

The Cultural Genogram: Experiential Entrepreneurship and social impact through a Global lens

Abstract

Experiential entrepreneurship has become a significant pedagogy in preparing American students to compete in the dynamic and consolidating global economy. Whereas the model of experiential learning facilitates collaboration between industry experts, entrepreneurs and community stakeholders, it is imperative to look at entrepreneurship from a global perspective. Medgar Evers College has a mission for social justice and socio-economic transformation. Through the Entrepreneurship & Experiential Learning (EEL) lab, students are exposed to industry leaders, faculty and other stakeholders to the benefits of global entrepreneurship and experiential learning. This paper will discuss lessons learned on **innovation, culture and entrepreneurship from students and faculty exposure to innovation** and international entrepreneurs from Kenya, Chile, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, China, London, Paris, Japan and Thailand. Additionally, the paper addresses the implications on entrepreneurial learning by encouraging diverse perspectives and practice for the American student entrepreneurs in the 21st century.

Key words: entrepreneurship, innovation, experiential learning, culture, global.

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5. Audio Visual Requirements

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6. Biographic Sketch of Presenters

Dr. J. D. Rolle has over 30 years of experience in government, corporate and higher education. She is a former IBM Visiting Professor, Harvard Administrative Fellow, and consultant in entrepreneurship. Dr. Rolle is currently the Dean of the School of Business at Medgar Evers College, City University of New York.

Dr. Jacqueline Kisato (PhD) is a lecturer at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. She is also a mentor at the Chandaria Business Innovation and Incubation Center at her university and a master trainer in entrepreneurship for youth in Africa. Her research interest is in innovation and entrepreneurship among enterprises in emerging markets.

Dr. Iris Billy Director of the Entrepreneurship & Experiential Learning (EEL) Lab is a serial entrepreneur with a passion for entrepreneurship, education and consulting. Dr. Billy spent over 10 years as a serial entrepreneurship. Dr. Billy is a generalist and strategic thinker, with expertise in management/leadership, entrepreneurship, economic development, and diversity management.

Roberto Acevedo, PhD. Full Professor at both Universidad de Chile and Universidad Mayor. His interest include social issues, scientific psychology science and technology . He earned a PhD from the University of London (UK) and postdoctoral studies in Charlottesville, University of Virginia (USA). He is currently the Head of Research and Development at the Universidad Mayor.

Dr. Khasadyahu Zarbabal is the newest faculty member in the School of Business assigned to the Department of Economics and Finance at MEC. In his first year he lead a group of Entrepreneurship & Experiential Learning (EEL) Lab students to China and also accompanied a group to Kenya.

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1.0 Introduction

Entrepreneurship creation and innovation is being recognized as a key factor for economic development in a dynamic 21st century global economy. In the USA and other countries, the youth and minorities have formidable challenges in getting employment as well as monetizing and scaling their entrepreneurial ventures. Entrepreneurship Capacity building in institutions that serve minorities in the USA has been a challenge with few sustaining outcomes. Medgar Evers College, City University of New York (MEC-CUNY), a recognized Institution for economic development & entrepreneurship, launched partnerships with both Industries and Universities on a global basis to mitigate these challenges among their students and understand the cultural perspectives that enhance business across different countries. These diversity in perspectives were viewed as an important ingredient for successful entrepreneurship in the global market space. In addition, the 21st century business must endeavor to enhance economic justice whilst creating a social impact in their society, This paradigm in entrepreneurship demanded for an experiential entrepreneurial learning model that would break the boundaries of classroom learning.

It is worth noting that entrepreneurship as a discipline has evolved greatly since the 1990s. Entrepreneurship educational programs in universities have evolved to emphasize experiential teaching and learning (Mitchelmore and Rowley 2010; Rolle, Billy, Acevedo, & Kisato, 2016). This emphasis is based on the premise that entrepreneurship is an action oriented discipline that is effectively learned through action training and learning. This paradigm proposes that the learner is centric to the learning process and the trainer plays the role of a facilitator through the learning process.

