

Entrepreneurship Education Through a Blended Teaching Approach

Rama Vaidyanathan

Hepsibah Sharmil

Abstract

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) is designed for large numbers of participants that can be accessed by anyone without entry restrictions through an internet connection, and offer a free complete course experience. These open education courses are a mid-ground between traditional structured class-room teaching and the freely available but fragmented information in the world wide web (Aydin 2017). In a traditional classroom, the educator has a specific course with clearly articulated goals and outcomes. With the push towards digitization of education, increasing competition between Universities, accreditation requirements, there is clearly a movement in Indian Education towards a learner-centric and outcome based education. Educationists are now adopting digital content in their lecture delivery, using methods other than a written examination, such as seminars, assignments, and group projects to assess the outcome. According to a report prepared by Stanford Class Central, it was estimated that more than 500 Universities offer 4200 courses to 35 million learners globally (Shah 2016). Coursera, a for-profit provider, offers more courses than many others. From India, Indian School of Business, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore offer courses through International MOOCs. Swayam is an initiative by the government of India to offer an online education module. Students who take up the course can get credited transferred to their Certificates. These efforts taken by the Government will ensure that the quality of education improve better opportunities for faculty and teachers.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, MOOCs, Learnwise

1. Introduction

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2. Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education prepares people to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to convert ideas into monetizable activities. Students who have learnt entrepreneurial skills by working in a campus start-up have an experience of a real job. Their communication skills, leadership and team working abilities and networking propensity are developed at a much better rate. Including Entrepreneurship education in the regular curriculum can give many advantages to students in understanding and developing entrepreneurship. In India, Entrepreneurship Education is offered as an elective paper mostly in the final year of Engineering courses or Business Administration courses. Some Universities have an Entrepreneurship Cell which organizes Business Plan Competitions and talks with Entrepreneurs.

Internationally, there are few Universities that offer free online courses. Notable among them are Talkshoe, a series of courses offered on Entrepreneurship and Business planning by Carnegie Mellon University, U.S.A. Stanford University's E-Corner offers numerous podcasts and

videos on Entrepreneurship skills. Massachusetts Institute of Technology offers online courses through the edX platform.

In India, Wadhvani Foundation (Wadhvani Foundation 2017) has launched Entrepreneurship course based on a cloud based Learnwise platform which used blended approach, using faculty facilitation in Higher Educational Institutes. The Entrepreneurship courses are organized in 6 modules: Orientation, Discovery, Practice, Start-Up, Growth and Expand as shown in the figure 1 below.

Each module consists of short videos and activity instructions to understand and experience entrepreneurship skills. Figure 2 shows the typical journey of a student. Each course consists of 20 contact hours and 20 practical hours. Each assignment by the students requires a real-world experience and original thinking. Group activities ensure that their communication and team work skills are honed. The facilitators are given guidance on evaluating the student assignments. The student involvement can be tracked by the internet use. In addition, there are competitions at the national level between students taking up the courses. At the end of the course, the students are evaluated by a third party online quiz. Certificates of Completion have the logo of the Wadhvani Foundation and the student's Institute. More recently, this courseware has also been adapted by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship under the flagship "Prime Minister's Yuva Yojana".

3. A Case Study on introduction of Entrepreneurship Education through Learnwise Platform in a private University

Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute is a deemed to be a Universities under the UGC Act of 1956. The University offers professional courses under 9 different faculties including Engineering, Architecture, Computer Application, Management, Science, Commerce, Medicine and Allied Sciences with about 8500 students in the campus. Many of the Departments offer an Elective Course in Entrepreneurship. The Entrepreneurship Cell of the University organizes events to network with Entrepreneurs and Competitions for Innovative Prototypes which are given seed funding by the University.

The Wadhvani Foundation's Entrepreneurship Course was introduced to the first year Engineering students as a non-credit and voluntary course. The registration for the course was marketed by one hour orientation program giving a preview of the course to all the students in groups of 300. The classes were conducted after regular class hours in a classroom equipped with internet access and an LCD projector and speakers. One faculty was assigned to a class of 30 students. Two batches of students registered for the course.

