

ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR FOR STARTING PROFESSIONALS OF GENERATION Y: AN INDUCTIVE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT:

As more and more research work is dedicated to the concept of entrepreneurial behaviour, more attention is also given to the teaching or training of such behaviour. In this paper we argue that a new integrative management approach, labelled as “gyroscopic management” (Vinke & Orhei, 2010, 2012), is one of the ways to stimulate, educate and train such behaviour among the representatives of so called Generation Y. In order to create evidence of such presumption we present the first data obtained as part of a grounded action research which started in January 2013. The research included international, second year bachelor students, as representatives of Generation Y, during a Research course as part of their study. This course consists of practicing inductive and deductive approaches to research, by using attitude, skills and knowledge as didactical process, with the presence of two educators at the same time, all through the process. This paper will show the first results that will create the explanatory theory (Simmons, 2006) and later the operational theory with “stimulating entrepreneurial behaviour” as field of interest.

1.INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is the driving engine of economies and as a field of study it captures the attention of governments, educators, researchers and practitioners from different parts of the world and from different domains but mainly from economics, strategic management and psychology. In all these domains of study one of the elements that have attracted researchers on the topic of entrepreneurship is behaviour, more specific, enterprising or entrepreneurial behaviour because it functions as a foundation in the entrepreneurial process of opportunity imagination, discovery, evaluation and exploitation of these opportunities whether in venture creation or corporate settings. Professionals with entrepreneurial behaviour can also be seen as “change agents” or “improvising” professionals, who are needed in business environments of today (Sabourin & Pratt, 2008). As more and more research work is dedicated to this concept, more attention is also given to the teaching or training of such behaviour, next to the classical entrepreneurship as venture creation type of education.

In this context, entrepreneurship as phenomenon takes more individual and personal

forms such as a competence or as an entrepreneurial and improvising behaviour rather than following deterministic patterns of business plans and revenue models. The authors believe that there is a need for a different approach in educating and training of new professionals that is more suited to the current representatives of the so called “generation Y” and the upcoming “GenNext”. Therefore, in this paper we argue that a new management approach, labelled as gyroscopic management (Vinke & Orhei, 2011) is one of those ways to stimulate, educate and train such behaviour.

The aim of this paper is to present the preliminary results of an applied, action based research experiment, done with representatives of Generation Y, within the field of interest “Stimulating entrepreneurial behaviour based on gyroscopic management (Vinke & Orhei, 2011) and improvisation”.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Enterprising or entrepreneurial behaviour can be seen from an individual (personal) perspective or as (organizational) a more corporate perspective in the form of “entrepreneurship”. Entrepreneurial behaviour can be linked to the Schumpeterian conception of an entrepreneur (Audretsch, 2012), which concept creates new combinations of resources either as a founder (of an enterprise) or as a manager. Also Kizner’s concept of “alertness” as a key entrepreneurial attribute, Knight’s concept of “risk taker”, or McClelland’s concept of the need for “achievement”, can all be considered as main characteristics of a successful entrepreneur (Nandram, Samsom, 2006).

Enterprising or entrepreneurial behaviour has been defined as “...a set of activities and practices by which individuals at multiple levels, autonomously generate and use innovative resource combinations to identify and pursue opportunities.... (Mair, 2002, p. 1)”.

The concept also has been defined as a more generic behaviour that involves recognizing, taking advantage and acting upon these opportunities (van Dam, Schipper, & Runhaar, 2010) or as exploring and creating opportunities while in the process of emerging organizations (Gartner, Carter, & Reynolds, 2010).

Entrepreneurial behaviour is also increasingly recognized as a proponent to social change and facilitating innovation within established organizations (Kuratko, Ireland, Covin, & Hornsby, 2005). Although in the literature the topics have been frequently used interchangeable, we consider the term “entrepreneurial behaviour” as most adequate for this paper.

A similar view to the concept of entrepreneurial behaviour was also found in the work of Sabourin & Pratt (2008). As the business world is constantly searching for ways to expand the skills of its professionals, they explain that improvising and performance under pressure combined with a creative process, is becoming increasingly popular as a strategy to resolve unexpected challenges in organizations.