In the past decade, experiential learning in the discipline of entrepreneurship has gained momentum across the world and evolved from a from a “ teacher –centric” to ‘learner-centric’ approach (Rolle, Billy, Acevedo, & Kisato, 2016; Blenker, P., Elmholdt, S. T., Frederiksen, S. H., Korsgaard, S. and Wagner, K., 2014). Theories underpinning experiential learning have looked at other extraneous variables that interplay with entrepreneurial and experiential learning. Entrepreneurial teaching is therefore designed to stimulate entrepreneurial attributes with insights and experience that compel entrepreneurial action (Pittaway & Cope, 2007). In addition, experiential learning models that encompass understanding the cultural genome across countries is becoming

imperative for a generation that is highly connected virtually and seeking to solve global problems through provision of products and services.

Although many scholars have written about the pedagogy of entrepreneurship as a practical action-based discipline, there are relatively few studies that have looked at curriculum design and pedagogy across different countries, cultures and institutions (Sarasvathy, 2008). In addition, citations of case studies of successful entrepreneurs and their social impact across this cultural genome have not been fully incorporated into these studies.

To mitigate these gaps, Medgar Evers College, -CUNY successfully organized and launched two international conferences on Corporate Social Responsibilities and Social Entrepreneurship empowerment with the participants representing academia and industry from Kenya, Jamaica, Chile and the USA. In addition, MEC-CUNY developed a comprehensive and integrative approach that combines multiple co-curricular activities including entrepreneurship training; business plan pitching; and study abroad to countries such as China, Thailand, Japan, Kenya, Jamaica and Dominican Republic. The Medgar team sought to investigate the models used in the various institutions across different cultures and countries, whilst interviewing practicing entrepreneurs in these countries.

This paper addresses a paradigm of experiential entrepreneurial training that has a strong bias to the learner being the nucleus of the entrepreneurial process, whilst leveraging experiences and lessons from other student entrepreneurs and practicing entrepreneurs across a cultural genome. In addition, the paper will highlight social impact takeaways from entrepreneur case studies and coalesce lessons learned across different cultures. The need for such a pedagogical format is to enrich the entrepreneurial teaching and increase the incidences of successful startups among student entrepreneurs in the EEL lab at Medgar Evers whilst increasing the networking and synergy in the global arena. It is hoped that such an approach will create more entrepreneurial learning spaces outside the confines of the educational institutions that have a positive social impact in the world.

2.0 Theoretical Foundations

Various scholars have posited theories in entrepreneurial experiential learning as dynamic and holistic approaches to learning. They have further proposed that a student actively engages in an entrepreneurial activity to achieve the relevant skill set and competencies in their entrepreneurial ventures (Kolb 1984, Lackéus 2013, Rolle et al., 2016). Experiential learning theory further proposes that this entrepreneurial paradigm not only results in the acquisition of knowledge but also results in transformational learning for the experience acquired (Kolb 1984). Such a student entrepreneur develops

both knowledge and competencies that are imperative in entrepreneurial success (Rolle et al, 2016, Mitchelmore and Rowley 2010).

Experiential learning proponents also emphasize the importance of learning by doing to acquire entrepreneurial competencies (Lackeus 2013, Mitchelmore and Rowley 2010). The theory underpins the need for both acquisition and transformative experience during the learning process (Kolb, 1984). In addition, experiential learning as a pedagogy results in practical intelligence that impacts greatly on the students entrepreneurial venture (Baum and Bird , 2010). This approach to learning focuses on the active participation of the learner in gaining experience and developing a reflective ability for the experiential processes and outcomes

Suffice it to say, the interpretation of experience is imperative to experiential learning (Sardana and Scott-Kemmis 2010). This practical intelligence positively correlates with business startup and growth because the lessons acquired are fundamental in business sustainability (Krueger, 2007). To further support the experiential learning process, case studies of actual entrepreneurs in these cultural differentiated environments are vital for the learning process. In a related study, Löbler(2006) pointed out that acquisition and understanding of knowledge is based on experiences from the environment.