The first module WFNEN100 – Orientation to Entrepreneurship includes a curriculum where students learn about the journey of entrepreneurs as depicted from the figure 3 below.. As an assignment, students interview local entrepreneurs and share their stories. Students learn about personality styles, communication skills, how to execute a sales plan, develop design thinking for the Customer, managing risks and learning from

failures in this course. There are 9 lessons. Each lesson has a quiz and an assignment. The role of the Facilitator is to introduce the concepts and to provide the materials required for some the activities. The Assignments are valued by the facilitator and returned to students. There is ample scope for creative contributions by the faculty.

Apart from the curriculum students do atleast two practicum events though their E Cells. These vary from Meet an Entrepreneur event to organizing Ideathons, running a venture with Rs. 50/- as investment, These practicum activities are done by the students independently with minimal guidance by the faculty. In the first batch, 38 students registered for the course and 30 completed the course and gave the final online test. Out of which 27 students passed the final online quiz. Three students had excellent grade and 8 in Good grade and the rest were Pass. 3 students will take the test again.

The benefits of the Course were analyzed by personal interviews with the faculties and students to assess their perspectives. Three faculties and twenty students were interviewed.

4. Benefits from the Teacher's perspective

- ❖ Significance of including Entrepreneurial thought process in students is recognized as very critical especially since the Start-up India policies encourage student entrepreneurship. It is recognized that funds for start-ups are available more than earlier.
- ❖ Curriculum structure
 - ◆ The curriculum is suitable for a wide student background. The same material is suitable for

students from a variety of streams including Science, Engineering and Management.

- ◆ The level of difficulty increases as the student progresses from course 1 to 6.
 - ◆ It was recommended that the Courses 1 and 2 can be made mandatory in the first year but the others can be elective courses
- ❖ Use of a Cloud – based teaching methodology:
- ◆ Each video lecture is around 3 – 5 minutes each. While it can be streamed live, faculty prefer to download and then show the lectures.
 - ◆ The videos are available for the students through the web sites. However, most students prefer to view them in the class.
 - ◆ Students have to be instructed to bring their laptops to do the activities in WFEN101.
 - ◆ In our student group, we found only about 10 % had prior experience in using Excel spreadsheet. However, a higher percentage of students were familiar with preparing videos of their interview assignments.
 - ◆ The cloud based method encourages students to use their smart phones and laptops for a focused learning activity.
- ❖ Differentiation from a structured class room course:
- ◆ In a regular course, the curriculum is adapted from a text book and is prescribed by the affiliated University. Deemed Universities have the freedom of modifying or giving their own syllabus but they are regulated by the cost of the text books and reference books and the international exposure of the faculty.

- ◆ In this case, the curriculum has been prepared by faculty from the Best Institutes in the country. The facilitator gains from using a well – prepared and honed curriculum.
- ❖ Evaluation methodology
- ◆ The online quiz and the assignment at the end of each lesson is essential to move on to the next lesson. The faculties have to ensure that the assignments are submitted and evaluated before the next lesson. This led to loss of a few non-participating students. But, it also allowed the faculty to focus on the students involved in the course.
 - ◆ The structure of the assignment and the evaluation guidelines ensured that students could not find readymade answers. It ensured that students should think and present their answers. The faculty initially focused on the logic of the answers and less on the language. With encouragement, the student assignment quality improved.
- ❖ Outbound activities
- ◆ A few of the assignments required the students to do an activity outside the class room. The activity on interviewing an entrepreneur and submitting a report was very successful. The activity which required students to get outsider's view on their Entrepreneurial idea required students to break their shyness to approach outsiders. It required more convincing to make the student do the activity.
- ❖ Gains for the Faculty
- ◆ All the faculty agreed that they learned new teaching methodologies.

◆ The lack of stable internet or non-availability of a projector during some classes leads to innovative thinking from the faculty. Some downloaded the lectures beforehand. In some cases, students were encourage to view the lectures from their smart phones using the University WIFI.

◆ Faculty certification from Wadhvani foundation was appreciated by the Faculty.

❖ Scope for Improvement

◆ The faculty wanted recognition by the University for the time and effort.

◆ The faculty wanted to be mentors for the student's future projects.

5. Benefits from the Students perspective

❖ The students found that the activities which allowed them to interact in the class were the biggest advantage in the course;

❖ Most students said that the development of communication skills – both oral and written was high priority for them;

❖ The practicum activities needed them to organize competitions for their class. The planning, marketing and execution of the programs lead to a real job experience;

❖ A few of the students emerged as leaders during the course; and

❖ These students were more confident when they participated in inter-college events;

6. Conclusions

Adapting a blended learning approach such as the one on Entrepreneurship offered by Wadhvani

Foundation has many advantages to the University. On the one hand, it acts as a train the trainers program for the faculty. The overall teaching methodology, evaluation methods and peer learning was a great benefit. These faculties are more likely to embed innovative methods for teaching and learning.