According to them a promising approach to teaching and training new skills in an experiential manner is using improvisation exercises. Accordingly, these authors studied the characteristics of skilled improvisation professionals to see which skills might be applicable to leaders in business. They discovered that there are two kinds of professionals in the business settings: *executive professionals* and *improvising professionals*. The first professional, the executive one, has a strong focus on solving problems, taking charge, controlling and managing according to measurable criteria. The second professional, the improvising one, has more focus on the process of the

continuing action. He or she listens, is aware of situations and problems, accepts them and adapts to them and then advances.

Improvisational behaviour is defined as “the deliberate extemporaneous composition and execution of novel action” (Moorman & Miner, 1998). Baker et al. (2003) suggest that improvisation can be utilized to see how current resources can be used to either meet pre-existing goals (i.e., causation) or to explore what outcomes are possible (i.e. Effectuation). Acts of improvisation can thus be seen as a central element in the ongoing conversations and experimentation as a way to deal with the inherent uncertainty and thereby ultimately increase innovation performance (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998; Vera & Crossan, 2005). Studies on entrepreneurs have already proven that improvisational actions are part of the decision making process. (Baker et al., 2003). Improvisational behaviour can be a predictor for entrepreneurial intentions (Hmieleski and Corbett, 2006).

Most of the entrepreneurial and business education is currently consumed by representatives of Generation Y, which by now have or are entering the professional field and the business environment. The members of this generation are considered to be born between 1977 – 1997, following “Generation X” and the “Baby Boomers”. The members of the current generation (Y) have, according to Quinn, S. (2010) the following common generalized characteristics: Tech-savvy, family based, achievement-oriented, team-oriented and attention-seeking. They are seeking for different and creative challenges, personal growth, meaningful careers and are in need for specific supervisors, coaches, and mentors. They want to approach problems in new and innovative ways. Moreover, they want to be more “players”. This is a much-overlooked value and to make better use of this, we, as authors believe that trainers and educators need to become more innovative themselves. One of the most important characteristics of the Generation Y members seems to be that they are more “out-of-the-box” thinkers. (Kovary & Buahene, 2011). Or in other words, they want to be more “entrepreneurial” in their behaviour. We consider that this generation is prone to improvising behaviour as well as entrepreneurial. However, what they miss is exactly this more improvising and entrepreneurial education. Authors like (Carlson, 2005; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007, Oblinger & Oblinger, 2006a; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008) consider improvisation in the classroom consistent with the characteristics of this generation. It also *fosters collaborative learning* and promotes *deep learning* through the active engagement with new ideas, concepts, or problems while linking the activities or tasks to prior learning and applying the content to real-life applications (Berk & Trieber, 2009).

The main principles of improvisation also create bridges between the definitions of entrepreneurial behaviour and improvisational behaviour. Some of the most used rules of improvisation include: trust, listening, accepting, using everything as an offer, spontaneity and no prior preparation (Berk & Trieber, 2009), Koppett, K. (2001).

When entrepreneurial behaviour is about recognizing, taking advantage and acting upon opportunities (van Dam, Schipper, & Runhaar, 2010) or generate and use innovative resource combinations to identify and pursue opportunities (Mair, 2002) all authors are aiming at new behaviour.

While improvisation behaviour and the use of improvisational techniques in teaching can increase the exploration side of entrepreneurial behaviour, our experience, as educators, trainers and researchers, has also shown that having an inductive mind-set can increase exploration. The use of inductive methods to “explore” entrepreneurship is already used quite frequently (Laukkanen, 2003, Luke et. Al., 2006, Shaw & S Carter,

2007).

While the link and relation between inductive research and entrepreneurial behaviour is not new, the use of the inductive reasoning and mind-set in teaching research as well as stimulating entrepreneurial behaviour in this has not yet been done often. Research evidence has already demonstrated that improvisation can promote spontaneity, intuition, interactivity and inductive discovery, (Crossan, 1998; Moshavi, 2001; Sawyer, 2004; Berk & Trieber, 2009). Therefore it is, according to the authors an essential element to use improvisation to promote an open mind-set which can be realized through inductive views.