This line of thought proposes a nexus between the social or cultural context and the entrepreneurial experience. Social constructivism points out to a global cultural genome variable helps that the student entrepreneur needs to explore beyond the classroom boundaries to enrich the entrepreneurial process (Kanselaar (2002); **Cannila & Reiff, 1994**) . The approach states that different environments provide real-world settings or case-based learning that thoughtful reflection on experience instead of abstract hypothesis that do not relate with the different environments. Teaching pedagogies based on constructivism, make a conscious effort to move from the ‘traditional, objectivist models didactic, memory-oriented transmission models’ to a more student-centric approach (**Cannila & Reiff, 1994**). Suffice it to say therefore, the use of real-life entrepreneurial case studies becomes pertinent in understanding entrepreneurship through the global lens.

With these interrelated variables in mind, the educator transforms from a knowledge guru to a facilitator in the learning process (Taylor and Thorpe, 2004). Entrepreneurial learning is said to be more successful when the learner actively participates in the process and is able to negotiate and contextualize this experiences to grow their business and appreciates the cultural genomes within which such businesses exist.

3.0 Design / Methodology Employed

Since the study used an exploratory and case study approach, data was gathered from students in the entrepreneurship programs designed for intimate intellectually stimulating workshops and balanced with study abroad tours by the student entrepreneurs and faculty to appreciate the cultural and entrepreneurs' diversity in these countries. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques in research were used in the data collection. Interview schedules, observation techniques and questionnaires were used to collect data from student innovators and entrepreneurs from Kenya, Chile, China, Japan and the USA. In addition, ad hoc interviews were carried out for selected business practitioners in some of these countries, to explore the cultural challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurship for these students. The findings across various countries were summarized and collated to deduce take away lessons for faculty and the student entrepreneurs that would enrich their experiential entrepreneurial learning.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

4.1 Statistical analysis

Demographic data of the student entrepreneurs was important to the study. These findings across Medgar, Kenya and Chile student entrepreneurs is summarized in table 1.

4.11 Age of Student Entrepreneur Founders/Innovators

The study sought to establish the age of the student entrepreneurs/innovators in the study, who had founded their enterprises. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Age Bracket in years	MEC-CUNY Percent	Chandaria Percent	BIIIC	Chile Percent
Less than 24	0	22.2		0
24-30	25.0	66.7		10.0
30-35	12.5	0		10.0
36-40	37.5	11.1		10.0
41-45	12.5	0		50.0
older than 45	12.5	0		20.0
Total	100.0	100		100.0

*n=27

Table 1: Age of Founders

4.12 Gender of the Student Entrepreneurs/ Innovators

Gender	MEC-CUNY (%)	Chandaria BIIC (%)	Chile (%)
Female	75.0	0	0
male	25.0	100	100
Total	100.0	100	100

*n= 27

Table 2: Gender of the respondents

From the data more female student entrepreneurs were found in the USA team but hardly any were in the Chile and Kenyan teams. This sample was almost representational of the total number of female entrepreneurs in both Chile and Kenya. This could be a result of cultural factors that encourage more male students to take risks while the female students are encouraged to pursue safer white collar occupations.

4.12 Motivators innovate or start a business

The respondents were asked what motivated them to innovate or start a business. The responses are summarized in Table 3.

Source of Idea for innovation/business	MEC-CUNY (%)	Chandaria BIIC (%)	Chile %
Family	12.5	0	0
Creativity	12.5	0	10
Identify need	62.5	55.6	30
Personal experience	12.5	11.1	30
Other Startups	0	11.1	0
Work experience	0	11.1	20
Guidance from Lecturer	0	11.1	10
Total	100.0	100.0	100

*n=27

Table 3: Motivators to start their Business

Majority of the entrepreneurs identified a need in society and sought to create a business around the need (Medgar 62.5% and Chandaria 55.6%). This finding supports literature that has posited that need identification and problem solving competencies are vital components for any entrepreneur. There seems to be very little influence from the lecturers or faculty that inspires the students to start enterprises

4.13 Fears or de-motivators

The respondents were asked whether they had any demotivators that deterred them from starting a business. The findings are summarized in figure 1.

