

Knowledge Transfer in Entrepreneurship Education in Tourism: A Conceptual Framework for Learning Design and Curriculum Innovation

Michal Lukáč, Martin Halmo and Peter Pisár

Institute of Management, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia

michal.lukac@ucm.sk

martin.halmo@ucm.sk

peter.pisar@ucm.sk

Abstract: This paper focuses on improving knowledge transfer in entrepreneurship education in tourism. It assumes that the mere transmission of theoretical knowledge is insufficient and that its practical application is essential. The paper presents a proposal for an innovative undergraduate study programme in Tourism and Hospitality Management at a Slovak public university, introducing two new courses: Venture Ecosystem and Entrepreneurial Marketing and Branding. The approach emphasises project-based learning, real-world problem solving and the use of digital tools. The paper proposes a knowledge transfer model based on the integration of knowledge creation, application and feedback within the learning process. The model combines principles of knowledge management and entrepreneurship education. It is assumed that effective knowledge transfer depends primarily on the design of the learning process, interaction between students and educators, and the connection with practice. The proposed framework is expected to support the development of entrepreneurial competencies and improve graduates' readiness for the labour market.

Keywords: Knowledge transfer, Entrepreneurship education, Tourism education, Project-based learning, Curriculum innovation

1. Introduction

The tourism and hospitality sector is undergoing a significant transformation driven by digitalisation, increasing competition and changing consumer behaviour (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Sigala, 2018). These changes place new demands on graduates, who are expected to possess not only theoretical knowledge but also the ability to apply it in a dynamic entrepreneurial environment.

In this context, the issue of effective knowledge transfer in higher education becomes increasingly important. Traditional teaching models based on one-way knowledge transmission are insufficient for developing practical entrepreneurial competencies (Neck and Greene, 2011). This creates a gap between acquired knowledge and its practical application. From a knowledge management perspective, this gap reflects the challenge of transforming explicit academic knowledge into tacit entrepreneurial competencies applicable in practice.

The aim of this paper is to analyse how learning design and programme implementation can support knowledge transfer in entrepreneurship education in tourism. The paper is based on a proposal for an innovative undergraduate study programme integrating project-based learning, digital tools and collaboration with practice.

Despite the growing body of research on entrepreneurship education and knowledge transfer, existing studies focus predominantly on teaching methods and learning outcomes. Less attention has been devoted to how programme design and implementation frameworks influence the transformation of knowledge into practical competencies, particularly in sector-specific contexts such as tourism.

The paper also proposes a knowledge transfer model based on the integration of solution development, application and iterative feedback within project-based learning environments.

2. Context and Theoretical Background

Knowledge transfer represents a key process in knowledge management, involving the creation, sharing and application of knowledge in organisational and educational contexts (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Argote, 2013). The proposed framework therefore understands entrepreneurship education as a process of knowledge transformation, where students gradually convert explicit theoretical knowledge into tacit knowledge through experiential and iterative learning activities. Its effectiveness depends not only on the quality of knowledge itself but also on the ability of individuals to internalise and apply it (Grant, 1996).

In higher education, knowledge transfer can be understood as the transformation of explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge applicable in practice. Traditional transmissive teaching approaches are insufficient for

developing complex competencies, particularly in entrepreneurship (Neck and Greene, 2011). Contemporary approaches therefore emphasise experiential learning, which actively engages students in knowledge creation (Kolb, 1984; Pittaway and Cope, 2007). Recent research further highlights the role of digital and AI-supported learning environments in supporting entrepreneurial learning, interaction and knowledge sharing processes (Holmes et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurship education increasingly focuses on the ability to identify opportunities, experiment and iteratively test solutions (Fayolle and Gailly, 2008; Ries, 2011). This reflects broader economic changes characterised by the growing importance of innovation, knowledge processes and digital technologies.

In tourism, these trends are particularly pronounced, as business activities are strongly influenced by digitalisation and rapidly changing customer behaviour (Sigala, 2018). Recent studies also emphasise the growing importance of digital entrepreneurship ecosystems and digitally supported entrepreneurial learning environments in higher education (Secundo et al., 2021; Nambisan et al., 2022).

Effective knowledge transfer requires a learning environment that supports interaction between knowledge creation and application. Project-based learning, digital tools and collaboration with practice play a crucial role in bridging academic knowledge and real-world entrepreneurial situations (Argote, 2013; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Furthermore, knowledge transfer is influenced by relational and contextual factors (Argote and Ingram, 2000). The concept of absorptive capacity highlights the ability of individuals to recognise, assimilate and apply new knowledge (Zahra and George, 2002). In this context, absorptive capacity is particularly important, as students must not only acquire new knowledge but also interpret, adapt and apply it in dynamic entrepreneurial situations. This is increasingly important in digitally intensive educational and entrepreneurial environments (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Secundo et al., 2021).

Despite these developments, many study programmes still lag. Students often acquire knowledge but struggle to apply it in practice. Therefore, the focus must shift towards how knowledge is transformed into practical skills.

3. Methodology

The paper adopts a conceptual and design-oriented approach grounded in entrepreneurship education and knowledge transfer literature.

The proposal is based on an analysis of labour market needs and required competencies in tourism, particularly in entrepreneurship, marketing and digital skills.

The innovation includes the introduction of two courses – Venture Ecosystem and Entrepreneurial Marketing and Branding -into the study programme.

