Post-Course Continuity of Entrepreneurial Class Projects

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

Class projects implement the application of theory learned in class and offer students opportunities to work in groups with classmates. As such, these projects last as long as the duration of the class. However, one kind of class project is inherently created to prevail over the pass of time: the entrepreneurial projects. Consequently, these long-term projects trapped in short-term classes, are, probably, against the underlying goal of fostering permanent students’ entrepreneurial initiatives that can have positive effects in the socioeconomic development of their communities. This proposal assesses the factors affecting students’ willingness to continue the development of entrepreneurial class projects.

Class projects are important learning activities that implement the application of theory learned in class and offer students opportunities to work in groups. They last as long as the duration of the class. However, some entrepreneurial projects such as those in project management, systems analysis and design, or capstone classes are created with the tacit purpose of becoming real businesses that benefit the socioeconomic development of the community.

Given the choice among unemployment, subordinate employment, and self-employment faced by graduated students, it is natural that academic leaders support the development of innovative entrepreneurial projects in their programs hoping that their graduated students pursuing startup projects would be less constrained by the labor market fluctuations and proving the relevance of college education in times when the cost of this education and mismatches between academic knowledge and required labor market skills are under scrutiny.

The case of information systems and similar programs is particularly important in the current conditions. Like no other major, information systems provide students with the tools to undertake innovative projects that can easier and faster become real companies and foster socioeconomic development. Information systems students, especially those within business programs, are equipped with the marketing, managerial, financial and technological skills needed to create, develop and launch tech-related enterprises that can provide employment for themselves and others in their communities.

Despite the potential of these entrepreneurial projects, few of them will have continuity after classes end or after graduation. This proposal will perform an assessment of students’ willingness to continue pursuing entrepreneurial projects started during their study programs at a big public university of the south west of the United States. This study case will collect students' insights about their entrepreneurial project experience, evaluate their willingness to continue with the project after the course has ended, and identify the factors that affect that willingness.

The study requires both qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher will reach out to former students and professors of courses where entrepreneurial projects were developed. The collection of information will be done through surveys and interviews. Professors’ interviews will help in the design of questions used to survey the students regarding potential factors, obstacles and opportunities affecting the continuation of the projects.

The purpose of the study is inductive in nature and the target research question is ‘what are the factors affecting students’ willingness to continue the development of entrepreneurial projects in an information systems program? Insights from the Technology Research, Education, and Opinion (TREO) Talk session will inform the researcher about similar experiences and potential factors to include in the elaboration of surveys and interviews, as well as of other recommended methodologies and literature to consider.