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Nurturing Entrepreneurship Skills, Creativity and Communication Skills: An Exploratory Study on Omani Arab EFL Learners

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Abstract

To prepare students to face the world of work, universities should ensure that engineers graduating from their campuses demonstrate entrepreneurial skills and the ability to understand market forces alongside domain knowledge. This exploratory study focused on the design, application, and evaluation of a research-based coursework assignment in a business communication course offered to undergraduate level engineering students at a university college in Oman. The assignment aimed at developing students' entrepreneurship skills, basic business concepts, creativity, critical thinking, communication skills, and research skills. Student perceptions on the role of assignment in developing the above-mentioned skills and in influencing their affective domain were gathered using a survey questionnaire carrying closed and open-ended questions. The data were analyzed using SPSS and frequency tables were generated. The results of the survey revealed that the students enjoyed working on the assignment and showed strong agreement for most of the items on the role of assignment in developing their skills and knowledge. The assignment model used in this study can support teachers in designing assessments that target the development of entrepreneurial skills alongside other meta-skills and can help solve the problem of unemployment in due course.

Keywords: Omani EFL learners, affective domain; entrepreneurship skills; creativity; critical thinking; research skills

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship has emerged over the last two decades as arguably the most potent economic force the world has ever experienced (Kuratko, 2005). Today's young generation needs skills that can help it respond to situations creatively to achieve success in the fast-paced, competitive, and demanding world of work and pave the way for a sustainable future. Present economic trends and changes in employers' approach towards decision-making indicate that the future workplace is most definitely going to be more dynamic and intense. It is often the entrepreneur who can respond to these demands and exploit available opportunities.

Higher education is meant, among others, to be the driving force of socio-economic development and its quality partly depends on its demand and recognition from the labor market and stakeholders—hence, there is an urgent need for integrating entrepreneurship into higher education as "one of strategic pathways in the improvement of the quality of higher education" (Melnikova, Ahrens, Grunwald, & Zaščerinska, 2017, p.160).

Currently, universities are not only institutions of higher learning but also "important catalysts of technological development and economic growth" (Yemini & Haddad, 2010). This notion has led to increased awareness and the potential value of entrepreneurship in education.

Increasingly, universities have realized that the only way students can be prepared for the transformed working environment is through entrepreneurship education. Therefore, most of the business courses train students in these skills through modules on entrepreneurship. However, it is often noted that the students opting to study engineering disciplines seem not fortunate enough to get adequate, sufficient training in this area. This is unfortunate because entrepreneurship skills can support engineers in exploiting technological innovation, yielding enhanced economic growth for the countries (Holzman, Hartleib, & Roth, 2018).

Though there have been entrepreneurship courses designed for business students as well as for students opting to study engineering and science, entrepreneurship skills are allocated but a minimal percentage value in the curriculum.

While the increased access to higher education in Oman is commendable, a large population of young Omanis graduating from tertiary level institutions is not able to find suitable jobs. Jobs in the government sector are limited, and the private sector is considerably dominated by expatriate workforce due to the specialized nature of certain jobs and expatriates having the upper hand in terms of English language proficiency. Despite the government's efforts on increased Omanisation, the situation does not seem to be under full control.

The problem is not only limited to Oman; researchers from other countries have also reported similar concerns. An important observation made by Wei, (2005) in this context is that research and development in manufacturing companies used to be viewed as "a glamorous career for the brightest engineering graduates, but the number of attractive job offers has been declining for many years" (p.130). He believes that at present, a feasible option for an engineer is to work in a smaller, more entrepreneurial company, which requires "a broad range of skills and knowledge beyond a strong science and engineering background" (p. 185). Therefore, even though the aim is not to

open their own company, graduates might need to work more or less like entrepreneurs in small companies. In these circumstances, it appears inevitable to develop entrepreneurship skills of the graduates to enhance growth opportunities, increase job opportunities, diversify the Omani economy and, in the long run, reduce reliance on oil revenues (Magd & McCoy, 2014).

Focus of the paper

This paper focuses on the design, application, and evaluation of an individual assessed assignment of Business Communication course, which aimed at developing entrepreneurship skills, creativity, and academic skills of non-business students enrolled in engineering programs at a private university college in Oman. The student perspectives on the role of this assignment in enhancing students' creativity, critical thinking, entrepreneurship skills, research skills, and motivation alongside the content knowledge, report writing, and communication skills are also discussed.

Research questions

The main research questions guiding the study are:

- What initiatives can be taken by teachers to develop entrepreneurship skills of non-business students enrolled in engineering programs?
- What are the student perspectives on the role of the individual assignment in developing their content knowledge and skills such as entrepreneurship, researching, creativity, critical thinking, report writing, oral communication?
- What are the students' perspectives on the role of the individual assignment in influencing their affective domain?