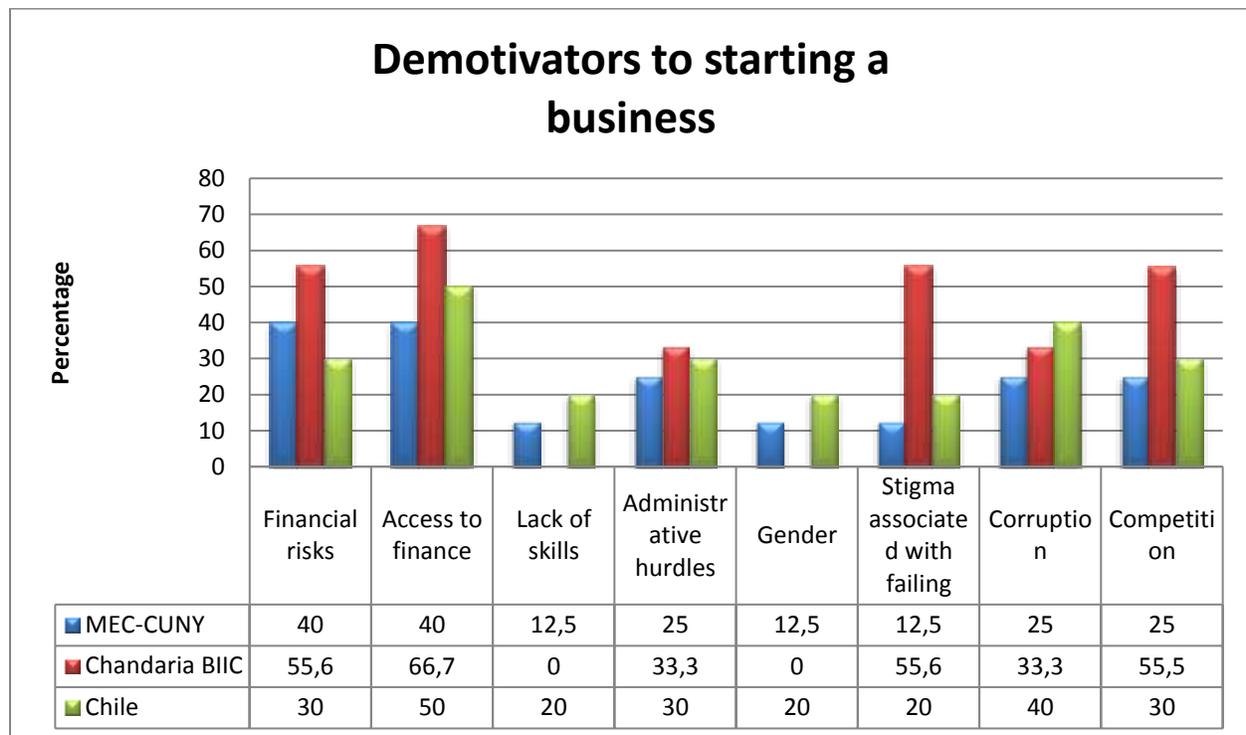


Figure 1: Demotivators to starting a business

5.0 Social Impact: Case Studies from Practicing Entrepreneurs

5.1 JoraFarm: Mitigating climatic change and best agricultural practices

John Mbuu, social entrepreneur and sustainability advocate. Mr. Mbuu is an entrepreneur whose business is in mitigating climate change through best practices in agriculture on the 350-acre Jatflora Farm. As an entrepreneur and an ardent environmentalist, he set up an indigenous tree seedlings nursery that has different types indigenous seedling and herbal trees. It boasts of 6 million seedlings to be used to re-afforest local forests in Kenya. Since the incorporation of Jatflora Farm, in 2007, this entrepreneur has pivoted from a flower nursery in 2008, exporting flower crops primarily to Amsterdam, to a environmental sustainable agricultural venture. The entrepreneur took this line of business due to ravaging drought of 2009 in Kenya, to mitigate heavy deforestation, along with global warming.