The students benefitted greatly from the program in their overall development. We believe that these students are more likely to adapt MOOC courses in their core curriculum. The course allowed inter-departmental interactions between students and faculty. As the students progress to the advanced entrepreneurial courses, the development of entrepreneurial ideas will definitely become better.

Since the Learn-wise modules are available to Institutes through an MoU with National Entrepreneurship Network and through the Prime Minister's Yuva Yojana, more students will be benefitted from the course. The differentiating factors leading to successful entrepreneurs are likely to be the number of students participating in the program, number of faculty successfully running the courses, infrastructural and mentoring support for the prototypes and campus start-ups. The access to market and finance support will also be critical in the success of the program.

In conclusion, it is recommended that more Universities should adopt a teacher facilitated e - learning platforms for students before offering the freedom of an open online coursework.

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Figure 1: The six Courses offered by Wadhvani Foundation and their learning outcome

Course	Title	Learning outcome
Pre-incubation		
WFNEN100	Orientation Program in Entrepreneurship	Develop awareness about entrepreneurship and develop key skills in entrepreneurial thinking
WFNEN101	Basic Program in Entrepreneurship	Discover personal strengths and weakness ; learn about opportunity discovery and evaluation
WFNEN102	Foundation Program in Entrepreneurship	Learn to create a Business Model and building a prototype; Run a Campus Venture
WFNEN103	Intermediate Program in Entrepreneurship	Launch a sustainable venture with a valid business model and real paying customers; Gain in-depth knowledge and relevant skills on a specific vertical Incubation
WFNEN104	Advanced Program in Entrepreneurship	Manage and Grow the Business ; Pitch to investors
WFNEN105	Expert Program in Entrepreneurship	Reiterate the Business Model, Scale up, look for partnership



Figure 2. The typical learning journey for a student

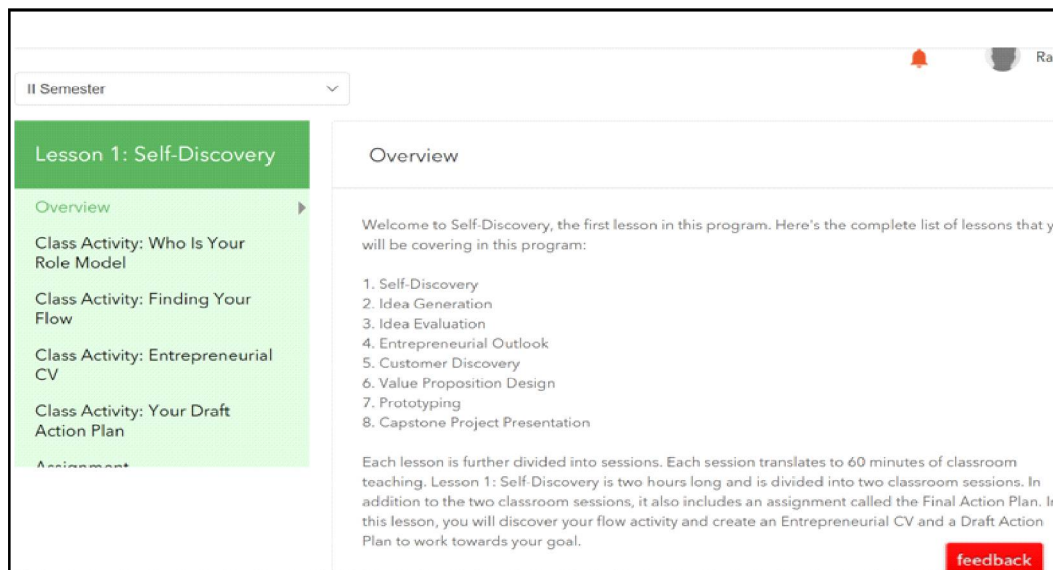


Figure 3 : A screen shot of the lesson 1 in module WFNEN100

Dr. Rama Vaidyanathan, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute, Maduravoyal, Chennai - 600095

Dr. Hepsibah Sharmil, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute, Maduravoyal, Chennai - 600095