Literature Review

This section covers the concept of entrepreneurship education, relevant studies conducted in this area, the relationship between Entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, and how the business communication course can accommodate entrepreneurial initiatives.

Entrepreneurship Education and Relevant Studies

The importance of entrepreneurship education and some of the initiatives taken in the recent past will be discussed in the earlier part of this section. According to Karim (2016), "Entrepreneurship is the foundation of successful economies and the beacon of hope for developing economies" (p.380). Entrepreneurship education that trains students in founding new ventures/ start-ups is gaining enhanced impetus in the present education scenario (Holtzman, Hartlieb & Roth 2018; Zhang, 2017; Melnikova et al.2017). Start-ups can substantially help in economic development. The development of entrepreneurship skills can offer a major part of the solution to poverty in developing and underdeveloped nations (Si, Ahlstrom, Wei, & Cullen, 2020).

Holzman et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of entrepreneurship education and argue that it should be a cornerstone of the engineering curriculum, which has not happened so far. Their paper introduces the concept of entrepreneurial campus through 'Entrepreneurial Campus Villach' located at the Carinthia University of Applied Sciences (CUAS), Austria, to provide insights to

universities and public institutions who are interested in a similar setup. The campus is among the first in Austria that offers an extensive and scientifically sound entrepreneurship program. The purpose of this initiative is to support entrepreneurship education, which can transform technical inventions into innovative ventures.

Melnikova et al. (2017) discuss the integration of entrepreneurship in higher education, related challenges, and insights from university teachers and students on how to improve it in Lithuania and Latvia in their article. The teachers who were interviewed suggested that "entrepreneurship should be integrated into study subjects in order to develop students' entrepreneurial competencies. In their opinion, the integration of entrepreneurship would make studies more attractive and possibly more beneficial for students. Study participants argued that modern young people are focused more on practical issues (e.g. opportunities to earn money, create some venture, etc.) than academic knowledge" (p.164).

Souitaris, Zerbinati, and Al-Laham (2007) studied the impact of entrepreneurship programs on the entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions of science and engineering students drawing on the theory of planned behavior to verify the conventional belief that entrepreneurship education enhances one's intention to start a business venture. The results confirmed that such programs raise attitudes and inspire students towards entrepreneurial intention.

Concerning the initiatives on entrepreneurship research in Oman, Ibrahim, Devesh, and Abdullah (2017) assessed the attitude of 165 Omani graduates towards entrepreneurship from four colleges in Muscat, Oman. Exploratory factor analysis and multivariate regression model were used to ascertain the main factors affecting students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Their study revealed that the level of knowledge about enterprises, the level of understanding business risk, and the entrepreneurship education attended, have a significant influence on graduate students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship.

Bakheet's (2018) study, conducted on a sample of 2529 students from higher education institutions in Oman, envisioned discovering the relationship between attitudes and intentions for business start-ups. Linear and Multiple regressions were applied to determine the impact of independent variables (Business opportunities, perception of barriers and perception of motives, personal entrepreneurial exposure, expected family support, and culture) on the dependent variable (Entrepreneurial attitudes). The results indicated positive entrepreneurial attitudes and a positive and robust relationship between attitudes and intentions. It was concluded that creating positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship among students will increase the probability of their intention to establish and launch a start-up.

The study that can be closer to the present study is the one conducted by Özdemir (2015). According to him, among the range of skills that are vital for students' success in the future, a good command of English is essential. He used entrepreneurship-based exercises in his classes for a certain period and compared the attitudes of the students before and after the use of exercises. It was found that there was a positive change in the students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. He recommends theme-based entrepreneurial activities to be embedded in EFL classes to promote entrepreneurial spirit among students.

It is important to note here that most of the initiatives mentioned above are either full-fledged entrepreneurial education initiatives or studies on students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Very few studies have looked at the integration of entrepreneurship skills in other courses such as communication and English language support courses, offered to non-business students.

Business Communication, Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation

After discussing the importance of entrepreneurship education, it is essential to look at the relationship between business communication and entrepreneurship and the role of creativity as a driving force of business ventures. Grenci (2012) rightly puts it,

> Entrepreneurship and business communication each is focused on a defined set of concepts and skills that are framed primarily within the context of business. At the same time, their respective studies lie at the crossroads of several disciplines; and as such, each is not entirely unified in its focus. Underneath it all, creativity can provide a convergent point between the two studies (p.2).

Business communication, as Shaw (1993) claims, has been described as a hybrid discipline focusing more on the aspects of the problem-solving mission than the subject matter. It mainly focuses on communication, rhetoric, and management, the areas with connections to areas such as rhetoric, oral and written communication, and management. "The hybrid conception of the field allows us to make the most of our ranging intellectual traditions and to derive research and teaching purposes that extend beyond the limits of a narrow academic legitimacy" (p. 297). Due to this, several business communication courses embed a range of contexts alongside the main focus on business content, writing, and communication. Similarly, the field of entrepreneurship extends over several business disciplines that have a common interest in certain entrepreneurial themes (Ireland & Webb 2007).

