

## Conference Paper

# Education and Entrepreneurship: Best Learning from Helm Project at Cenderawasih University

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## Abstract

In 2013, as part of the Higher Education Leadership and Management national initiative sponsored by US AID, Universitas Cenderawasih proposed an action research project to address the under-employment of UNCEN graduates through purposeful entrepreneurship education. Although entrepreneurship education had been introduced previously at UNCEN, it had never been custom designed to integrate theory and practice appropriate to Papua as part of the formal curriculum. This paper focuses on the use of core principles of the action research process (ARP) to develop and implement a locally effective curriculum for students enrolled in UNCEN's Faculty of Economics. A central value underlying the project was the development of a curriculum that could address social inequalities in Papua, specifically the significant under-representation of Papuan native peoples in the entrepreneurship sector. Through a mixed methods approach that used demographic, attitudinal and outcome data as well as observational, interview and focus group data, the ARP team designed an experientially-based learning module, documented implementation of the pilot learning module, evaluated its effectiveness, and developed proposals for improvement and institutionalization. As a result of its action research project, the ARP team suggests that future iterations of the entrepreneurship curriculum at UNCEN should adopt a culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995) that addresses the disparities in cultural and social capital shown to be significant in the ARP to entrepreneurship education.

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## 1. Introduction

Universitas Cenderawasih is charged in the era of Papua Special Autonomy to graduate students who are trained and willing to lead the region to sustainable economic and job growth through creative and responsible entrepreneurship. Yet, to date, students have continued to aspire to the secure and prestigious employment afforded by the civil service. Young Papuan graduates are most likely to queue waiting for the chance to become civil servants despite increasingly limited jobs in the civil service. To interrupt this pattern and encourage student entrepreneurship, starting in 2014 UNCEN in collaboration with the USAID/HELM undertook an Action Research Program (ARP) to create an integrated, experiential curriculum in entrepreneurship, attentive to the cultural and social conditions significant to its Papuan students.

## 2. Core Principles of The Action Research Process Used at UNCEN

Action research intends to engage local people in a systematic, data-driven research process to solve local problems. Key to this are the principles that the purpose of the research is for action to be taken to address a specific local issue, and that the issue is best addressed if those engaged in the research process are the people who will be affected by the action's implementation, outcomes and subsequent revision. The action research process is itself a circular one beginning with identification of the issue to be addressed, research to determine action, implementation of action, followed by its evaluation and revision (McNiff, 2013; McNiff and Whitehead, 2001; McTaggart, 1991). This data-informed cycle constitutes the ARP practices of Inquiry, intervention, development and change within communities and groups. Through its collaborative process, action research can lead to more self-transformation and consensus on the change undertaken.

Within the Indonesia Higher Education Leadership and Management initiative sponsored by US AID, Universitas Cenderawasih (UNCEN) was one of twenty-five higher education institutions funded to undertake an 18-month ARP pilot project. The overall goal was to demonstrate the potential of ARP for innovative change management and leadership development within the Indonesian higher education context (Lomax, 1991; Zuber-Skerritt, 1992). UNCEN proposed to undertake a project that would address the under-employment of UNCEN graduates through purposeful entrepreneurship education. While recognizing the need to orient UNCEN students in general to careers outside the civil service, the team particularly sought to address social inequalities in Papua, specifically the significant under-representation of Papuan native peoples in the entrepreneurship sector.

## 3. Project Design

The aims of this ARP are to determine students' orientations about entrepreneurship, analyze the factors that influence the entrepreneurship culture for students and generate and implement a formal curriculum model of entrepreneurship development. The ARP introduced an entrepreneurship subject within the Faculty of Economics based on the integration between theory and experiential learning.

Underlying the project's design was the belief that the human spirit for entrepreneurship is not innate but rather is learned. Students arrive at the university having developed certain orientations toward entrepreneurship from their families and communities; structured training and guided experience as part of the formal curriculum can enhance or change those orientations but must also factor in the cultural values and practices already significant to the students (Wlodkowski, and Ginsberg, 1995). (Burchell, 2000). Kemmis, S. and R. McTaggart (Eds.) (1988)

## 4. Research Design

The objectives of this research are to profile UNCEN student values related to entrepreneurship, develop and implement experiential entrepreneurship curriculum, and thereby increase students' understandings and skills in entrepreneurship. The research used purposive sampling technique by choosing nine groups consisting of 9-11 students and was designed based on Action Research Project.

## 5. Findings

The results show a change in students' mind set after the Research Action Program and the thirteen factors have significant influence in shaping factors of entrepreneurial spirit where self-confidence has the most dominant weighting factor. Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data on the groups with start-up businesses formed as part of the course shows correlation between the degree of success (measured by duration and profitability of the business) and the gender, tribe (ethnicity), GPA, family socio-economic status, and group work style of the students. In brief, Papuan students, males, and students with GPAs below 3.0 were less likely to succeed with the start-up businesses than non-Papuans, females, and students with GPAs above 3.0.

This data analysis from 89 student participants showed a change in students' mind set following participation in the entrepreneurship curriculum. While most students entered the course with some desire for entrepreneurship, they lacked confidence to try, had limited if any experience with business practices, and lacked startup capital. Thirteen factors proved to influence their entrepreneurial spirit significantly, with self-confidence the most dominant weighting factor and one that differentially increased following their experiential learning.

Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data on the nine groups that started businesses as part of the course shows correlation between the degree of success (measured by profitability and duration of the business) and the gender, tribe (ethnicity), GPA, family socio-economic status, and group work style of the students. The quantitative results were triangulated with data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) on group process and business practices. In brief, Papuan students, males, and students with GPAs below 3.0 were less likely to succeed with the start-up businesses than non-Papuans, females, and students with GPAs above 3.0. While gains were noted in both individual confidence to engage in entrepreneurship and in ability to seek information to support business initiatives, the degree of these improvements followed the same differentiated pattern as did business success.

## 6. Recommendations

As a result of its action research project, the ARP team suggests that future iterations of the entrepreneurship curriculum at UNCEN should adopt a culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995) that addresses the disparities in cultural and social capital shown to be significant in the ARP to entrepreneurship education. The generated model and entrepreneurship curriculum are expected to be used at all faculties at Uncen.

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