Over that last few decades there has been a significant rise in interest for design-led entrepreneurship and innovation. This has brought about the need to expand on the principles and methods of human-centred design by incorporating knowledge from multiple disciplines, such as management, business, and entrepreneurship studies. This expansion aids designers, engineers, and marketing practitioners who strive to create innovative, meaningful and relevant services, business models and experiences.

More often than not, ventures operate under very limited resources, and practitioners are often required to fulfil several roles. The concept of ‘multidisciplinary teams’ widely spread in this sphere often bears little resonance in these contexts. Designers possess valuable competencies that can have a significant impact on the venture, especially driving user and context-centred strategy and processes for the introduction, legitimization and scaling-up stages. However, engaging with these areas of practice requires skills and capacities that overlap traditional disciplinary roles. In doing so, the boundaries between design and engineering, branding and communications, cultural and behavioural insight, marketing and management strategy are blurred.

As educators in design innovation, how do we explore, define and balance interdisciplinary relationships between design, engineering, management, business and entrepreneurship theories, methods, language and models of education? The purpose of the entrepreneurship in design education track is to discuss methods, models, case studies, research, insights and unexpected knowledge in benefits and limitations of design entrepreneurship education. In particular, the three papers presented in this track demonstrate different approaches to entrepreneurship and design education.

The paper, Design Thinking & Entrepreneurial Opportunities: Visual Case Studies of Chilean Designer/Non-Designer Founders by Potocnjak-Oxman, Kriz and Nailer explores the rise in both number and diversity of roles played by designers in the global entrepreneurship ecosystem. Be it as consultants, contractors, educators, founders or funding decision-makers, design skills seem to be increasingly attractive to entrepreneurial teams, accelerator programs and venture capital. The study asks whether the practices, cognitive processes and mindsets prevalent in formal design thinking training helps in the formation of entrepreneurial opportunities. The paper highlights the parallels between design thinking traits with established entrepreneurial competencies and points out that while there are significant alignments, there are also gaps, which when identified, could help determine entrepreneurial actions and success. It also explores how “abductive reasoning” which has been said to sit at the core of design thinking could be a potent tool to enable the successful formation of entrepreneurial activities. The study compares the processes of 14 Chilean founders from both design and non-design backgrounds, with the purpose of identifying how design thinking contributes to, or hinders, those processes. Preliminary findings suggest that successful entrepreneurs from
design backgrounds extend the human-centred view to include organisations, industries and societies, use continuous observation and learning-by-doing to develop their ventures, rely on interdisciplinary collaboration and are tolerant of failure. Design thinking does not, however, seem to provide a clear understanding of the importance of value creation and resource leveraging in the formation of entrepreneurial opportunities.

The paper, Contamination Lab of Turin (CLabTo): how to teach entrepreneurship education to all kinds of university students by Fiore, Sansone, Remondino, and Tamborrini presents the impact of combining design and entrepreneurial methods to teach entrepreneurship to a variety of university students in three different formats. As demand for entrepreneurship courses increase, new methods of teaching entrepreneurship will be required. This paper explains how instructors at the University of Turin are exploring this. Their study addresses how students from different fields of study and different educational levels can have a positive entrepreneurial experience. The teaching experience combines design and entrepreneurial education methods to create a practical, multi-disciplinary team-based course that addresses real-life projects through a learning-by-doing approach. The courses enlist instructors from multiple disciplines to mentor students. The study relies on programme assessment data, including pre and post-surveys to evaluate educational impact. Overall, they found a positive effect on the students’ entrepreneurial skills. However, when the data was broken down according to the students’ fields of study and education levels, mixed results emerged.

The paper, Entrepreneurial Mindset: a longitudinal study of three different teaching approaches to developing it by Fain, Rod and Bohemia explores the influence of three teaching approaches on entrepreneurial mindset of commerce, design and engineering students across three universities. They measured the entrepreneurial mindset of students at the start of a course and then again at the end. During the course, three different teaching methods were employed; lecture and case based, blended online and class based, and project-based course. They found that the engineering students mindsets grew the most, followed by the commerce students, while the design students grew the least.

Attendance and conversation during this session was strong and focused. A number of participants shared insights and experiences that enriched the conversation beyond the paper topics. Near the end of the session, a sincere interest was shared that session participants should get together more often and discuss opportunities and practices. Clearly, exploring entrepreneurship and design education is of growing interest while a challenge remains on how we develop effective education methods in multi-disciplinary entrepreneurship courses.

References