Innovative ideas are considered the lifeblood of entrepreneurial ventures. Entrepreneurs need to identify potential opportunities, generate valuable ideas, craft them, and prepare a feasible plan that can lead the project to fruition (Ward, 2004). Innovation and creativity are fundamental to all academic as well as business endeavors. Creativity is one's ability to produce new knowledge or ideas, and innovation is the practice that helps in putting a new idea into practice.

Business organizations have realized that creativity plays a vital role in developing successful business models and helps organizations build competitive advantages and achieve success (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014). Hence creativity is viewed as a critical aspect of businesses where most of the engineering students' future rests, be it their start-up or they are a part of a business organization. Despite this, recruiters complain that graduates often lack these non-technical skills. Therefore, a feasible option that might resolve this problem is via cross-disciplinary efforts made by teachers and curriculum designers, an example of which is outlined in this paper.

To sum up, the relationship among the three areas, entrepreneurship, creativity and business communication and the related pedagogical implications, Grency (2012) emphasized, that the

convergent characteristics of entrepreneurial creativity and business communication go beyond their multidisciplinarity and reveal a parallel set of foundational elements pertaining to individual-level processes and skills that are further defined by their context and outcomes. He further states,

> It is within these latter two elements – context and outcomes – that the convergence takes on pedagogical implications. Specifically, business communication course content can be framed by the complementary context of entrepreneurial creativity, with the outcomes (or deliverables) defined to accomplish the process-focused and skill-building goals of both disciplines (p.3).

Research Methodology

This case study focused on seeking answers to the above-mentioned research questions via the design, application, and evaluation of an individual assignment used in a Business Communication Course in Fall, 2018, which engaged students in a scenario-based task where students were expected to create their own prospective company. The course is offered to non-business Arab students enrolled in undergraduate level engineering courses at a university college in the Sultanate of Oman. The assignment culminated in a written report and an oral presentation detailing various aspects of the company and students' reflections on the task. A mixed-method approach was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the assignment. Student questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data and written reports, and the last part of the survey with open-ended questions was used to arrive at qualitative data. The student survey was administered using google drive, and the quantitative data gathered from closed-ended questions were analyzed using SPSS. Frequency tables were generated for each question. Then, the overall average for all items under each category was calculated.

Course Description

The Business communication course (BUSS0002) enables students to develop skills in both Written and Oral Communication for business. Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the importance, types, and barriers to Communication, data collection and data analysis methods, and data presentation in oral and written forms. The course involves the preparation of business documents, making presentations in a variety of business situations, and communicating effectively both individually and as part of a team. It is a ten credit point course with three in-class contact hours which consist of interactive activities and tutorials and was offered for fifteen weeks. Students are involved in group discussions, case studies, presentations, and task solving apart from quizzes and tests. Apart from the three hours, students are expected to devote extra hours in self-study required to complete the assignments and prepare other assessments. The course carries three assessments, one group assignment, one individual assignment, and one closed-book test. Since the course focuses more on skills acquisition as compared to subject content, there is room for flexibility regarding assessment design, which gives room to innovation. This paper focuses on the design, application, and evaluation of the individual assignment from the point of view of students.

The Assignment and Procedure

This section will focus on the initiative taken to develop entrepreneurship skills among engineering students. The said initiative was introduced as an individual assignment, which is the

second assignment that the students are expected to finish in six weeks (week 8-13) in the course of a fifteen-week semester. It was an assessed assignment with 35% weighing and aimed at developing students' entrepreneurship skills alongside business communication, oral communication, report writing, and research skills.

The assignment is a scenario-based task where students are supposed to envision that they will start their own company. They need to plan and prepare its overall profile, organizational structure, mission and vision, products/services it will provide. They need to think about how they will arrange for finances, raw materials, and other related requirements and ensure their company's success in this competitive world. Other requirements include designing a catchy logo and a slogan for the Company/ Service; giving reasons for the choice of product/service; place and date of establishment; Mission and vision of the Company; detailing its product/services and the reason why the product/service is compelling (the only product which can provide a solution to the problem; planning for finances –salaries, maintenance, marketing, etc.; working on the suitable pricing strategy; customer demographics; drawing organization structure and so on.

It is worth mentioning here that some of the concepts related to business organizations, such as communication in the workplace and organization structure, are covered in the course material. Still, most of the other areas such as pricing strategy, finance options, etc. are not covered and students need to rely on research for these.

The assignment culminated in the production of a written report and an oral presentation using a PowerPoint or Prezi. The presentations covered all the aspects of the company mentioned above. Some students also created a website for their company.

