

The Effectiveness of Mentoring and Coaching in Teaching Business Planning: The Case of Universitas Andalas

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ABSTRACT

Business plan course has become an essential part of entrepreneurship education in entrepreneurial universities. Universities nowadays are required to showcase their entrepreneurial spirit as a way to adapt to current trends and public demands. Therefore, it is important for universities to work together with private sectors and the business world. Business plan course has long been recognized as a source of essential skills in entrepreneurship. By combining mentoring from business world and entrepreneurship knowledge and strategies from coaches (lecturers), it is expected that students can gain encouraging experiential learning that help them benefit from this course. The objective of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of mentoring and coaching from existing entrepreneurs in a business plan course in Universitas Andalas. From the students' perception survey of twenty-seven students, it can be seen that mentoring is an effective way that enriches their understanding regarding business plan and its implementations.

Keywords: *Mentoring, Business plan course, Entrepreneurship education, Entrepreneurial learning, Entrepreneurial university, Learning method*

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education has become a prerequisite for enhancing entrepreneurial university. As suggested by Rauch and Hulsink [1], while some people may identify entrepreneurship education as an ineffective way to create entrepreneurs, many researchers see the opposite. They also have found that entrepreneurship education does have an impact on entrepreneurial behavior, even if it is not an immediate impact. In addition, Heinonen and Hytti [2] argues that entrepreneurship education may be seen as representative of entrepreneurial learning in more entrepreneurial university. In this case, teaching business planning in more entrepreneurial ways can be seen as inevitable. Cordell [3] has identified that preparing business plan is considered as one of the most important skills to be taught in business education. As such, according to Shane and Delmar [4], business planning can lower the business risks and enhances business performance compared to those who have no plans. In brief, a new way of teaching business planning can represent better entrepreneurship education that leads to a highly entrepreneurial university.

The objective of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of teaching business plan in a business school, Department of Management, Universitas Andalas, Indonesia. Typically, based on my experiences in teaching entrepreneurship for nearly eight years, business planning in the Department of Management has been taught as follows. Business planning is part of entrepreneurship course. The course is divided into two: entrepreneurship values, motivation, business startup, and business innovation. After the mid-semester exam, business plan is introduced for the rest of the semester. It is expected that by completing a business plan, students can have a greater understanding in the main functional areas of business such as finance, marketing, production, and human resources management [5]. Furthermore, typical business plans are also implemented. Blenker et al. [6] identified that most of the business plans include items such as overview of the business field, description of the management team, description of the market segment, marketing plan, business system and organization, implementation and risk assessment and funding.

It is safe to say that in terms of teaching materials and knowledge, business planning is almost the same everywhere in many aspects. However, the question now

is whether this term of teaching is effective. Accordingly, seeking a new pedagogical approach may help students to understand and experience the learning process.

The effectiveness of business plan course can be seen from various aspects. These are, for example, student perceptions and lecturer's evaluation [7]. Recent development has shown that it is important for business education to follow current needs and trends [5]. In this regard, providing some insights from business people to students in entrepreneurial learning would be highly recommended [8] including in business plan project. This can complement knowledge and theory by incorporating case studies from past experiences that are discussed with lecturers. This is the reason why I include young and bright entrepreneurs as mentors for students in teaching business plan. It is expected that students would gain valuable experiential learning that gives them the essence of business planning.

1.1. Related Work

The literature reviews show that entrepreneurship education is more effective when done with application-based methodology rather than heavily focusing on theory based approaches [9]. Accordingly, entrepreneurship education can be seen as simulating the entrepreneurship process within the pedagogical structure of the curriculum which can be conducted by introducing group dynamics and using project-based experiential approaches [10]. For this reason, mentoring from entrepreneurs would provide real experiences and discussion of practical issues from business world. As such, Arasti et al. [11] providing real case studies from business world can be an effective way to attract students' attention. In addition, real-world experience, more specifically, business mentoring in which there is the selection of experienced supervisors and one-on-one discussion, was found to be reasonably appropriate for the effective delivery of the course [5]. This practical approach has assisted students to acquire the required business knowledge and skills to start and manage a business in the near future.

