Proceedings
Cross-Cultural Education in AEC 2015:
Realizing Possibilities, Defining Foundations

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Entrepreneurship Learning in Cross-cultural Educational Environment: The Dynamics and Critical Factors

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ABSTRACT

The establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 has brought more challenges and important roles for entrepreneurs in the South East Asia region. One of the main cooperation programmes in AEC is the capacity building and professional development that have an emphasis on building good and successful entrepreneurs being resilient in highly competitive economic region. This paper presents our research on how to develop entrepreneurship competences in cross-cultural university by exemplifying the development of students’ business creation and challenges as well as identifying their critical failure and success factors. In multi-cultural educational environment, a cultural difference can be a challenge for students to learn entrepreneurship. Some of the challenges may rise from the differences in languages, lifestyles, interactions, traditions and values of life. On the other hand, this cross-cultural environment could deliver a positive impact on improving the students’ entrepreneurship competences. Good entrepreneurship learning should be able to generate entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, such as entrepreneurial character, leadership and business management. The implementation of entrepreneurship learning in a cross-cultural educational environment was explored in the scope of business creation issues and challenges experienced by students of the International Business Management Program at University of Ciputra. The criteria for sample were groups of students running business projects, consists of students with different cultural backgrounds. Triangulation methods and sources were used to obtain validity and reliability. The results showed that students experienced a dynamic learning process and faced challenges caused by cultural differences. Based on this study, entrepreneurial characters and support accepted by students was identified as the most important success factors. Students who are successful in their business projects tend to be more open and confident in creating business with cross-cultural team members.

Keywords: cross-cultural, entrepreneurship, higher education, start-up business

Introduction

The Asean Economic Community (AEC) will establish a single regional common market of Asean countries by 2015. This effort is expected to be an economic prosperity mission, increasing business and investment opportunities for the ASEAN countries through free flow of goods, services, investment capital and skilled labor,
supported by the administrative policies such as tariff reductions and other administrative procedures. AEC opened the opportunity for entrepreneurs in South East Asia with new regional markets, greater choices of goods and services for consumers, acquiring more qualified human resources and business networks across ASEAN countries. On the other hand, this condition will increase competition, constraints such as tight fiscal situation, inadequate infrastructure (Rosellon & Yap, 2010) and other challenges for entrepreneurs. Moreover, for marketing highly competitive products and services, entrepreneurs need to learn many things about the target market, such as local regulations, culture, languages, and customer behaviors of the market. Entrepreneurs who are generally associated with SMEs will meet several barriers, such as: “access to finance, technology, skills, information gaps, difficulties with product quality and marketing, and the fact that penetrating the export market has not been easy for SMEs” (Aldaba, 2013). This challenge is not only the responsibility of the business people but also educational institutions, by contributing to highly competent human resources.

Today, entrepreneurship becomes important factors contributing in job growth and national economic development (Sahin, Nijkamp, & Baycan-Levent, 2007). The role of entrepreneurs in private sector has become the driver of economic growth in most of ASEAN member countries (Rosellon & Yap, 2010). Furthermore, an entrepreneurship education is expected to create great passionate, highly energetic entrepreneurs that can invent new ideas, creative solutions with calculated risk taker character and has vision to recognize opportunities (Kuratko, 2005). Thus, entrepreneurs will be able to face AEC challenges by creating employments in dynamic, creative and productive businesses (Abdinagoro, 2003) within cross cultural environments. “This will require models of education which is more focused on preparing people for tomorrow’s labour markets and for a more unpredictable and complex society, as well as new policies especially target for this area” (Marques & Albuquerque, 2012). Particularly, entrepreneurship education must be improved by incorporating cross-cultural business environment in its curriculum.

This paper explores the entrepreneurship education experience in cross-cultural environments in International Business Management study program in Ciputra University. The entrepreneurship learning process at University of Ciputra adopts experienced-based learning approach that combines theory and practice. Students are assigned to create a business project that must be executed from the 2nd semester until 7th semester of their studies. By having business project, students had the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills learned in class into their business, practice how to look for business opportunities then creating businesses of their own. Student must be the active participant in learning and depends on collaboration and interaction with their partner within the group (Lans, Popov, Oganisjana, & Täks, 2013). Furthermore, “the role of culture in explaining entrepreneurial intentions is probably very relevant” (Liñán & Chen, 2009), culture effects learning styles, such as “preference for abstract conceptualization versus concrete experience” (Joy & Kolb, 2009). Moreover, culture is considered as tools of communication in a group, used for expressing feelings, exchanging valuable information, forming bonds of solid teamwork as well as strategies for their business project (Kraus & Sultana, 2010). Cross-cultural collaboration incorporated in entrepreneurship education is expected to result in better development of interpersonal skills as well as higher-level learning (Sweeney, Weaven, & Herington, 2008).