Participants

The participants were 27 undergraduate-level students enrolled in either the third or fourth semester of their program with mixed specializations, including Computer Science, Multimedia, and Information Technology. The class population comprised 23 females and four males. However, for the survey, only 21 responses could be considered for analysis since the remaining six students either did not save or did not submit their responses on Google Drive. Though the overall responses are shown as 27, question-wise responses are visible as 21. For qualitative analysis, feedback collected through written reports and oral presentations, responses from all 27 students are taken into consideration.

Survey Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was designed to collect student perspectives on the role of individual assignment in developing their entrepreneurship skills, academic skills, and creativity and its impact on the affective domain. The survey carried three sections: I. Demographic details, II. Student perspectives on the development of various skills and knowledge, and III. Two open-ended questions on students' learning experiences and suggestions for improvement. The survey was also translated into Arabic by an expert in the field and piloted.

Section I comprised the demographic details, which are covered in the methodology section. Section II aimed at gathering student perspectives on the role of assignment in developing their

knowledge and skills. It carried eight sub-sections, including 1) content knowledge, 2) research skills, 3) entrepreneurship skills, 4) creativity, 5) critical thinking, 6) affective domain, 7) report writing skills, and 8) oral communication and public speaking skills. Each sub-section carried five items except the affective domain, which carried ten items. A five-point Likert scale was used to get students' agreement/disagreement on a continuum from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The data were analyzed using SPSS. Frequency tables were generated for each question. Then, the overall average for all items under each category was calculated. The information is presented using bar graphs in the results section. Section III carried two open-ended questions, one elicited responses on the reflections of students on their learning experiences during the course of the assignment, and the second sought their suggestions concerning improvements that can be made in the assignment to make it more effective and useful in future.

Results

This section presents the results gathered from the survey administered to the students using Google Forms.

Development of Content Knowledge and Skills

The average response from students for each area concerning the role of assignment in enhancing content knowledge, developing various skills, and influencing their affective domain is presented in this section along with a table carrying all the items used to elicit responses for each area. The five points of the Likert scale comprise Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The average of responses gathered from all the items in each area is presented through graphs and discussed.

Content Knowledge

The following five items were used to gather student responses on the role of assignment in developing their content knowledge in business and the workplace. As evident from Figure one, there is a strong agreement from students, with 57.1% students strongly agreeing and 38.1% agreeing that the assignment helped in developing their content knowledge in terms of organization structure, functions of an organization, business strategies, business ideas, etc. (refer Appendix 1)

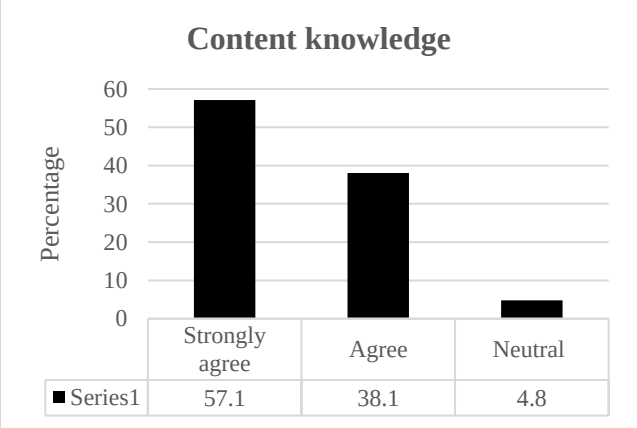

Figure 1. Content knowledge

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Development of entrepreneurship skills being the main focus of this assignment, the student views on the role of assignment in developing related skills were elicited through the five items mentioned in Figure two. It was found that 100% of students agreed, with 52.4% of students strongly agreeing and 47.6% of students agreeing that the assignment developed entrepreneurship skills as they engaged in exploring financing options, and learning about budgeting and pricing. It also motivated them to establish their own business in real.

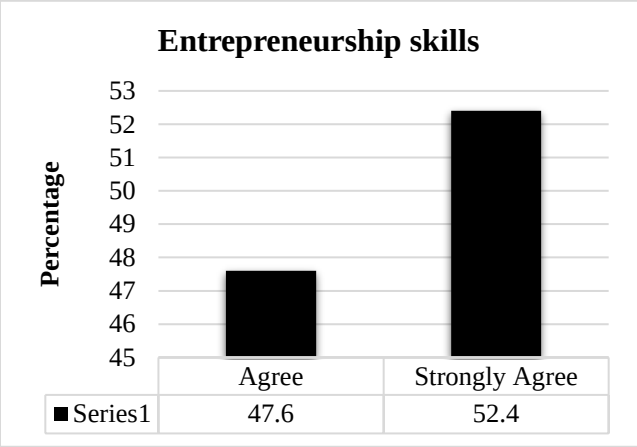

Figure 2: Entrepreneurship skills

Research Skills

Concerning the development of research skills, as shown in Figure three, 100% of students (47% SA and 52.4% A) agree that the assignment encouraged them to research various business concepts, pricing strategies, secrets of success of large business enterprises, and employee staff profiles, etc. In addition, students reported having read research articles on entrepreneurship and establishing business ventures during their presentations.