1.2. Contribution of this Paper

New pedagogical approach in teaching business planning has been conducted in Department of Management, in my entrepreneurship course, from April to June 2020. This is something new in our department since previously mentoring was not officially included in the learning process. Some recent research that focuses on business plan learning methods such as by Malinda [12] has not included mentoring and coaching which may indicate the novelty of this method in the context of Indonesia. This method has yet to be officially conducted, at least in our department. Because of that, this paper may provide some

perspectives regarding the effectiveness of mentoring in teaching business plan. Additionally, during this Covid-19 pandemic, new learning method including online learning method is a new norm. This is also a moment for applying a new method that reduces the burden of students, but is still highly effective in assisting them with their learning process. Online mentoring and coaching has become understandably compatible with the context of a pandemic because this supports independent learning. Student's perception may also indicate whether they are able to benefit from the assistance of external actors. It is expected that if the students' perceptions are positive, this approach can be emulated even in a face-to-face situation.

1.3. Paper Structure

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces how pedagogical process in teaching business planning. After that, I present results of the students survey which is students' perception regarding learning process in business planning, particularly the roles of mentor in helping them learn. Lastly, in section 3, conclusion, there will also be some suggestions for improvement, limitations, and future research.

2. RESULTS

2.1. Introducing Innovation in Teaching Business Planning

The most noticeable difference in this new learning process is the existence of mentors and coaches. As mentioned previously, mentors are those who guide and advise students in writing business planning. Some of them have intended to not only writing the document, but also implementing them even if it is not required for this stage of learning process. Mentors provide idea validation, strategies, market demand, and market knowledge including tacit knowledge that may not be found in textbooks. In brief, mentors provide insights from practical experiences.

Additionally, lecturers act as coaches in this method. In this case, I evaluated what they were doing by questioning and suggesting some steps if they were needed. Mentors in our entrepreneurship course come from our alumni which is advantageous as they have strong attachment to the campus and may see their roles as their responsibility as seniors. Some mentors come from small business owners who were involved in their previous case study assignment before the mid-term exam. As mentioned before, teaching business planning was conducted after the mid-term exam as before that, we focused on entrepreneurship characteristics.

Table 1. Outline of the course (week 8 to 14)

Week 8	Business Planning (introduction) and idea generation: what is business planning and why is it important, business planning component, the power of business ideas, and why they are not enough, Simulation of idea generation
Week 9	Market analysis and marketing plan: market research, business environmental scanning, market segmentation, marketing strategy, dealing with suppliers, consumers and competitors
Week 10	Production plan: prototyping the product, new product development, product planning and control, lay out and location
Week 11	Financial plan: sales forecast, establishment costs, cash flow forecasts and planning, pro forma financial statements, performance evaluation
Week 12	Human resources plan: human resource requirements, job descriptions
Week 13	Business plans presentation
Week 14	Evaluating the whole course (week 8 to 14): the role of mentors, reflecting the path as entrepreneurs

Students worked in a team of mostly four people. Due to the pandemic, they were proactively seeking guidance and advice from mentors mainly through online platforms such as social media and WhatsApp group in which mentors were included by students. In fact, mentors were expected to help students in many aspects of business planning, as can be seen from table 1 above.

2.2. Students' Perception

At the end of the course, students were asked to fill surveys. These are general surveys regarding business planning learning process. Twenty-seven students have filled the online questionnaires. As can be seen from table 2 below, most of the students perceived and experienced business planning as essential for their business perspective. Among the highest percentage of students who have chosen "strongly agree" is from statement "discussing with business owners in my case study has broadened my business perspective in business planning". 59.3 percent of the students "strongly agreed" while 40.7 percent "agree" with this statement. Before the mid-term exam, there was a case study assignment which was designed to analyze small businesses' strategy. It seems that this assignment was helpful as most of the mentors were the owners of those small businesses. It is worth noting that despite their enthusiasm in terms of mentoring and coaching, it was found that these students seemingly "agree" that "online learning method for business planning during Pandemic Covid-19 was less effective". This is perhaps because mentoring and coaching or learning process as a whole

needed some face to face communication component especially in terms of technical aspects such as financial and marketing aspects. Furthermore, this study was conducted in early stage of online learning in Universitas Andalas as Pandemic Covid-19 also occurred. In brief, overall students in this study was satisfied with the learning method and learning processes that included mentoring for business planning although they felt not well-prepared to have fully online teaching classes during this pandemic.