The authors have found the inductive research practice and the mind-set required for this practice, in the definition of exploring in an inductive way.

In the context of entrepreneurial behaviour, we consider improvisation and inductive mind-set as the antecedents as well as instruments that stimulate entrepreneurial behaviour in representatives of Generation Y.

In order to further *explore* this concept ourselves, we have undertaken a research project, in the form of an experiment, using a Grounded Action methodology as both research methodology and teaching/ training strategy in a special course aimed at teaching Research as discipline for business management students.

3. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

3.1. THE DIDACTICAL APPROACH

As educating (inductive) professionals we, as authors, are constantly busy with finding ways to foster such behaviour among the future managers. Currently we are applying a different didactical approach, called gyrosopic management. This name is based on the principle of a turning gyroscope, which only can find balance while turning. (Vinke, J. Orhei, L., 2011) The, in earlier publications described principle, is the core of an international bachelor study program called Human Resources and Quality Management (HRQM/ BMS). The program originates from an experiment, some years ago at Arnhem Business School (ABS) in which separated disciplines like HRM, Quality Management, Communication, and Business Ethics were integrated in one common lecture. This was done to get a new integrated perspective in combination with a ‘systems-thinking’ style. In short, it means that the teachers or trainers, in their gyrosopic approach, do not pretend to be able to give the answers to any management oriented problem, because this would “stop” the turning of the individual (student) gyroscope.

This “not answering approach”, creates the opportunity for the participants to constantly, search for an answer or solution to a problem and find a new balance themselves. It is obvious that this does not always take place in a secure environment. In preparing participants for their professional career, this creates, on purpose, situations and atmospheres that reflect this professional field. This does not feel like a secure environment, especially from the point of view of participants. To re-create this business environment we do things the participant does not expect and we get their “gyroscopes” to start. This change can be as mentioned by Johansson (2004) “*an exhilarating experience*”. As a result of this approach, students (the individual gyroscopes) find new and creative/innovative ways of dealing with what is happening in the environment. They also learn to take charge and be more improvising and sometimes risk taking, as well as using all the elements of the environment as opportunities and not as problems. Earlier studies and researches done by some of the

authors already gave examples of this. (Vinke. J., Orhei, L. 2012) A real “improvising professional” as mentioned by Sabourin & Pratt (2008), has, according to the authors, a very similar behaviour to entrepreneurial behaviour (Mair, 2002; van Dam, Schipper, & Runhaar, 2010).

To be able to comprehend the didactical style we refer to the higher education, especially in the applied science settings. During the whole duration of their study, students are exposed to knowledge as strong basis, training in developing skills and actions for realizing attitude change. As the knowledge is the main grounding of the study, especially in business studies, by teaching students tools, models, theories and tricks, there is very little orientation towards a more exploring entrepreneurial attitude and behaviour. This is mostly done because knowledge offers both students and educators a “safe” and measurable setting. This mostly seems to be with ignoring the personal motivation/drive of the student.

