SITUATED LEARNING AMONG BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURS IN SARAWAK

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Master of Science (Learning Sciences) 2015
Statement of Originality

The work described in this Final Year Project entitled

Situated Learning among Business Entrepreneurs in Sarawak

is to the best of the author's knowledge that of the author except

where due reference is made

31 July 2015
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A
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Abstract

The emergence of situated learning is seen as a part of scholarly attention and academic curiosity. There is a significant increase in numbers of key research done pertinent to situated learning in order to explore and validate the elements of situated learning. However, a crucial query in this field remains that of how business entrepreneurs actually learn. The current study aims to offer an explanatory understanding into the situated learning of business entrepreneur in Sarawak context. Qualitative case study supported the exploration for real-life experiences of business entrepreneurs in Sarawak. The findings of this study revealed that, there are seven first learning steps to do business; selling for fun during university, seek information from the internet, attending courses, learning from home, self-experience by working with employer, getting business experience from family members and life experience. Basically, this study concluded that, situated learning is a vibrant process that occurs by socialization, collaboration and interaction experiences among business entrepreneurs in Sarawak during their entrepreneurial voyages.
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study attempted to approach on the question of how entrepreneurship happens. The aim is to unwrap the discussion on situated learning so as to tolerate emancipation for permitting a conceptual framework in which the how-question could be given new importance and epitomized as a result. It presented situated learning as an entrepreneurial process and as a process of social creation. This allowed a discussion on implications of how entrepreneurship is learnt and how situated learning is conceptualized and practiced by business entrepreneurs to obtain entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, which eventually can unlock closed-doors to their business success. At the same time, this study seeks out the challenges faced by these entrepreneurs during their learning process and possible solution towards those challenges.

Inspired by the writings of Bakhtin (1986), it is believed that some of the mystique concerning situated learning sought by entrepreneurs can be conceptualized from a processual perspective (Dawson, 2003). Such a re-thinking of learning, something to be output or emergence from this study may allow new imagination and offers new possibilities for entrepreneurship learners. The study conducted a research by way of two cases being merged – in the context of learning sciences field (in both entrepreneurship and situated learning).
1.1 Background of the study

Someone who starts a business is defined as an entrepreneur. However, the word "entrepreneur" carries a number of implications that go beyond basic business start-up. By willingly assume all risks that are linked with business activities and projects, having a transparent and flexible idea of the practicality of a business before it is even started, be prepared and competent enough to think diverse and broadly variant responsibilities, and able to acclimatize and invent accordingly to new information and ever changing situations placed a person to be an entrepreneur in the highest wisdom of the word. Personality qualities, disciplines and good values that can be learned through life experience and diligence are some of the characteristics that contribute to the making of successful entrepreneur. On the other hand, there are also other reasonable ways of learning vital knowledge and skills required of new and budding entrepreneurs. Therefore, this study encompassed those basic elements needed for entrepreneurial knowledge and learning.

1.2 Problem statement

Little is known about the relationship between situated learning and entrepreneurs in the context of business entrepreneurial knowledge and learning sciences. Literature on situated learning and entrepreneurs were mostly conducted in the Western context (Flethcher, 2004; Rae, 2005; Higgins et al, 2013; Gordon et al. 2012; Sandhu et al. 2012; Theodorakopoulos et al. 2014; Raffo, 2000; Stein, 2001; Hamilton, 2011; Lackéus, 2013; Cope and Down, 2010).

A review of the publications (Ariff & Abubakar, 2005; Ming, Wai & Mahmood, 2009) at major public and private universities in Malaysia, revealed that only a few studies had been done
on business entrepreneur's situated learning. Hence, there is a lack of data and empirical research on situated learning with regards to business entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Therefore, the literature review revealed that limited research have been done on situated learning for business entrepreneurs in Malaysia. For that reason, it would be important to conduct a study on situated learning among business entrepreneurs to fill in the gap in the literature.

Specifically, this study sets out to determine the types of situated learning by business entrepreneurs that affects their business entrepreneurial knowledge and learning. In addition, this study also looked at the relationship between situated learning and business entrepreneurs, and whether entrepreneurs' situated learning has an effect towards their business success.
1.3 General Objective

The research aimed to offer an understanding of how business entrepreneurs in Sarawak learn to do their business trade and how situated learning is conceptualized and practiced by these entrepreneurs to acquire entrepreneurial knowledge and competence, which ultimately can open doors to their business success.

1.4 Specific Objective

i. To explore how entrepreneurs learn to do their business.

ii. To discover how entrepreneurs learn the knowledge and skills to ensure their business success.

iii. To find out the challenges that the entrepreneurs faced while learning the knowledge and skills to ensure their business success.

iv. To identify solution to the above challenges faced by the entrepreneurs while learning the knowledge and skills to ensure their business success.

v. To suggest critical knowledge and skills training required to be a successful entrepreneur.
1.5 Research Question

Based on the statement of the problem, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do the business entrepreneurs learn their ways to do business?

Research Question 2: What knowledge and skills do the entrepreneurs learn to ensure their business success?

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced by the entrepreneurs while learning the knowledge and skills to ensure their business success?

Research Question 4: What are the solutions to the challenges faced by the entrepreneurs while learning the knowledge and skills to ensure their business success?

Research Question 5: Which critical knowledge and skills training are required to be a successful entrepreneur?
1.6 Significance of the study

1.6.1 Contribution to knowledge

The findings of this study acted as a reference and guide for public and private universities, lecturers and educators in preparing their students for entrepreneurial learning and budding business entrepreneurs who intend to further their knowledge and skills in business entrepreneurship and real life entrepreneurship.

