**Teaching Entrepreneurship and Innovation at PPU**

**Action Research**

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# Abstract

Graduates of PPU and many other universities have excellent technical and specialized skills. However they usually lack personal qualities related to entrepreneurship and business skills as well as they are not usually aware of the self employment as a career option. Therefore a course about “Entrepreneurship and Innovation” was offered at PPU in order to provide students with such qualities and awareness. The course was offered in an innovative way. It was completely students oriented including activities and learning events which all were completely student centered and focused on the interaction of students with the society which helped them ‘learn’ from all these interactions. Students were all involved actively in the course and the results were satisfactory in which students were still providing their feedback after the end of the course. Students’ valuable interactions with the society were notable as well as a change in the mindset of these students towards university learning as a result of the high students’ involvement and participation in the course lectures and activities.

# The Problem

In response to global trend in higher education, PPU adopted the introduction of Entrepreneurship and Innovation to its students. This is to help graduates being able to develop innovative ideas and transform these ideas into profitable projects. However, the problems faced in this endeavor that students:

* were not aware of the self employment concept as a career option,
* lack personal qualities that relevant to entrepreneurship, and
* lack business skills for running start-up businesses.

# Learning Goals

College of Information Technology and Computer Engineering offered a course to students named “Entrepreneurship and Innovation”, and this course aimed at achieving three major objectives:

* Raising students’ awareness of **self-employment** as a career option (the message being that you can become not only an employee, but also an entrepreneur)
* Promoting the development of **personal qualities** that are relevant to entrepreneurship, such as creativity, risk-taking and responsibility.
* Providing the technical and **business skills** that are needed in order to start and run a new business

**Intended Learning Outcomes of the course**

After completing this course, students would be able to:

1. Understand the importance of social processes such as networking and to entrepreneurial action.
2. Understand how entrepreneurship and innovation contributes to growth, employment and wealth creation.
3. Personally assess their potential for becoming entrepreneurs;
4. Understand the entrepreneurial mindset and how best to work as entrepreneurs;
5. demonstrate a solid theoretical understanding of the innovation process and the associated management issues;
6. apply analytical tools that can help structuring information for decision making about innovation;
7. Identify typical components of a business model, and demonstrate knowledge of the learn start-up methodology.
8. Write, critique, and refine a business plan;
9. Practice working in a team, and improve communications skills; particularly how to clearly articulate a business case/plan for a new venture to specific audiences.
10. Craft a clear value proposition.

As well, a course website on the moodle elearning platform was created to help students and it included:

* soft copies of references and reading material
* PowerPoint presentations,
* business plans templates and samples
* case studies.

Course outline is attached in the appendix(appendix #---).

# Plan of Actions – Activities

* Networking and Communication
	+ Students are expected to attend one of the major business activities (any networking event around) held around and get at least two business cards for two different persons, and write a report about their experience of communication.
* Innovation
	+ Students will visit a company and report about the innovative idea they may see or find applicable to the business of that company.
* Leadership Lab
	+ Students are expected to participate in a Leadership lab activity. In A leadership lab students will focus on how leaders lead innovations that generate both social responsibility and business success.
	+ The Leadership lab is organized around three core activities: observation, sense-making, and creating.
		- **Observation:** Students spend a full day inside Company 1. The task is to shadow, observe, and interview leaders who work at the frontline of socially responsible business innovation about their challenges, strategies, and practices.
		- **Sense-making:** The next day participants reconvene at PPU to share their stories and make sense of their observations during the company visits. The sense-making day also includes presentations and discussions with one of the speakers who will focus on Leadership of entrepreneurial projects in particular.
		- **Creating:** The final part of the Lab focuses on developing ideas for change and prototyping them. The teams can focus on changes in the college or projects related to the company visits. Each team presents its accomplishments on the final day of the Lab.
* Writing Requirement**:** Business Plan
	+ The writing requirement must be met in order to receive credit for this course. There are two ways in which this requirement can be met: Students may
		- (1) write a 2 to 3 page Executive Summary for a business plan they are developing, or
		- (2) write a hypothetical Executive Summary for a Company which has just received funding or is introducing a new product into the market.
	+ The paper is to be handed in during the last week of the course. Team efforts are encouraged. Criteria for evaluation will be introduced to students.
	+ The business plan must be presented in a pitching session the will be held during the last week of the semester in presence of invited guests, college staff and course partners.

**Invited Speakers**

The course was conducted in cooperation with PICTI. Mr. Hasan Omar contributed to the success of this course by conducting several presentations about the PICTI endeavors to enhance, encourage and support entrepreneurship in Palestine. As well, Mr. Ali Ramadan, the Entrepreneurship projects’ coordinator at FFKITCE conducted presentations and trainings on applying for Business Plan Contests and Business Canvas. Dr. Ibrahim Masri (former PPU president) conducted a lecture about entrepreneurship as a strategic objective for PPU.

# Assessment and Evaluation

For the purpose of assessing students’ achievements in this course, they were asked to do the following assignments as per each activity and title:

* Networking and Communication
	+ Students got at least two business cards for two different persons (appendix #---),
	+ Students wrote reports about their experience of communication(appendix #---).
* Innovation
	+ Students reported about the innovative idea they saw or found applicable to the business of that visited company (appendix #---).
* Leadership Lab(appendix #---)
	+ - **Observation:** Students spent some time inside a Company or simple met with some company leaders. The task was to shadow, observe, and interview leaders who work at the frontline of socially responsible business innovation about their challenges, strategies, and practices.
		- **Sense-making:** The next day students shared their stories and made sense of their observations during the company visits. The sense-making activity also included presentations and discussions with one of the speakers who focused on Leadership of entrepreneurial projects in particular.
		- **Creating:** The final part of the Lab focused on developing ideas for change and prototyping them. The teams could focus on changes in the college or projects related to the company visits. Each team presented its accomplishments on the final day of the Lab .
* **Final and Midterm Exams**
	+ - **Final and Midterm exams were conducted to assess students’ performances and give them proper grades for the course. These two exams were open book, and contained questions in which students express their opinions and understanding of the business cases, leadership and innovation aspects of each case** (appendix #---).

In the appendix, the assessment matrices are all included, together with samples of students’ works and assignments.

# Future Action

For the purpose of achieving the goals and objectives of the “Entrepreneurship and Innovation” course, it is strongly recommended to cooperate with IT Center of Excellence by which students are given more time and efforts for building business skills for running start-up businesses. IT Center of Excellence offers many such trainings and offers meetings with Business sector resulting in an added value to this course.