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Nybye, Nicolai Løntoft

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Student entrepreneurship and innovation through teams in a non-business context

Nicolai Nybye
University College Lillebaelt, Department of Interfaculty Resources and University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark
nlny@ucl.dk

Abstract: As the field of entrepreneurship education has become highly heterogeneous, there is a growing need for increased contextual knowledge on the aspects of learning, outcome, forms, content and methods in the future teaching and counseling of students. As part of my PhD I am carrying out in-depth case studies in a non-business medium-cycle higher educational context following a qualitative ethnographic-inspired methodology. I consider the context as ‘non-business’ in the sense that the research is carried out at an institution that educates professionals to become employed in the Danish public welfare sector. Expectations to the students’ knowledge and skills transform as a need for newness and a need to fulfill new collaborative spaces in and between public, private and civil sectors grow. Thus, new courses have been developed driven by the notions of innovation and entrepreneurship. My research is empirical and follows ‘how’ and ‘why’ oriented research questions to explore how students working in teams create innovative initiatives and why their projects are created and led in certain directions. In the paper, I move from the research frame of the PhD project to outline that three overall, emerging, preliminary themes concerning 1) a team-environment nexus, 2) dialectics and 3) pragmatics can explain enablers and barriers for innovation and entrepreneurship. From these themes, I argue that to understand innovation and entrepreneurship we need to think of the students’ team practice in relation to endeavors across a learning-creation spectrum and a contextual spectrum. The data is gathered from a faculty of Education and Social Sciences and a faculty of Health Science and is related to courses building on ideas and theories of innovation/entrepreneurship. In total I have data from 10 teams through observations, video recordings, voice recordings, pictures and interviews. I am about to progress into the data processing phase followed by the analysis thus, I hope, a project presentation at the ECIE PhD Research Colloquium and the feedback related to this can offer inspiration for the further research.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial learning, Innovation, Teams, Educational context.

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