Case method is often applied in business education as it effectively builds capacity for critical thinking and allows students to experience problems that organizations face (Lincoln, 2006) by making learning fun (Bruner et al.,1999). Traditional case method—that is, textbook case method—is often applied in a way that students go through the case material and then the material is discussed jointly in class and/or written analysis is conducted. However,

traditional case method has multiple constraints. Students might experience motivational issues to solve someone else's problem by looking through an unclear rear-view mirror (Lincoln, 2006). Moreover, dated and/or disguised cases do not appeal to students. To provide meaningful learning experiences, students should be able to work in real time with real problems, information, and individuals (Lincoln, 2006). As a form of experiential learning, live case method allows students to work on an actual business issue and become immersed in a real organizational environment (Culpin & Scott, 2012; Gentry, 1990). Traditionally, live cases involve an entrepreneur coming to class, presenting a real problem, and solving it jointly with the students in real time (Rashford & de Figueiredo, 2011), or students conduct a project for an organization (Elam & Spotts, 2004; Lincoln, 2006). We suggest that venture creation courses provide a unique setting for applying live case method (see Binks et al., 2006). In these courses, students experience entrepreneurship themselves (see Lincoln 2006; Rasmussen & Sørheim, 2006). They have a unique opportunity to solve their own problems, instead of solving the problems of others, and to be responsible for the decisions made.

This book chapter presents a live case from a start-up course, where the students set up businesses that operate in real markets. The method allows the students to learn by solving problems they face in their own start-ups. The bachelor-level course is organized jointly between three HEIs comprising a scientific university and two universities of applied sciences. The educators-represent all the participating institutions. The non-compulsory course is part of a national Junior Achievement Young Enterprise programme. The learning outcomes focus on supporting and providing students with hands-on entrepreneurship experience in ideation, validation, launching, and running a new business venture in multidisciplinary teams. During the course, the students also train their innovation, teamwork, project management, and communication skills. This 10 ECTS graded intervention takes place over 18 weeks. In all, the intervention follows a common format in venture creation courses (see Rasmussen & Sørheim, 2006).

In the course, students participate in exercises, assisting the start-up process. The exercises comprise different kinds of activities such as idea generation and testing, business model generation and validation, and pitching and marketing the idea. The solutions and their outcomes are decided by the students, and the related learning experiences and solutions are discussed and pondered jointly in the meetings. The meeting themes are presented in Appendix Table 1.

Pedagogical Development Approach: Team Teaching

The live case method relies solely on team teaching, and its benefits and challenges are illustrated in this book chapter by discussing benefits and challenges from the literature and offering empirical insights from interviews with two of the educators, Johnny and Danny, who were willing to share their experiences of running the course with the live case method in Finland. They were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. They were selected on the grounds of their availability and willingness to participate, as well as their authority in running this well-known course. The interviews encompassed the informants' backgrounds, their descriptions of the live case/course, and their related experiences in teaching. Johnny and Danny were interviewed separately in their native language by one of the authors of this chapter. The interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes, and each was recorded and transcribed. After that, the discussed benefits and challenges of team teaching were analysed deductively.

In practice, team teaching can be organized in multiple ways: interactively, participatory, or in parallel (see White et al., 1998). In interactive team teaching, teachers are actively present in class at the same time, and all contribute to the teaching. In participatory team teaching, all participate, but each teacher presents the material independently with little or no intervention from others. In parallel team teaching, each educator teaches only those sessions assigned to them. In this course, the format is interactive team teaching. Interactive team teaching brings the most benefits for the students but, at the same time, it is the most complex form of team teaching as the educators share the same teaching space and are required to interact and be in dialogue with each other (see White et al., 1998).