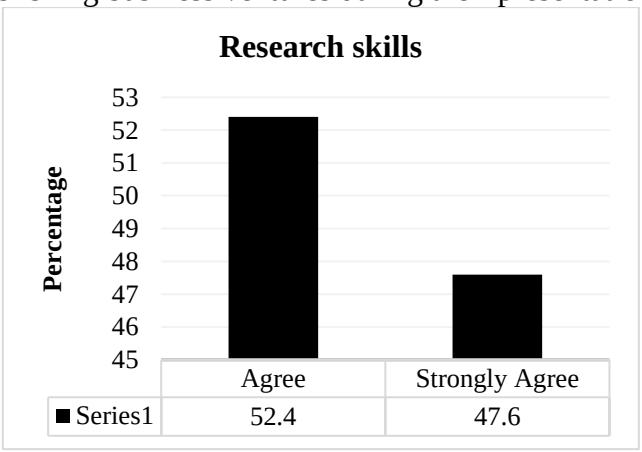

Figure 3: Research skills

Creativity

The next focal area covers the role of assignment in developing creativity among students. Here again, as shown in Figure four, an overwhelming majority of students (71.4%) strongly agreed, and 28.6% agreed that the assignment helped in developing creativity and spirit of inquiry

and innovation as they worked on giving names to their companies, devised slogans, created logos and engaged in other similar exercises. The students also created their company websites, which enhanced their creativity to a large extent.

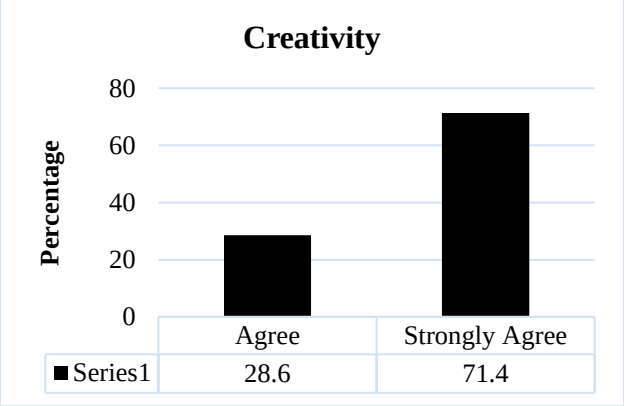

Figure 4. Creativity

Critical Thinking Skills

As shown in Figure five, the next area focuses on the role of assignment in enhancing students' critical thinking, reflecting, and conceptualizing concerning the creation of the company. Here also, the frequency table indicates that 66.7% strongly agreed, and 33.3% agree that the assignment enhanced their critical thinking skills.

The next two areas of the survey covered items related to communication skills, including report writing and oral communication skills.

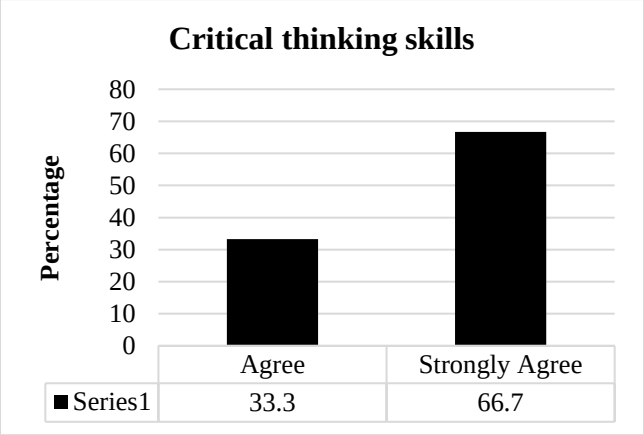

Figure 5. Critical thinking skills

Report Writing Skills

One of the primary learning outcomes of the course is the development of report writing skills among students. The students were trained in report writing skills as part of the course. The entire exercise taken by students culminated in a written report which covered details of the company. Here again, as shown in Figure six, 61.9% of students strongly agreed, and 38.1% agreed that the assignment developed these skills as they worked on the report.