This research focuses on how to develop entrepreneurship competences in cross-cultural university by exemplifying the development of students’ business creation and challenges as well as identifying their critical failure and success factors. The implementation of entrepreneurship learning in a cross-cultural educational environment was explored in the scope of business creation issues and challenges experienced by students of the International Business Management Program at University of Ciputra. Case study approach is used on groups of students running business projects, consists of students with different cultural backgrounds, Cleaning Service Residential (CSR) and Forward Event Creator (FEC). The selection of CSR is considering cross-cultural background of members of
a group consisting of two locals and one Korean student. CSR is a business in cleaning service on call for personal residential that has been running for 3 semesters. This group was examined concerning on cross-cultural influences related to differences in nationality. On other hand, the FEC was chosen with regard to its members' background that consists of 4 local students, from Surabaya city, and one student from Ende city. Cross-cultural differences related with student's origin, 4 members are from Java, part of Western Indonesia and 1 student is from Flores Island, part of Eastern Indonesia. The objective of using case study is to identify a more detailed description on the entrepreneurial learning process, group dynamics related to the relationship between members, interaction with customers, suppliers, employees and other parties and to identify the problems, find solution proposed by groups then formulate critical failure and success factors in a cross-cultural entrepreneurship.

Literature review

Cross cultural education

Before looking further into entrepreneurship education in cross cultural environment, it is necessary to first understand what culture is. In general, culture consists of four elements: values that comprise ideas about what seems important in life, norms that consist of expectations of how people will behave in various situations, institutions as the structures of a society within which values and norms are transmitted and artefacts, aspects of material culture, derive from norms and values of a culture (Sahin et al., 2007). With these elements, "growing up in a certain cultural context entails the imparting of these meanings, practices and tools of discourse" which processed explicitly or implicitly involving knowledge (Kraus & Sultana, 2010). "Culture is a factor, which can influence people in the way they behave. Culture is transferred by social environment in which one passes through the learning and growing process" (Sahin et al., 2007).

In educational context, students from various cultural backgrounds gathered in an institution, creating dynamics in learning and social interactions. It is evident that culture has an impact on the learning style like collectivism, uncertainty avoidance in certain culture impact person's preference for abstract conceptualization versus concrete experience (Joy & Kolb, 2009). Instead of influencing learning style, culture consists of "a set of conventionalized learned routines that help individuals in a society to coordinate their social behaviors. On the other hand, when an individual is immersed in and exposed to only one culture, the learned routines and conventional knowledge of that culture may limit his or her creative conceptual expansion" (Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008). The cultures from different disciplines, different national and cultural contexts influence students' ability of becoming effective communicators and collaborators (Kraus & Sultana, 2010). Students attending universities in a culture different from their own usually deal with problems of adjustment. Multi-cultural experience could result in "culture shock, feeling anxious and disoriented in the absence of the familiar—the language, the food, the behavioral norms" (Leung et al., 2008). This is could be difficult when a new student is aware of the cultural differences in advance, and becoming more difficult when he or she is unaware, assuming that the new environment are like their home country (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008).

Dynamics caused by cultural differences also happen in the learning process and interaction within smaller group of students. "Obstacles in communication within a culturally mixed group are often concerned feelings of awkwardness, discomfort and uneasiness associated with expressing what one felt during interactions with others" (Kraus & Sultana, 2010). Many learning-related problems in inter-cultural group are resulted from expectations gaps between teachers and students (Zhou et al., 2008), tensions and challenges involving value differences while working on assignments as project partners may have different perspective (Kraus & Sultana, 2010). Thus, "social support
from both host and co-nationals can contribute to enhancement of student psychological well being to enhance the quality of their overall experiences” (Zhou et al., 2008).

Entrepreneurship in cross-cultural environment

For AEC 2015, entrepreneurs should be able to overcome expanded business environment. Cultures exist surrounding entrepreneurs will influence entrepreneurial intentions. “Culture-based differences like inter alia, internal solidarity and loyalty, flexibility, personal motivation, the work ethic, flexible financing arrangements, influence entrepreneurial attitude and behavior” (Sahin et al., 2007). Moreover, entrepreneurially friendly culture such as in collectivistic cultures that valuing entrepreneurship as career option, supported with legal reforms that facilitate firm creation will promote entrepreneurial intentions (Liñán & Chen, 2009). Culture, in the form of a family tradition in business and strong family ties, has an impact on business entry motives, on the financing of new start-ups, and are responsible for encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit and performance (Sahin et al., 2007).