Johnny had been involved in the course for 5 years. He had worked as an entrepreneurship researcher for the past 15 years, but the course was one of his very first teaching experiences. Johnny said that it was 'a pure accident' that he was running this course. He had noticed the existence of this increasingly popular course, and when the previous course educator suggested rotation, he was ready to step in with his colleague. Johnny remembered that it was very exciting to start as an educator in the course. He had no pedagogical training or qualifications to back his work. Danny, on the other hand, was a new educator in the course. Danny had worked as a lecturer in the field of art for the past 11 years at a university of applied sciences and thus possessed extensive teaching experience. Danny had been involved in some entrepreneurship activities at his institution and thus considered himself a natural choice to run the course. He had completed pedagogical qualifications. Therefore, in theory, Johnny and Danny complemented each other nicely as they had differing experiences, and complementary expert areas as they came from different disciplines, but entrepreneurship seemed to be an interest for both (see Letterman & Dugan,

2004). In addition, as they came from different institutions, they benefited from access to diverse types of expertise and resources in their contexts and networks (see Crawford & Jenkins, 2018).

Description of Teaching Moments: Identified Team Teaching Benefits and Challenges Benefits of team teaching

At the institutional level, team teaching might be a way to manage and optimize teaching resources (Buckley, 1999). Indeed, Johnny mentioned that the starting point of team teaching was the idea that every involved HEI also gave teaching resources to support the course. Hereby, team teaching is about fair use of resources. Yet for Johnny and teachers in general, this may not be a very important benefit. Baeten and Simons (2014) found that the key benefits for the educators were increased emotional and professional support, possibility for dialogue, professional growth, and personal growth. In line with this, Johnny said that for him, it was very inspiring and rewarding to work with colleagues from other disciplines and HEIs. Particularly at the beginning of the course, he felt energized because of his colleagues. Further, Davis (1995) suggested that team teaching is a response to the isolation that many academics experience.

For novice educators, team teaching may provide possibilities for decreased workload, learning gains, and increased collaboration (Baeten & Simons, 2014). This was the case for Danny. He admitted that in the beginning, his key motivation to join the teaching team was learning: 'I wanted to learn how to run this type of an entrepreneurship course'. Further, he said that it was such a relief to be able to rely on others' expertise as a new educator. His coping strategy was to follow Johnny's 'footsteps' whenever possible. Concretely, this meant that he let Johnny take decisions regarding what happened in the course and copied his practices. Johnny also said that when he was a novice in this course, he relied on his more seasoned team teachers: 'For the first year, I considered myself more as a course assistant than as an educator. I did minor tasks here and there, but was more focused on observation and learning.'

In the beginning, the novice educator Danny was not familiar or comfortable with the pedagogical approach (Shibley, 2006). Johnny encouraged the student teams to find their own unique way of doing, 'to find their own path' as he said. This means that the educators only roughly structured the course and each meeting around the day's theme. For Danny, this came as 'a shock'. This approach was new to him as he was used to careful planning. However, Danny acknowledged that the benefit of this approach was that it brought students closer to the practice of entrepreneurship by providing a real-life entrepreneurial experience,

particularly important when applying a live case. Danny asserted that, for him, adaptation required 'throwing myself into the process, similar to the students'.

Danny explained that participating in the team teaching had been a beneficial experience as it changed his whole attitude towards entrepreneurship. In the beginning, he had a narrow idea that the students joined the course to become entrepreneurs, informed by his background in the arts. However, when he had the opportunity to observe the students and discuss with other educators, he started thinking that the course, and entrepreneurship education in general, produced a vast amount of working life skills which were important despite career choice.

Challenges of team teaching

Besides benefits, team teaching can have disadvantages both for educators and students. We identify challenges, particularly in the middle and at the end of the course. Letterman and Dugan (2004) discussed that conflicts among teaching team members can arise if roles and responsibilities of the educators are unclear or not agreed upon by all the educators. According to the interviewees, that the course relied on live case method seemed to rest on the shoulders of the more experienced educators, including Johnny. In addition, newcomer Danny felt that he was 'a bit lost'. However, because of the power relations, he felt neither allowed nor able to intervene too extensively to the course (see Minett-Smith & Davis, 2020). Concretely, this meant that Johnny decided everything.