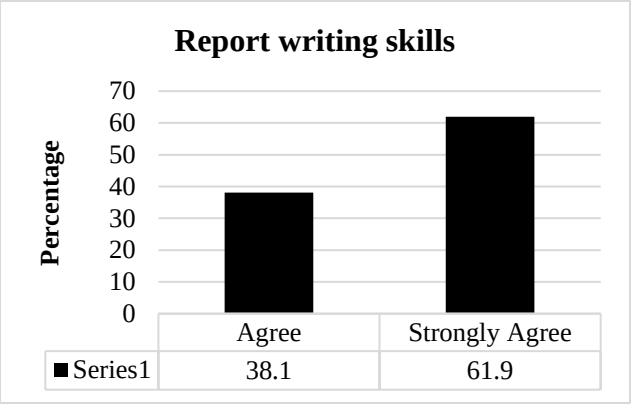

Figure 6. Report writing skills

Oral Communication and Public Speaking Skills

Along with submitting written reports, the students were also expected to make an oral presentation using PowerPoint or Prezi. They were given sessions on making effective presentations. The assignment allowed them to showcase their oral communication skills as they worked on their PowerPoint slides, rehearsed their presentations using effective body language and tone, and prepared expected questions from the audience. Therefore, when asked about the role of assignment in developing oral communication and public speaking skills, as depicted in Figure seven, most of the students responded positively by either strongly agreeing (14 students-66.7%) or agreeing (6-28.6%) to this point. Only one (4.8%) student chose the option 'Neutral'.

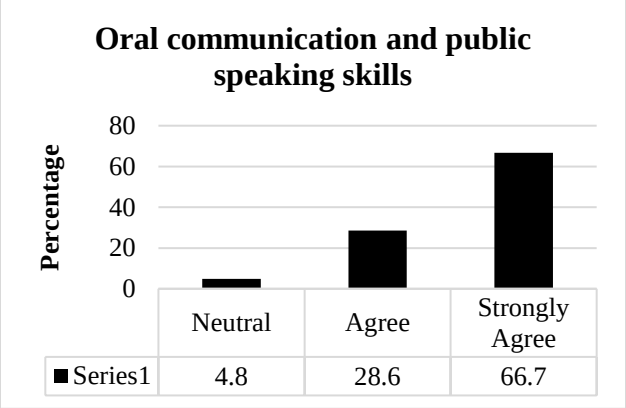

Figure 7. Oral communication and public speaking skills

Role of Assignment in Influencing Students' Affective Domain

Since motivation, positive attitude, interest in doing the task are vital to student learning, it was essential to learn about the student perspectives on the role of assignment in influencing their affective domain. The average student response on all the ten items listed in Figure eight, shows that 76.2% of students strongly agreed and 23% agreed, which confirms that the assignment successfully influenced their affective domain. They found that the assignment tasks were enjoyable; gave them a sense of achievement; provided them with an opportunity to express their interest; gave shape to their dreams; raised their confidence in making decisions; and working on the tasks independently.

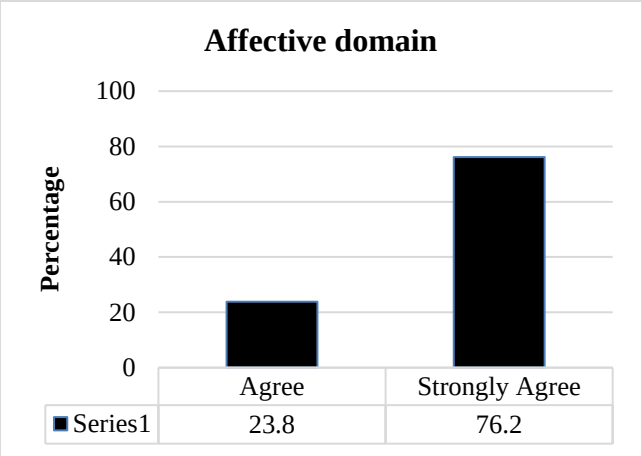

Figure 8. Affective domain

This section carried two open-ended questions that elicited comments on student reflections on the role of assignment in enriching their learning experiences and their recommendations on making it more effective in the future.

Twelve students gave their comments in response to the first open-ended question, which focused on the role of assignment in enriching their learning experience. Some of their comments are listed below:

> I would like to say that all that helped me, was increasing my present knowledge about entrepreneurship [**sic**].
>
> That assignment was a very good chance for me to show what I'm interested in, and also it helped me to present my ideas about the company and I learned a lot about the companies needs and requirements which that will helped me in the future if I want to create my own company [**sic**].
>
> The assignment helped us get the knowledge of initiating an organization or a company and how to manage it in the future, also the feasibility study for when we start a company [**sic**].
>
> It was a great experience for a project like this because it makes us think a lot and get to know many articles about these topics. It was a new thing I did for the first time and I liked a lot.☺ ❤️ [**sic**].
>
> I learned a lot of skills in performing individual duties and how to design a structure, design a company logo and gain experience for a small project in the future [**sic**].
>
> I totally enjoyed this module. It was fun. The assignments were very creative. I've learned so many things.