An entrepreneur should have vision and innovative thinking then learn all the information, to plan and measure risk before taking action (Kuratko, 2012). However, culture may limit creativity, multicultural experiences can promote creative ideas by “providing direct access to novel ideas and concepts from other cultures, creating the ability to see multiple underlying functions behind the same form, destabilizing routinized knowledge structures, thereby increasing the accessibility of normally inaccessible knowledge, creating a psychological readiness to recruit ideas from unfamiliar sources and places, and fostering synthesis of seemingly incompatible ideas from diverse cultures” (Leung et al., 2008). The entrepreneurs find opportunities and start business based on perceived entrepreneurial opportunity influenced by contextual motivation, that is the influence of social, economic, and political environments that shape individual behaviors (Hechavarria & Reynolds, 2009).

In higher education entrepreneurial learning context, Rae (2003) speaks of opportunity-centred learning as the heart of entrepreneurship (Lans et al., 2013). The learning process needs to incorporate cross-cultural element that enhances creativity and opportunity recognition. Bringing students from different cultural backgrounds into the same team provides multicultural experience that can potentially result in creative problem solving and idea generation (Leung et al., 2008). However, the learning success rate in heterogeneous student groups need to consider factors like embracing members’ knowledge, experiences and skills; “communication; problem solving and decision making; conflict management; and leadership” (Lans et al., 2013). Incorporating cross-cultural in entrepreneurship study should contribute significantly to the personal development such as confidence, personal initiative, creativity and responsibility and, the entrepreneurial skill development such as social competences, “creative problem solving, opportunity seeking, selling, presentation, group leadership, community co-operation, dealing with bureaucracy, among others” (Marques & Albuquerque, 2012).

Research Method

Qualitative research approach with a case study strategy is used to explore the development of students’ business creation and challenges, and to identify their critical failure-success factors as well as to develop entrepreneurial competences in cross-cultural university. This study used three data collection methods of observation, interview and documentation that used as triangulation to obtain the validity of the data. CSR was selected based on members’ cross cultural nationality backgrounds consisting of two local students and one Korean. FEC groups were selected based on members’ background consisting of 4 local students from Surabaya and one from Ende, Flores Island in
Eastern Indonesia to learn the cross-cultural differences of student origin within one nationality. Observation period of this study was taken over three semesters starting from start-up business phase.

**Discussions**

The first section of discussion will explain about the dynamics of CSR and FEC in their learning process during business start-ups and execution. The entrepreneurial competences that appear as a result of their learning process will also be described in this section. The last part of the discussion will describe the critical failure and success factors in entrepreneurship learning and business creation process particularly in cross cultural environment elaborated from observations and interviews.

**Dynamics and entrepreneurial competence**

Business start-up process was done in the 2nd semester as part of Entrepreneurship 2 and Entrepreneurial Project 2 courses. At the beginning of the course, students were given the task to form a business group and then create business idea that was targeted to be ready for execution at the end of 2nd semester. In early stages of the group formation, both CSR and FEC choose their members based on friendship. CSR choose members from their classmates since they felt more comfortable working with a friend they already know as they hoped for easier coordination in the team because they have similar lecture schedule than if collaborating with those from different classes. FEC group selected their members based on classmates, hangout partners since they expected it would be fun and fit each other. At this stage, they do not yet understand the recruitment process and forming group as fulfillment of course requirement.