Scholars recognize that a lack of compatibility challenges team teaching (Anderson & Speck, 1998; Baeten & Simons, 2014). According to Anderson and Speck (1998), educators' compatibility does not refer to conformity of teaching styles but how these teaching styles fit together and whether educators share the same vision. Regarding pedagogical differences, Danny brought up the role of planning: he would have been happy if there was more planning. Now, the structure, content, and goal were not crystal clear to him, making it difficult for him to contribute in the best way possible. It might be that time was not spent on planning as everything was clear to Johnny, who did not realize the need from the perspective of Danny. Moreover, as Johnny and Danny were used to different pedagogical approaches, particularly Danny was thinking that whether he needed to compromise too much: 'Team teaching is about compromising. As there are many educators involved, there is a need to find an acceptable solution for all. However, this acceptable solution rarely is an optimal solution for anyone. This is even emphasized in this course where we [the educators] come from different disciplines and institutions. This [compromising] can even hinder student learning, I think'.

Davis (1995) discussed that by engaging in team teaching, teachers lose their individual autonomy and control: an educator must rely on their co-educator contributing as agreed. Johnny explained that every year, he became frustrated with his co-educators, which decreased his energy levels. He felt that not all in the team were equally invested in developing and contributing. He discussed that communication was key to mutual trust, fair work distribution, and solving conflicts. Johnny admitted that he had been unsuccessful in communication himself and felt there was room for improvement. He said that in team teaching, it was easy to lose your nerve if there were tensions bubbling under the surface regarding, for instance, work distribution or pedagogical ideas. He admitted, 'For couple of times I have been thinking that whether I have gone too far in "my sayings" and lost professional relationships with my co-educators'.

Discussion

The venture creation course is a unique form of live case method, as entrepreneurship students can solve issues that concern their own ventures instead of solving problems for others. This highlights the role of uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity included in entrepreneurship education (see Etivick et al., 2003). Luckily, team teaching can reduce these issues as educators from different fields with diverse expertise can mentor and guide students in their decisions. The aim of this book chapter is to discuss benefits and challenges of interactive team teaching when applying live case method from the educator's perspective (Hannon, 2018; Neck & Corbett, 2018). Given the potential benefits but complex challenges involved in team teaching, it is important to share and develop our expertise in this domain (Dominik & Banerji, 2019; Lee et al., 2018). All identified benefits and challenges of interactive team teaching live case method in entrepreneurship education are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Benefits and challenges of interactive team teaching

Benefits for the educators

- Possibility for increased inspiration and motivation when working with new people
- Reduced isolation
- Decreased workload
- Learning gains; easier to run an intervention and try out new methods for the first time when a more seasoned educator is on board
- Dare to try out new things and move out of the comfort zone

Challenges for the educators

- Unbalanced responsibilities and roles
- Unclear responsibilities and roles
- Freeriding
- Confronting pedagogical approaches; compromising
- Conflicts; disappointment

We learned that, particularly in the beginning, team teaching can provide enthusiasm and reduce educators' feelings of isolation. This is amplified by Letterman and Dugan (2004) who discussed that team teaching can contribute to diversity among educators who come from different ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds, as well as from different disciplines. This allows learning possibilities for educators as well as for students. Helms and colleagues (2005) stated that team teaching may reduce 'silos' of educators coming from different functional areas or disciplines (Helms et al., 2005).

Team teaching can also encourage new things to be tried and to step out from one's comfort zone. Pedagogical approaches, courses, and methods can be designed differently than an educator would have done alone. Here, team teaching provides possibilities for increased support, interesting and varying teaching and learning activities, and learning gains for the students (Baeten & Simons, 2014; Benjamin, 2000). For novice teachers, this is an important resource, but also more seasoned teachers can receive refreshing ideas through team teaching. We learned that team teaching can help teachers to engage in more philosophical discussions than the usual discourse over class materials (Letterman & Dugan, 2004). These discussions offer unique learning possibilities for both educators and students.

We were able to identify diverse challenges of team teaching when the course proceeded. Team teaching means shifting from a position of managing oneself to managing and operating as a team (Minett-Smith & Davis, 2020). One clear mistake was that time was allocated based on the seasoned educator's needs, which meant obscurity for the novice teacher. This puts forward that in comparison to solo teaching, team teaching may increase the workload, particularly in the planning stages, as it requires time and imagination from the educators involved (Davis, 1995; Shibley, 2006). When insufficient time was allocated to planning, the educators did not share the same vision about the course (Anderson & Speck, 1998). This lack of time and the confusion may have also hindered students' learning as they were not receiving a consistent and coherent communication from all their teachers.