Mr. Mbuu became keen on environmental sustainability for his business as a way of mitigating climatic changes. This is a clear indication of social impact that has been inspired by the context within which his enterprise operates. His business model encompasses a diversification approach of organic vegetables and fruits, livestock, poultry and mushroom production. The need for being a total organic farm, for environmental sustainability also fueled this diversification. It was established that Jatflora as a private farm had already germinated and nurtured over 7.8 million indigenous, exotic, fruits, bamboo seedlings and 250,000 plant seedlings for reforestation. As a result of this survey and the impressive results by the farm for agricultural and environmental sustainability, Jatflora was awarded the ECO TOTAL GLOBAL AWARD 2012.

The bloodline of successful business has been said to be cashflow. Mr. Mbuu's approach is not only for profit, but a multi-faceted that ensures the human resource in his farm are retained and their children are educated. In this way, Mr. Mbuu ensures posterity by being an example of a social impact business to upcoming entrepreneurs on organic farming, climatic change, best human resource practices and sustainable entrepreneurship whilst making a reasonable profit.

5.2 Case Study: Pitchface: Creating Employment For The Most Vulnerable Youth

The youth make over 60% of the population in most developing countries. Kenya is not an exception. Due to the youth bulge and the slow growth of employment opportunities, unemployment and poverty levels are on the rise especially among the youth.

One of the young entrepreneurs, Mr. Osoro, created a branding and retail business whose core business and Corporate Social Responsibility; (CSR) missions are all related to rescuing youth economically, socially, emotionally and spiritually. PitchFace group is a wholesaler and retailer who work with international partners to market their products in Kenya. Using a mass marketing model, Pitchface has an army of 2000 youth trained to sell the goods to local merchants. The vulnerable are trained in sales, counseled on drugs and other substance abuse; equipped with professional etiquette skills and paid on commission for any of the products sold. This business model seeks not only to reduce jobs among the most vulnerable youth, but also ensure the holistic wellbeing of his employees.

6.0 Discussions and Limitations

Data derived from various countries revealed that entrepreneurship is seen as the vehicle through which student entrepreneurs will create employment. Whereas the Kenyan students seem to start entrepreneurship at an undergraduate level, the Chilean counterparts are more inclined to pursue entrepreneurial ventures in their later academic. All three countries need to appreciate that age should not deter anyone from becoming an entrepreneur and it is the willingness to disrupt social norms that will lead to their success. For curricula, there is a need to develop programs that will enable junior and senior students in the university to monetize their research work and utilize their skills to become job creators and not job seekers.

With regard to gender, both Chilean and Kenyan student entrepreneurs' cases had little or no female representation. In fact, in the Kenyan incubator, Chandaria, BIIC, there are only 10% female owned companies. This small representation is a key concern since women make 50% of the national and global population. The USA team seems to attract more females and academia need to develop mechanisms and experiential pedagogies, mentorship and role modeling by successful female entrepreneurs to attract more female students.

Cultural norms and the overall cultural genome of a country with regard to entrepreneurship is fundamental for the success of any entrepreneurial success. As discussed earlier, entrepreneurship is about disrupting existing status quo. For this to happen more effectively there is need to take lessons from other global entrepreneurial spaces such as the Silicon Valley and other entrepreneurial spaces across the world. Universities can therefore enrich their lab and incubation spaces by borrowing lessons that will help their entrepreneurs scale their business, whilst ensuring that their academic success is not sacrificed on the altar of entrepreneurship.

The 21st century has seen more entrepreneurs striving to build businesses that make a difference in the world. Some critics have called it altruistic-capitalism, or, "impact entrepreneurship." to differentiate it from those enterprises that seek profit above all else. Social impact entrepreneurs are driven by a desire to disrupt their cultural genome creating businesses that are more ethical and transparent, and ensuring that the consumer or society at large is left better for it. Such entrepreneurs seek to do good and make profits ethically to improve their society.