For the second open-ended question which extracted student recommendations on making the assignment more useful, the following comments were received:

> Give a sample for the assignment so those who don't know English could get idea from the sample [**sic**].
>
> Let each student choose a different company. (They mean products here. Sometimes products are repeated.)
>
> I think if there are a lot of time for do this assignment we can do a good assignment more than this [sic].
>
> Personally I think this assignment will be more effective if the students connect with similar companies of their companies with prepare a short report about main points. That will give the student the motivation to implement their planned company in the future after seeing similar and successful companies [sic].
> To add one more task; making an advertisement for the products sold from krasthe company [sic].

Discussion of Results

The scenario-based task taken up as an assessed assignment turned out to be very popular among students. They came up with excellent plans for companies they want to establish in the future. The products and services included software development companies, gaming apps, gaming stations, restaurants, and coffee shops. The results gathered through the questionnaire indicate a very positive response from the students in terms of the role of assignment in developing their knowledge and skills and in influencing their affective domain. Most of the items received a high degree of agreement from students. According to them, the assignment developed their content knowledge along with research skills since the requirements of the assignment encouraged them to research various business strategies and organizational structures. It also proved beneficial in inspiring students towards entrepreneurial intention, as confirmed by Souitaris et al. (2007) through their study on Engineering and Science students.

For the development of meta-level skills, most of the students were highly positive about the role of assignment in developing their critical thinking and creativity. Creativity is considered to be the driving force of business ventures, and this assignment provided students a platform to develop and exhibit their creativity (Grenci, 2012).

When asked whether the students want to establish their own companies in the future, 95.2% responded positively. This finding is not concurrent with the study conducted by Duval-Couetil, Reed, and Haghighi (2012) on the involvement, attitudes, and outcomes of entrepreneurship education on Engineering students. They found that two thirds or more of the students surveyed wished to work for companies after graduation. Yet, this finding does tend to be in line with Souitaris et al. (2007), who found that the students who were in the program group raised their subjective norm and intention for self-employment, however, students in the control group did not: Hence, the programme helped in raising the entrepreneurial attitudes and intention. In a similar vein, both Lithuanian and Latvian research participants of Melnikova et al.'s (2017) study

also wished for practice-oriented teaching methods and lectures by successful local entrepreneurs who can encourage them to establish their start-ups.

Due to the nature of the module, which focuses on developing communication skills in the workplace and the students being learners of English as a Foreign Language, it was essential to verify whether the assignment was successful in developing students' communication skills. The assignment and other related activities proved beneficial since the students were expected to compile a report and present their future company to the classmates, the course tutor, and moderators who act as judges. The findings are concurrent with Özdemir's (2015) study— the only study which is similar to the present study in that he adopted a theme-based combined approach to teaching English and entrepreneurship.

Research has confirmed that a range of affective variables relates to success in second language acquisition (Brown, 1973: Krashen, 1981). Most of those can be under the three main categories, including motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. According to Fandiño Parra (2008),

> considerations for beliefs, attitudes, anxieties and motivations have been incidental rather than integral to the teaching methodology and have not been grounded in a conscious philosophy of pedagogy. Affective factors should not continue being considered the Cinderella of mental functions (p.196).

A conscious effort was made to learn about the role of assignment in influencing the students' affective domain. Once again, the results are very positive since the students enjoyed working on the assignment, felt that it built confidence, and gave them a sense of achievement. Thus, incorporating entrepreneurship content and assessed assignment in communication or EFL modules can develop an entrepreneurial spirit, competencies, and attitudes among students (Ozdemir, 2015). The findings confirm that entrepreneurs are not born (Kuratko, 2005), and education can aptly enhance entrepreneurship skills among students.

Conclusion

Though it is small in scale, the present study was large enough to provide significant insights into the designing of course materials and assessments of the business communication module. Such initiatives can support the development of students' entrepreneurship skills alongside other meta-level skills that can eventually help solve the problem of unemployment. The stated objectives of integrating entrepreneurship skills along with oral and written communication skills, research skills, and content knowledge were satisfactorily accomplished. Most of the aspects explored in the questionnaire received a highly positive response from the students' end, and most of the qualitative comments revealed students' excitement and satisfaction after working on their written assignments and presenting them publicly in class. Innovation and creativity are fundamental to entrepreneurial endeavors, and this was exhibited through the students' unique ideas for their proposed companies. This indicates that such a pedagogical initiative promotes entrepreneurial intention among students and could be a motivating learning activity that viably enhances a range of skills alongside content knowledge and leads to improved learning outcomes. In addition, it can have a very positive influence on the students' affective domain.

