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EVALUATING IMPACTS OF EXPERIMENTAL LEARNING - THE CASE STUDY OF GROWING VERMONT

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Evaluating Impacts of Experiential Learning – The Case Study of Growing Vermont

Synopsis:

This paper discusses and analyzes a student-run entrepreneurial venture at the University of Vermont by incorporating experiential learning and assessment.

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to evaluate the educational impact of experiential entrepreneurship education using the specific case of the Growing Vermont store (GVT) at the University of Vermont (UVM). Variation in entrepreneurship curricula, both content and means of transference, has presented a challenge to educators wishing to prepare students for careers in entrepreneurship. By examining the benefits and consequences of the Growing Vermont program, recommendations can be drawn for future innovation in entrepreneurship education. Additionally, this paper uses a novel means of measuring the change in the entrepreneurial capacity of individuals. Entrepreneurial orientation (EO), proposed by Miller (1983) and refined by Lumpkin & Dess (1996), is used as a means of measuring the extent to which firms exhibit entrepreneurial behaviors. This paper scores participants based on the five dimensions of EO before and after the GVT experience to observe entrepreneurial learning.

This exploratory study uses a pre and post intervention research design to answer the question “To what extent is the GVT program an effective means of entrepreneurship education?” Data collection methods include a pre and post survey, exit interviews, and written reflections. Findings do not support the use of this program in its current operational state as an effective method of preparing students to become entrepreneurs. Literature suggests that personal risk is an inherent component of entrepreneurship which cannot be easily stimulated within the university environment. The results of this study support this premise, and suggest that entrepreneurship programs must consider how to infuse a sense of ownership to enhance entrepreneurial learning.