Educators might have similar roles and responsibilities to begin with, but practice might show that more seasoned educators rule out the novices who fear to suggest new ideas (see Minett-Smith & Davis, 2020). This is not beneficial for anybody as it may be interpreted as passivity, which in turn can cause tensions or even conflicts among the team teachers. In our case context, this meant that the complementary skills of educators were not used effectively. Also, the more seasoned educator became frustrated and disappointed with the 'freeriding' of other team members.

In conclusion, team teaching offers an opportunity for complementary skills and experiences, and provides enthusiasm and inspiration, as well as an opportunity for educators' learning, with the potential for improved quality of entrepreneurship education for students. Team teaching can also encourage trying out new pedagogical methods and approaches. These are clearly beneficial when working with live cases where teaching cannot be fully planned. However, it is challenging to take advantage of different types of expertise and backgrounds in team teaching that is important for educational development. It also requires the team being able to question as well as compromise their existing practices (see Farny et al., 2016). It is important to remember that team teaching is a learning process, which allows iteration (Shibley, 2006). It is helpful if the same team continues multiple rotations and engages in open discussions to solve problems and develop existing practices further.

Implications

Our chapter has clear implications for educators and decision-makers within HEIs. There is a clear need for putting more effort into the education of team teachers, becoming aware of the benefits and challenges involved, and particularly for using tools to get the best out of team teaching.

By identifying the educational experiences of entrepreneurship educators (Dominik & Banerij, 2019; Lee et al., 2018), we discovered a grassroots-level apprenticeship as a concrete practice for developing team teaching in entrepreneurship education when applying the live case method. Teaching teams could be formed in a way that a novice is accompanied by a more seasoned educator. Moreover, team teachers could jointly decide on novice-mentor roles in the team. Hence, the novice could learn and take responsibility for minor tasks during the first rotation and take a bigger role in forthcoming rotations. This could alleviate some worries that novices might have when joining a new course that involves solving problems in real time. This benefit is particularly important if one has relatively little teaching experience or comes from a different discipline, possessing limited understanding about entrepreneurship (see Gibb, 2011; Kabongo & McCaskey, 2011). It is also always important to understand and discuss one's role as a team teacher. As in every team, it helps to develop strengths and manage weaknesses in a way that contributes to and improves the team (see Belbin et al., 1976). As team teaching is a learning process, which allows iteration (Shibley, 2006), it would be beneficial for educators to be a part of the teaching team for several rotations.

Further, resources and time for planning are often allocated based on the needs of the more seasoned educators. However, we argue that it would be beneficial to conduct the allocation based on the needs of novice educators. This would ensure that novice educators are also on track and understand what is going on in the course, providing them with opportunity to contribute as much as possible. This would also be beneficial for student learning. Overall, time is an important element in efficient team teaching, and it can be enhanced by allocating enough time for open discussion, not only in the beginning, in the planning stage, but at regular intervals as the issues tend to arise when the course proceeds. For example, there could be time for reflection among team teachers before and after each session. Open discussion is also a way to avoid potential conflicts and disappointments. It might be good to develop a scheme for reflection to allow voicing feelings, concerns, and worries.

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Appendix Table 1. Descriptions of the meeting themes and tasks

Meeting session	Theme	Description of task(s)
1	Boot camp, 8 hours	Teaming, initial ideation, elements of business model canvas
2	Canvas and validation plans	Discussion on business model canvas, discussion on idea validation
3	Validated problem/solution	Discussion regarding problem-solution testing and its outcomes
4	Pitching	Keynote on pitching and pitching exercises
5	Demo and pitching day	Presenting and receiving comments on wire-frame models, pitching
6	Pitching competition	Pitching exercises, pitching competition among other teams in the course
7	Competitors and business numbers	Discussion on key competitors, excel exercise regarding business numbers
8	Channels (social media, marketing, press release)	Keynote on press release and press release exercise, discussion on social media and possible marketing channels
9	Canvas, validated problem/solution and demo day	Discussion on updated business model canvas, updated problem- solution testing, and presentation of updated wire-frame models
10	Pitching	Pitching exercises, pitching competition among other teams in the course
11	National finals pitching competition	National pitching competition