The next stage was they must think a business idea to be executed. Students were given knowledge of business ideas creation using design thinking method and planning using the Business Model Canvas tools from Entrepreneurship 2 class, while Entrepreneurial Project 2 courses taught the knowledge of market and competition as well as the preparing a professional business plan. Furthermore, lessons from class were directly practiced and they finally were able to decide business ideas. CSR decide to create cleaning service for home personal residents. This idea initiated by the CEO after considering many households in Surabaya often been hassled caused by the absence of housekeeper. CSR members held preliminary survey and market observation; then conclude an opportunity in this business. This business idea was then approved by the other members; but unfortunately, not all members interested with this kind of business, nor feeling optimistic with this idea. Moreover, cross-cultural dynamics experienced by Korean member, named Lee. At first joining the group, Lee did not know the other members well and he was more following the majority or CEO’s direction. Lee also found that the Indonesian middle class usually have personal housekeeper and nowadays it's been quite difficult to find one since many workforces choose to work as factory labor, shopkeeper or others that give higher salary and seemed to be more prestigious than housekeeper. On the contrary, in Korea, the middle classes do the houseworks on their own instead of having housekeeper. Another obstacles experienced by Lee was not fluent in Bahasa Indonesia, so often in discussions he stunned, silent for lost in translation or unable to express his opinions and feelings. On the other hand, the local members often got confused with Lee and sometimes laughed the awkwardness. Fortunately, this did not stop them in working on their business since all can speak in English. Informal interaction between members also occur like hang out, watching movies gave them opportunity to know each other in person, adapt, learning local term or slanks for Lee. Language barrier and acceptance from friends once had been a personal issue for Lee at the 1st semester. At Entrepreneurial Project 1 course, Lee did not know the class member, felt confused and less involved by his classmates result in feeling uncomfortable, unmotivated, more absence in class and failed in this course. This issue became less crucial in
smaller group like CSR since each member were more supportive and friendly.

Different conditions experienced by FEC, when they decided to join the team. In creating a business plan, originally they wanted to create business in trading palm oil commodity considering big profits generates from each transaction. But this idea was not executed because they have another alternative, event organizer business. According to them, event organizer was more fun than commodity business. Furthermore, all members had once used event organizer services, and experienced organizing event at Entrepreneurial Project 1 course. They see the opportunities that people, present and future, might hold an event or celebration. Although there are many competitors in this business, they were optimistic that this business could be successful considering the market size, creative opportunities to win the market and the most important was their passion in this area. Teamwork was more easily formed in this group because they have the same passion, and it is easier to communicate compared to CSR because Indonesian is their mother tongue. After forming the FEC, they were more often met formally to work on class assignment as well as hang out together. Often in informal meetings, they discuss business while dining or hanging out, and this effect to better teamwork, motivation and excitement in their business. In FEC, one of the members who have different cultural backgrounds came from the island of Flores, named Selvi. According to her, Flores people are more straightforward expressing their opinion, talk in a loud voice and act fast, unlike the Javanese people who are more implicit in communication, soft spoken, more patient and careful. She also had an event organizer business while in high school and had often helped his parents in the store during her childhood in Flores. Her background did not become problem in FEC, even help create openness in the team. Differences in local languages do exist, but in this group used Bahasa Indonesia more often than local languages.

In start-up business phase, both CSR and FEC learned basic concepts for starting business and entrepreneurial knowledge as well as managerial skill from other courses; then applied these in their business creation practice. From both cases, CSR and FEC start their business based on opportunity instead of necessity. This explains the opportunity recognition skill learned by students and had been applied in their business creation process. In addition, both group faced cross-cultural challenges such as language barrier, different cultural background and managed themselves to adapt to each other more from informal interactions to maintain cohesiveness.

On the next semester, CSR and FEC continued on business execution. For CSR, the execution did not run smoothly because they had trouble in finding customers. Although they had advertised their service to friends through BBM and brochures, many people contacted just for asking information since cleaning service for personal residential was relatively new. Consumers often compared the price offered with housekeeper salary that seemed more expensive, without considering professional cleaning offers. In addition, CSR also found difficulties in recruiting employees whereas business has been launched. At the beginning of running their business, there are several times that they had to clean customer houses because orders had been received but then employee were absence without prior notice. As solution, all members agreed to work on the customer's home together. Unfortunately only Edbert (CEO), Gabriel and Lee come while the other 2 members did not come, nonetheless they decided to finish the work. This brought an exciting experience for members of the CSR, the middle class students, who generally have housekeeper at their house and not used doing cleaning job. In this condition, they learn responsibility and the meaning of excellent customer service to build customer trust. Adverse business conditions and employees turnover happened one after another and finally 2 members quit, and left Edbert (CEO), Gabriel and Lee. This event gives hard pressure for the remaining members, but they did not give up. Edbert (CEO) remained confident that this business can run and needed more time for introduction and development, while Gabriel and Lee were less confident but still give support for Edbert considering their friendship. They changed the advertising media and look for employees through newspaper mini advertisements and get positive results. They finally got regular subscription
and learned improving their services, developing standard procedures and managing employees. In the execution processes, assigning tasks according to members competence were very important. Edbert (CEO) at first gave Lee responsibility as marketing, but this became problem because Lee did not speak Indonesian fluently, unable to communicate with customers and become less performed. Next, Edbert (CEO) assign Lee to handle daily operations, since he considered Lee was not good in handling finance and administration documents. However, this job meet language barrier once again, as Lee must meet local suppliers i.e. shop owners, dealing with employees who are local people with lower education and had to communicate more with the Javanese local language. Moreover, Lee did not have his own vehicle that is hindering the mobility to buy goods and other operational purposes. Finally Edbert gave assignments in administration and finance for Lee because this task does not require a lot of communication with external parties. As a result, Lee found it easier and more comfortable now and learned to improve his administration. This experience taught CEO in leadership and managing human resources that appropriate job assignment will bring optimal result; trust in team member and give responsibility will result in cohesiveness, more participation and better teamwork. In addition, the change of responsibility gave experience for Lee in interacting with the locals, experiencing cross-cultural dynamics in local business.