The second part of the questionnaire more specifically asks students regarding mentoring and coaching effectiveness. These students expected that mentoring would help them as they seemingly "strongly agreed" to "mentoring for writing business planning is very useful" (77.8 percent). However, there was a decrease in terms of its reality as 51.9 percent of the students seemingly "strongly agreed" to "my mentor has given us valuable perspectives for our business planning". This was also the case in terms of the role of lecturer as a coach in teaching business plan. The fact that students also thought that their lecturer "should help us in technical aspects of business planning" may indicate that the role of lecture as coach may not be enough. These students seemed to still need more detailed explanation and guidance in more technical aspects of business planning. They perhaps may not see flexibility and autonomy during coaching as well as online learning as the best method to master business planning. As a result, mentoring and coaching were effective in enhancing understanding business planning especially in the context of online learning during pandemic.

Table 2. Evaluation of teaching business planning

Writing business planning will increase my business practices	Agree	40.7%
	Strongly agree	59.3%
Writing business planning helps me understand business	Agree	48.1%
	Strongly agree	51.9%
I prefer to work in a group than individually in writing business planning	Disagree	3.7%
	Agree	37%
	Strongly agree	59.3%
Online learning method for business planning during Pandemic Covid-19 was less effective	Strongly disagree	3.7%
	Disagree	29.6%
	Agree	44.4%
	Strongly agree	22.2%
Writing business plan in a team make some member rely more on other team members	Strongly disagree	18.5%
	Disagree	22.2%
	Agree	44.4%
	Strongly agree	14.8%
Case study assignment in this class helps me in writing business planning	Agree	63%
	Strongly agree	37%
Discussing with business owners in my case study has broadened my business perspective in business planning	Agree	40.7%
	Strongly agree	59.3%
Guest lecturers from entrepreneurs are needed	Disagree	11.1%
	Agree	59.3%
	Strongly agree	29.6%

Table 3. Evaluation of mentoring and coaching

1	Mentoring for writing business planning is very useful	Agree	22.2%
		Strongly agree	77.8%
2	My mentor has given us valuable perspectives for our business planning	Agree	48.1%
		Strongly agree	51.9%
3	The lecturer should take a role as a coach in teaching business planning	Agree	14.8%
		Strongly agree	85.2%
4	Our lecturer has been a good coach in our learning process	Agree	37%

3. CONCLUSION

Mentoring and coaching were expected to provide assistances to understand business planning. Most of the students seemingly “agreed” and “strongly agreed” that they benefited from mentoring and coaching. As suggested by [8], mentors and coaches provide insights from their business experiences. This has helped students in this study.

The present study has confirmed findings of previous studies by [5] and [10] that emphasized the importance of new learning methods that enrich students’ experiences especially from the business world. However, the present study has only analyzed a class in which fully online learning was done in trials- and-errors mode. Future researchers may conduct similar research from more students with a more established online learning setting. In addition, it seems that students may still need assistance in

terms of technical aspects of business plan. This may suggest that lecturers should aim to balance between coaching and effective lecturing. This is not an easy task because business planning in our department is part of entrepreneurship course in which teaching business planning is conducted after the mid-term exam. This perhaps suggested a new approach in entrepreneurship education in our institution in which business planning should be taught on its own in one semester. Introducing new learning methods that are evaluated thoroughly requires continuous improvement, which in turn enables Universitas Andalas to become an entrepreneurial university.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was supported by Educational Development and Quality Assurance Institute of Universitas Andalas.

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