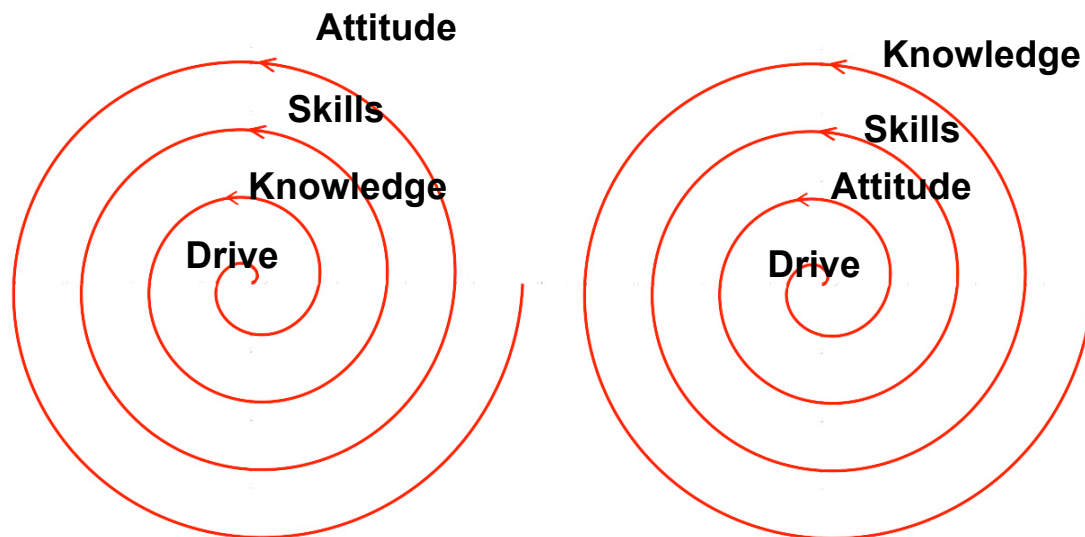


FIG 1. “FROM K.S.A TO A.S.K?” ORHEI/ VINKE 2013

Our approach is not based on the K(knowledge), S(kills), A(ttitude) approach, but starts from the motivation (drive) and the focus starts aimed on the attitude, train the skills and leave most of the knowledge acquisition to the student himself. This didactical approach we call “ASK instead of KSA” as shown in Fig 1. This is also the approach we have used in the specific Research course which we will describe in the next sections, as part of the research experiment.

3.2. THE CLASS – RESEARCH MODULE (OVERALL SCENARIO)

This section will give an overview of the context and actions taken within the course Research (DRSRES1D), which is part of the second year study, Business Management Studies (HRQM) at Arnhem Business School. As lectures, we have considered that the efforts of these international students that are the subject of this material needs prior clarifications.

The aim of the lectures was to train an inductive mind-set/approach, next to the basic deductive mind-set, that most of the international students already possess, in the

context of the requirements of the class. The scope of the lecture is (according to the Study Guide, v 2012/2013, pg.59)

“In this study unit, students will carry out a research in the professional HRQM field in project groups, and will present the results to the client. Students will have supporting lectures in research methods, statistics and management information systems. These supporting lectures will be given separately and will be assessed in an integrated or separate way.”

The students are familiarized by means of lecturing and debriefing with both inductive and deductive thinking styles, starting with an inductive approach and moving afterwards to deductive action. The lecturers applied a so called “Grounded action”(see explanation in section methodology) approach in order to research the actions taken by the researchers and students to find a grounding for appropriate intervention methods that stimulate the development of both mind-sets (inductive and deductive). The professional end product of this course is meant to be a group research report, customized on the needs of the client that is judged by both a research panel as well as the client. The students, who act as junior researchers, have to explain and justify to their fellow colleagues (the research panel consisting of teachers/researchers) their methodologies and how that relates to the needs of the client. This setting is one of insecurity, pressure and it needs sometimes improvisation from the students in this role. In this setting with the order of training the attitude, the skills and then the knowledge, the research project itself as well as intermediate assignments, served us as a mean, not as an end. The research report became secondary of importance, and took the role of instrument (red line) to guide both the teachers and the students.

3.3.INDUCTIVE AND DEDUCTIVE APPROACH

First the students were introduced in an improvising and interactive way, to the basics of research, differences and similarities between deductive and inductive approaches. Starting from week 3, a first assignment was presented to the students, In groups of three or four international members, they explored a common written material, having “entrepreneurial behaviour” as field of interest.

No further guidance was presented to them and no indication of what will be presented the upcoming week. The formation of the groups was left to their personal preference as well.

The lecturers communicated also that the groups will be asked each week to share their findings. After the students would become more comfortable with this new inductive approach, by experimenting with one common material, the rest of the material would be distributed, this time each group receiving different material.

The written material (data) that we used, were part of an end assignment of a post graduate (HBO) course on entrepreneurship of the HAN University of Applied Science. It has to be mentioned that this material was consisting of an anonymous description of a situation that according to the Post HBO student expressed his or her entrepreneurial behaviour in his or her professional context. It was meant to let them reflect on what actions the entrepreneurial behaviour consist of. These descriptions were written down in the Dutch language. Most of the students in the research course are international and do not have Dutch as their native language.