The FEC experience in the execution of the business can be valued more smoothly than CSR. It was proved from the performance; they had launched 7 events within 2 semesters and had reached over one hundred million Rupiah of sales (equal to USD 10,000). Their first event is “Fun Parade” which took children and toddler markets succeeded and reach full return on their initial investment Thus increase team motivation and confident in business. Their other events were bazzar and Halloween, and each event was always profitable. Business conditions are good this one because of solid teamwork by all members of the group. Although there are duties and responsibilities, but all give support to another friend. In FEC, Selvi, one from Flores, is responsible for marketing and has a different experience than the experience of doing business in Flores. Selvi explains that the people of Surabaya more careful in choosing and take time to decide on the deal, while people usually faster Flores decides deal shortly or immediately after the offering. Language is also a major challenge of doing business in Surabaya, because the bidding process, communication with customers should be more often use the Javanese local language so that the customer was not too formal and familiar thus forcing Selvi learn the local language. Another challenge is the lack of acquaintance of the Surabaya spur Selvi meet and interact more with the local people so they can more easily get a reference customer contact. These conditions provide a new experience for Selvi in negotiations to win the deal with the customer and this success gave personal pride because the background as Flores, a small island, he could deal with the business of Surabaya which is considered more advanced. Another experience is the interaction with a group of friends Surabaya to become stronger and Selvi feel fully supported, becoming an important part of the group.

In business execution phase, both CSR and FEC experienced various dynamics. Important learnings from their entrepreneurial experiences are developing system dan operational procedures like marketing, operation, customer service, promotion and effective business strategy. High ethical standard are important as well, applied in fulfillment of customer order, friendly service for customer, also after sales service to maintain customer relationship. At this stage, language barrier still exist for student with different cultural background, motivation to adapt with local situation and support from other members are also important to maintain solid teamwork.

Based on the observation of the dynamics of the group and interviews, critical failure factors in the process of learning entrepreneurship in a cross-cultural environment can be formulated, as follows:

- Lack of passion and confidence in the business. In CSR, lack of confidence in the business because of group splitting-up, whereas in FEC all members have the same passion thus the business runs more smoothly.
• Language can greatly impede the process of learning and interactions of foreign students. In groups’ internal communication, language barrier can be overcome by the initiative among members to accept this weakness. However, the incapability of speaking local language could limit an opportunity to making a deal with customers and building longterm relationship with customers or suppliers.
• Insufficient managerial knowledge and skills for business operations, human resource management and marketing can result in business stagnation and failure.

In addition, several success factors can be summarized below:
• Passion and confidence in business undertaken. This factor is confirmed and emphasized by the CSR and the FEC during interview and in accordance with their current business performance.
• Dare to take risks is important to execute business plan, implement quick effective solutions and improve business process.
• Persistence and adaptability can overcome cross-cultural environment constraints. This should be applied in the management and personal interactions.
• Support between members and the environment encourages entrepreneurs in running and sustaining their business in different cultural market area.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship learning through cross-cultural educational environment provides dynamic challenges and entrepreneurial competences in the development of new businesses, which can be adopted in the international business setting. The successful entrepreneurs often bring innovation, provide creative products and have good business management while they must adapt with the local culture. This research is a case study of multi-cultural entrepreneurship education at Ciputra University that could not be generalized internationally. It is also required some considerations of other cross-cultural environment and entrepreneurship dimension. However, this study can be utilized as useful information and guidance for the entrepreneurial education in cross-cultural environment, and for the preparedness of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) on building competences of good entrepreneurs and generating new strong businesses in highly competitive AEC economic region.

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