Whereas both businesses seek to make a profit, social impact is core to their mission is the need to create a social impact in their ecosystem. The Medgar students were able to appreciate the need for contextualizing the social impact to reap maximum returns. In addition, profitability of the entrepreneurial venture from these two entrepreneurs was a great opportunity for these students to experience the dynamics faced by entrepreneurs in different geographical locations. The Medgar Evers student entrepreneurs were able to appreciate this paradigm of doing business by interviewing and interacting with practicing entrepreneurs outside their geographical divide

The limitation of the study was in the number of cases studied across different countries. It is therefore necessary to expand the scope and include more student entrepreneurs in

the next studies for a better outlook. In addition, it might also require collection of data from students who have not pursued entrepreneurship to understand how best faculty can increase incidences of entrepreneurial success. In addition, faculty needs to work with policy makers to ensure a suitable entrepreneurial climate that will enhance business growth.

7.0 Practical Implications

Experiential learning pedagogies in entrepreneurship are imperative for students in the 21st century. The CUNY MEC student entrepreneurs and faculty shared perspectives on program experience that while we may be geographically diverse, we have similar academic challenges and opportunities for our students. In addition, teaching entrepreneurship with a global perspective will enrich the learning experience whilst creating awareness of how to do business with a multicultural perspective. Experiential entrepreneurship programs need to include some level of cultural studies that will broaden the student entrepreneur understanding on the different needs globally and create products/ services that meet these in the context of their cultural genome,

Since entrepreneurs and innovators are “the round pegs in square holes,” faculty and student entrepreneurs can leverage technology while creating global communities to solve the most pressing global problems. An entrepreneur needs to build products with the global village in mind; cultural differentiation to suit different market niches is important, and this is only attainable when entrepreneurship learning incorporates the cultural variables. Collaborative experiential learning; where students exchange knowledge and ideas across different countries imperative for the 21st century global entrepreneur. Whereas experiential learning is not confined to the classroom walls, there is need to break regional and geographical boundaries as well. By doing this, student entrepreneurs can leverage on new opportunities and markets while faculty will develop better experiential learning pedagogies that have an international outlook.

Finally, we should not forget that the new paradigm of entrepreneurship needs to care about the people, planet and profit. This paradigm has been called the triple bottom-line strategy that ensures businesses do go whilst making profit. The case studies of practicing entrepreneurs were an eye opener on the social impact that the student entrepreneurs can create if their incorporate best practices and environmental concerns in their businesses. Doing good while making profit should be emphasized by faculty because social impact results in more sustainable businesses. Faculty should therefore incorporate social impact pedagogies in their curricula, to enable student entrepreneurs incorporate and include social capital as one of their parameters for success,

8.0 Conclusion

It was evident that inter-generational collaborations for curriculum development leveraged by industry insights were vital to create a successful 21st century entrepreneur. Additionally, engagements diverse across cultures and disciplines yield opportunities for social change as well as business success over the spectrum of global markets. With regard to the entrepreneurial spirit and proclivities, the MEC-CUNY students reported similarities in the “disruptive nature “of entrepreneurs across the different countries. These entrepreneurs seemed to defy cultural norms to create products or services that would satisfy a need or want whilst generating revenue.

Challenging cultural norms, however, is not valued or encouraged equally across the various business settings that the MEC-CUNY EEL has directly engaged with. Notably, in China there was a sharp divide between business students who valued cultural unity and traditions versus those who sought to embrace and leverage the global Americanization trend. Generation-Y students from MEC were an inspiration helping change-tradition transition naturally difficult to a heritage just beginning to birth its own generation-X entrepreneurially. Witnessing the shift in China’s cultural genogram emphasized to minorities from MEC-CUNY that being divergent is an asset to the entrepreneur; the confidence often shaken by the American minority experience was strengthened.

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