As part of teaching both parts in the course, the lecturers also guided the process of data exploration in a deductive approach in the second period in this semester. This “switch”

was meant to contribute to a better understanding of the actions taken in the first part of the module, as well as traditional problem solving approaches, encouraged by deductive approaches.

The professional end product as mentioned before consisted of a research report for the client, based on data collected by inductive means that considers the field of interest: entrepreneurial behaviour.

During the lecture weeks, the students were asked three times to present their work, two times in the time dedicated to inductive research, one time during the deductive approach setting. In the appendix I a further detailed overview of the lectures is given.

4.METHODOLOGY

4.1.METHOD

The used method by the authors, called “Grounded Action” has been defined as a “*tool that allows a researcher to get at the essence of the core issues or problems [from the perspective of the people involved in the problem]. In this way the core issues generated ... are [as close as possible] to the main issues of the participants because they generated them. This makes the 'action' generated by the research more likely to penetrate the nucleus of the problem and bring forth more lucrative solutions for all concerned.*” (MORRIS, 2000, p.18).

The core issue in our research setting is (the stimulation of) entrepreneurial behaviour, within a research setting.

The authors are of course in this research in a double role – as researcher and practitioners (educators/ trainers). In this double role we used an action based approach to teach students who belong age wise, to the before mentioned Generation Y, in the period between January and July 2013. In this setting, we as researchers, consider the course itself as the research context and use the “Grounded Action” (GA) (Simmons & Gregory 2003, 2006) approach to explore the action based setting. As part of the methodology requirements in Grounded Action, we consider that “all as data” and therefore acted as such. We documented all actions during and outcomes out of the lectures, as well the student’s results. We followed our own field of interest: “Stimulating entrepreneurial behaviour” with the grounding in the theory of using as main didactical approaches gyroscopic management (Vinke & Orhei, 2011) and improvisation.”

According to Simmons & Gregory (2003), Grounded Action has two phases in the practice: the explanatory theory and the operational theory. The main base for the explanatory theory is already grounded in the existing research on gyroscopic management (Vinke, J. Orhei, L , 2010, 2011; Vinke, J. Orhei, L ., Bibu N. 2012). The current research is at the stage of re-creating the explanatory theory towards the field of interest of stimulating entrepreneurial behaviour. To achieve this, we will focus on formulating in a way that it becomes clear “what is” as the *explanatory theory* of “stimulating entrepreneurial behaviour” and will lead to the operational theory of how this occurs (How does it show?) which will lead to possibilities to make interventions (Simmons & Gregory 2003; 2006).

4.2.DATA COLLECTION

One of the main aspects in the inductive approach of Grounded Action research is that “all is data”, therefore the nature and type of data to be used is itself open to discovery (Simmons & Gregory, 2003). Participants in action scenes/contexts are usually also stakeholders in the problem and how it is addressed. Thus, when actions are introduced, stakeholders will assess their relationship to the action and act accordingly (Simmons & Gregory, 2003).

Our own main data collection method was observation, both by the individual researchers as well recorded material. Memoing was also used by the educators/researchers as result of lectures or discussions between themselves or with students (participants). A secondary data collection method was the material produced by the students, who acted as co-researchers, for the client, as their final professional product for the course

4.3. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A full grounded action based research process can at the end result in the implementing of initial actions or evaluated outcomes. The two researchers/educators have gone until now through the first part of the process with memoing, based on the lectures, training, interviews (unstructured) video material and the written reports. The process of memoing reveals itself as a “discovery” process for the researcher/practitioner/educator as well as for the students who are also involved as co-researchers. The written material provided to the students in the beginning of the course (Post-HBO end assignment of a course on entrepreneurship in the Dutch language) has created for the students a starting point in “exploring” entrepreneurial behaviour as field of interest. Therefore most of the end products/reports of the students participating in the research module include data from the written material provided as well as further explorations. It is also worth mentioning that by the end of the module the groups did not manage to fulfil the deductive data analysis approach on their work.

As a result of this data gathering a rich data collection already is present which will have to be coded in an inductive way in order to re-create the explanatory theory. The preliminary coding we present here are just a first step into creating themes, forms and the theory. Below are some results of themes we will use for exploring.