1.6.2 Contribution to the methodology

This study would benefit other researchers who wish to have similar studies as they can have background information from the result of this study which serves as a template to modify their research. Future researchers may use the problem statement, research objectives, research design and interview questions that are used in this study as a reference and guidelines in doing their related field of study.

1.6.3 Contribution to the community

There is still insufficient public awareness of the terminology of situated learning and entrepreneurship. The terms as they apply in a pedagogical situation are not clear to the general public, nor there sufficient awareness of entrepreneurship in a non-business setting. Therefore, the findings later would contribute towards public awareness on the importance of entrepreneurial and situated learning among students and youngsters.
1.7 Limitation of the study

The open-ended survey research design did not allow a firm establishment of a cause and effect relationship, and thus post as a limitation to the study. Therefore, a preferable longitudinal research which could generate more accurate findings is favored; however, this was not possible due to the time and cost constraints. The sample consisted of founding and established entrepreneurs from the n = 7. Thus, the generalization of the results is limited to entrepreneurs mostly in Kuching only, the capital city of Sarawak.

1.8 Definitions of terms

To facilitate readers get a comprehensible understanding of this study, the following terms are particularly defined:

1.8.1 Situated Learning

i. Conceptual Definition

- Situated learning can be defined as a particular way of learning which arises from the activities and interests of individuals and groups (Vygotsky, 1994b).

ii. Operational Definition

- Learning activities that are engaged by the entrepreneurs either by individual or in groups.
1.8.2. Entrepreneur

i. Conceptual Definition

- Someone who kick-starts a business setup and willing to take risks to create income (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary).

ii. Operational Definition

- A person who is having business setup on his own in and around Sarawak main cities.

1.9 Summary

To quote Tom O'Malia from his introduction to the book, 'Been There, Done That', "Entrepreneurs are about loving their journey, not their destination". This chapter provided a fundamental background for the study of situated learning among business entrepreneurs in Sarawak. The problem statement, objectives as well as the significance of this study are clearly stated. The contributions of this study have also been described. This chapter also briefly explained the definition of the title of the study.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section provides discussions on the past study done by other researcher that is related to this field. Appropriate information from their paper work are discussed and cited in this study.

2.1 What is Situated Learning?

Two researchers from two different disciplines proposed a new learning theory by rethinking a model for learning with the basis of learning takes place in a community of practice. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) suggested that learning is a social process where knowledge is constructed, and it should not be seen merely as knowledge transfer between individuals or groups. They both believed that learning is actually situated in a certain context and working along together within a certain physical and social environment setup. Lave (1993) observed daily on everyday activities in her workplace and thus came to the point where she suggested that, ‘learning is ubiquitous in ongoing activity, though often unrecognized as such’.

Various examples given by Lave and Wenger (1991) also included adult learners, and therefore situated learning gives a certain similarity with adult education. Kimble and Hildreth (2008) explained that within a community of practice, these adult learners discover, explore and
construct their knowledge through situated learning. The notion idea by Lave and Wenger, serves as a model of learning in a community of practice where the individuals or groups learn through socializing, visualizing, and imitating. Learning occurs when individuals are trying to work out and resolve their problems (Hung, 2002). By solving a problem, individuals find out the solutions and seek to answer the questions for their real life situations.

Hung’s research highlighted on the importance of social process in learning. He believed that social process is learning, and explained that learners who work along within a community with the same interest will be inclined to gain some advantages in terms of knowledge and experiences from those experts in the community who are more knowledgeable and experienced as compared to the novice learners. He also stated that the social process of learning actually provide the learning with real life situation and authentic experiences. It is a nature where in a real life situation, learners are required to learn and adapt to the learning process. Thus, by adapting a problem-based learning strategy, learners can be stimulated toward a higher stage of judgment, thoughts and belief (Hung, 2002).

Learners process and develop their understanding of information through hearing, visualizing, reasoning and reflecting of what they have learn more without much difficulties by having models to observe and imitate (Bandura, 1977). In his Social Learning Theory, Bandura stated that most behaviours and repetitive actions are learned from the environment (community of practice) through the learners’ observations. It is also stated in Bandura’s research that there are four stages in the social learning process of a learner through observational imitation for an effectual modeling:
i. **Attention** - In this learning stage, an individual must give more attention to the model or to a person who will be the object to be copied.

ii. **Retention** - an ongoing process or steps to remember the behavior displayed by a model such as that observed in the examples of behavior that would be imitated.

iii. **Reproduction** - a stage of an individual who has been closely observing and remembering back after what has been the model demonstrated, the next step is to try to mimic the behavior and practice.

iv. **Motivational Stages** - motivational stages of a person who has the motivation to study the behavior of the model such that they imitate.

Bandura (1977) denoted his position that human learn by observing others. Likewise, learning would and seems to be difficult if we have to rely upon the outcomes of our behavioristic actions in order to understand what we need to do subsequently. One particular important idea in observation is that, it lets other people to see the end results of other people’s actions. Hence, the novice learners are able to gain some new idea and informative knowledge of what might happen if they are to do this way or that way. On a later occasion, that new informative knowledge will serves as their guidance for future actions (Bandura, 1977).

Deriving from Bandura’s theory, both Lave and Wenger represented their situated learning theory as the acquisition of knowledge through social engagements and participations in a community of practice. Therefore, the learners get to be involved by participating in a scaffold learning structure or framework of which it provides them with necessary context in order for learning to take place (Lave & Wenger, 1991).