Limitations and Pedagogical Implications

The main limitation of this study is that it was conducted on one single cohort of students in one setting. Moreover, since the study was conducted during the third semester and the participants were hitherto enrolled in their study programs, whether their entrepreneurial intentions took a concrete shape or not, could not be studied. Lastly, due to the paucity of space, teacher perspectives of this intervention have not been reported in this paper. Despite these limitations, the assessed assignment model used in this study can form the basis for intervention programs that target developing students' entrepreneurial skills and are not in a position to offer full-fledged entrepreneurship courses due to curriculum and time-related constraints. Depending on the duration of the course, the teachers handling Business communication or similar communication and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses should address the curricular adjustments and introduce such practices that develop entrepreneurship skills. Since the choice of having one job to achieve retirement is no longer viable, universities should explore the possibilities of integrating such new teaching and learning practices to develop entrepreneurship skills that encompass creativity and critical thinking by default.

About the Author

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Appendix A

Student Survey on Business Communication Individual Assignment: Creating a Company

This survey focuses on the individual assignment, which is an assessed component in the Business Communication module. The main objective of this survey is to find out your perspectives on the role of this assignment in enhancing your creativity, critical thinking, entrepreneurship skills, research skills, and motivation alongside content knowledge, report writing, and communication skills.

The information that you express through this questionnaire will be handled by me with extreme confidentiality and will be used for arriving at some conclusions for my case study research. Your

participation in this survey is optional and highly appreciated and will be of great value to reach the objectives of my mentioned work. Please fill out carefully the entire questionnaire, for which I thank you in advance. Your response to these questions is based on the agreement that you have been clearly explained about the purpose and scope of the survey.

Gender

- Male
- Female

Semester

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Specialization: _____

SA: Strongly Agree A: Agree N: Not sure D: Disagree SD: Strongly Disagree
Please choose the most suitable option

Table 1. *Content knowledge*

	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. The assignment encouraged me to research and explore business ideas beyond the curriculum.					
2. I learned about the functions of an organization.					
3. I learned about the organization structure.					
4. I learned about various business strategies.					
5. I learned about staff profiles and their roles in an organization.					

Table 2. *Research skills*

1. The assignment encouraged me to research various areas of a business enterprise.					
2. I researched various pricing strategies before finalizing the prices of my products/services.					
3. I researched various organization structures used before creating my organization structure.					
4. I researched the secrets behind the success of a successful organization.					
5. I read various staff profiles before deciding upon the profiles of my staff.					
6. I explored the options available for financing and supporting young entrepreneurs in Oman.					

Table 3. *Entrepreneurship skills*

1. The assignment developed my entrepreneurship skills.					
2. I learned how to get and arrange for finances before starting a company.					
3. I learned how to budget the available finances.					
4. I learned about various pricing strategies.					
5. I learned about various pricing strategies.					
6. I look forward to establishing this business in real.					

Table 4. *Creativity*

1.	The assignment helped me develop my creativity.					
2.	The assignment developed the spirit of inquiry and innovation.					
3.	I learned how to give a meaningful name to my future company.					
4.	I learned how to devise a meaningful slogan.					
5.	I learned how to create a logo which ideally reflects the nature and business of my company.					

Table 5. *Critical thinking*

1.	The assignment encouraged me to think about which product/service would sell in the market.					
2.	The assignment helped me reflect on how to utilize my budget.					
3.	The assignment made me reflect on various pricing strategies and decide the prices.					
4.	I learned how to conceptualize a business venture.					
5.	I reflected on various options available for business in my context.					

Table 6. *Affective domain*

1.	I enjoyed working on this assignment.					
2.	I was happy to share my ideas with my friends and teachers.					
3.	The logo and slogan creation task gave me a sense of achievement.					
4.	I am confident that I can start a business on my own in the future.					
5.	The assignment gave me an opportunity to express what I am interested in.					
6.	The assignment helped me give a shape to my dreams.					
7.	My friends' and teachers' approval and appreciation gave me satisfaction.					
8.	I enjoyed working independently.					

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9.	My confidence level increased after finishing the assignment report and presentation.					
10.	Overall, the assignment gave me a sense of satisfaction.					

Table 7. *Report writing skills*

1.	I learned about the structure of a business report.					
2.	I learned about the components of a business report.					
3.	I developed report writing skills as I created drafts of the report and revised them.					
4.	I learned how to express my ideas in writing.					
5.	I developed referencing and citation skills.					

Table 8. *Oral communication and public speaking skills*

1.	I developed oral communication and presentation skills.					
2.	I learned how to give an oral presentation using effective body language and gestures.					
3.	I learned how to use effective voice tone during oral presentations.					
4.	I learned how to make professional PowerPoint slides.					
5.	I learned how to respond to the audience's questions.					

I. Please write your reflections on the assignment and your learning experience.

_____

_____

II. What suggestions would you like to give to make this assignment more effective and useful in the future?

_____

_____

_____

Thanks for your cooperation