Theme: Behaviour (some of the behaviour observed by the educators)

- Irritation
- Letting go
- Insecure
- Waiting
- Confusion
- Denial
- Natural in presentation
- Superficial

Theme: The writing down experiences of the students regarding used “methods” (discovered while reading the end report from the students for the client)

- Noted words after reading
- Asked a classmate to read the material
- Looked randomly in the paper
- Keeping a diary
- Translate from Dutch into Chinese

Give it to a friend and ask for words
Pick out interesting information
Cut an advertise paper and put it over the pages of the data
Interview
Use Google
Google translate and listen to the reading done by Google
Removing the vowels from the words
Make a poem out of the data

Based on video material memoing we have discovered or interpreted the following:

“inductive means vague, frustration, irritation, letting go , insecure”
For some students, inductive setting triggered deductive approaches
For some students, inductive became just doing without any skills and knowledge to support
Not going to theory and knowledge
Had difficulties approaching the assignments
Waiting behaviour
Confusion
Denial and seen as superficial
Preserved student behaviour
Made their presentation more natural/brought authenticity

The unfolding consequences of these observations and discoveries in the actions must be further studied in process, both in terms of the effectiveness of the actions and the responses of participants (Simmons & Gregory, 2003).

Therefore the next logical step will be an inductive data analysis process with a form of further coding. For this we will make use of focus groups. As the data needs to be revised over and over until saturation will lead to themes (categories), the proximity of the course and the time we have to complete this process was too limited to obtain the main themes for the explanatory theory.

5. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS AND MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS

The main contribution that this specific research will bring to the field of continuous innovation is to present new combinations and ways of fostering entrepreneurial and innovative behaviour in the next generation of managers, by practical means, through inductive thinking paradigm, improvisation and gyrosopic management as antecedents for enterprising behaviour.

The inductive nature of the whole research leaves space for many “entrepreneurial” results and outcomes. The paper also brings contribution to the field of education in/for entrepreneurship and continuous innovation with the use of the specific Grounded Action methods. As we cannot guaranty that this approach creates more entrepreneurial individuals, we can find out what occurs with representatives of generation Y when actions related to stimulate such behaviour, occurs.

We would like to formulate the aim of the authors in this work in progress with the following quote

“Continuous innovation is the on-going process of initiating, developing, operating and improving new and existing configurations of products, market approaches, processes, technologies and competencies, organization and management systems.” Kaltof (2006).

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY THE TRAINERS/EDUCATORS DURING THE MODULE

INDUCTIVE SETTING

Lecture Week 1 – Presentation of deductive and inductive methods. Lead of both lecturers

Lecture week 2 – presentation of deductive and inductive methods. Lead of both lecturers

Lecture week 3 – Deductive vs. inductive. The first assignment was presented to the students: Lead of Joop Vinke

Lecture week 4 – Presentation of inductive research. Students were asked to give an overview of what the process came about. They were asked to prepare for the next class a brief presentation of the process and outcomes of their first action. Lead of Joop Vinke

Lecture week 5 – Presentation of results. Each group presented the outcomes and process aspects. They were asked to reread the material and come back with the data. Lead of Joop Vinke

Lecture week 6 - Presentation of results second round of actions the same data. Each group presented the outcomes and process aspects. They were asked to reread the material and come back with the data. Second round of data. Each group received additional material, as five evaluation papers per group. All the material was different and again anonymous

DEDUCTIVE SETTING

Lecture week 7 – Presentation of exploration of the new material (different 5 evaluations) in an inductive mind-set. Presentation postponed until the following week. Lead of Loredana Orhei

Lecture week 8. In this lecture the students were set into a very deductive approach by the lecturer and the students showed and gave feedback to have problems with the going into the deductive approach and explained that it felt strange and “school-like” to do that. Lead by Loredana Orhei

Lecture week 9 – 10. The students were given time to prepare their material, focus on the deductive process. They also prepared their participation in a talent week event organized in the institution. Here their presented their results to a committee of foreign university teachers.

Lecture week 11. Students were asked about their experience with the presentation, discussed the final evaluation and conclusions of the course. Lead by Joop Vinke and Loredana Orhei.

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