Teaching methods include project-based learning, case studies, teamwork and experimentation (e.g. MVP). These approaches are expected to support active learning, solution development and more effective knowledge transfer (Kolb, 1984; Ries, 2011).

The paper therefore addresses the following research question: **How can learning design and implementation frameworks support effective knowledge transfer in entrepreneurship education in tourism?**

4. Knowledge Transfer Mechanisms in Programme Design

The proposed innovation is based on the premise that knowledge must be actively applied in practice. Knowledge transfer is therefore understood as a process through which theoretical knowledge is transformed into practical skills (Kolb, 1984; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). This transformation reflects broader knowledge management processes related to knowledge conversion, experiential learning and organisational learning within educational environments.

The Venture Ecosystem course focuses on idea generation, opportunity identification and solution testing. Learning occurs through experimentation, feedback and iterative refinement.

The Entrepreneurial Marketing and Branding course builds on this by applying ideas in marketing contexts, including branding, digital tools and customer engagement. Students work with real-world tasks rather than theoretical cases.

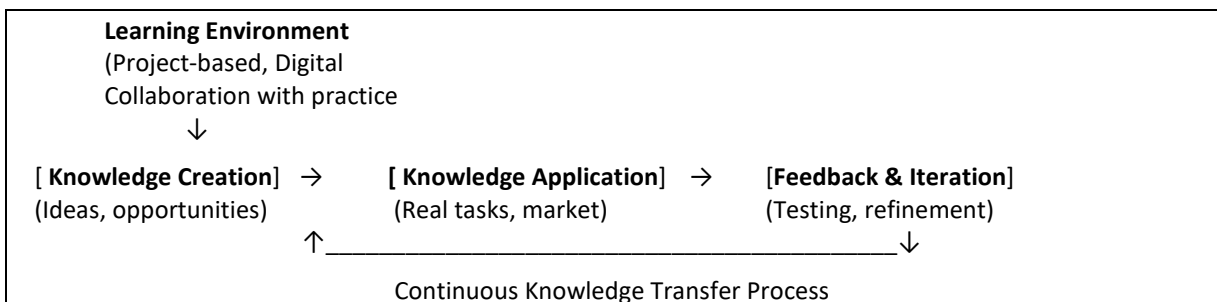
Teaching methods such as project-based learning, teamwork and case studies foster collaboration, discussion and problem-solving. Students learn not only from instructors but also from peers (Pittaway and Cope, 2007).

4.1 Conceptual Model of Knowledge Transfer

The proposed model conceptualises knowledge transfer in entrepreneurship education as a three-stage process:

1. Knowledge creation -students generate ideas and solutions through entrepreneurial exploration (Venture ecosystem course),
2. Knowledge application -students apply these ideas in real or simulated market conditions (Entrepreneurial marketing and branding course),
3. Feedback and iteration -students refine their solutions through continuous feedback, testing and adaptation.

These stages are interconnected and supported by active learning methods, including project-based learning, teamwork and digital tools. The model reflects the transition from explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge through experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and knowledge conversion processes (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Knowledge Transfer in Entrepreneurship Education

The model illustrates knowledge transfer as a continuous process linking knowledge creation, application and feedback within a structured learning environment.

5. Expected Outcomes

The proposed model is expected to improve knowledge transfer in entrepreneurship education. It is assumed that students will be better able to apply theoretical knowledge and develop practical entrepreneurial competencies.

From the perspective of the learning process, the following outcomes are expected higher student engagement, improved understanding of entrepreneurial processes and development of problem-solving skills in real-world situations.

From the perspective of learning outcomes, the following are anticipated: improved use of digital tools, ability to design and test entrepreneurial solutions and better preparedness for the labour market.

A key implication of the proposed framework is that knowledge transfer depends not only on the content of teaching, but primarily on the way it is implemented. In particular, the connection with practice, flexibility of teaching, and the use of digital tools plays a crucial role.

6. Implications

The conceptual analysis suggests the need for systematic innovation of study programmes in order to better reflect the needs of the entrepreneurial environment.

It is important to strengthen the connection between education and practice, emphasise the development of practical and digital skills and use active and innovative teaching methods. This is particularly relevant in the context of digital transformation and AI-supported education, which increasingly influence entrepreneurship education and knowledge transfer processes in higher education (Holmes et al., 2022).

Such an approach is consistent with trends in entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as with the requirements of the digital economy (European Commission, 2020).

The paper provides a practical framework for curriculum designers and education policymakers on how to structure teaching to support the effective application of knowledge and the development of entrepreneurial competencies.

7. Discussion

The proposed framework suggests that effective knowledge transfer in entrepreneurship education depends not only on pedagogical methods but also on the overall design and implementation of the study programme. This supports previous research emphasising the importance of experiential learning and active engagement (Kolb, 1984; Pittaway and Cope, 2007), while extending it by highlighting the role of structured programme design.

Compared to existing literature, the proposed model contributes by integrating knowledge management principles with entrepreneurship education in a sector-specific context. The framework also reflects the growing importance of educational knowledge ecosystems, where students, educators and external stakeholders collaboratively participate in knowledge creation, sharing and application processes (Nambisan et al., 2022). While prior studies often focus on isolated teaching methods, this paper demonstrates the importance of linking knowledge creation, application and feedback within a coherent learning system.

The results also highlight the importance of interaction between students, educators and practical environments, which aligns with knowledge transfer theories emphasising relational and contextual factors (Argote, 2013; Argote and Ingram, 2000).

At the same time, the proposed model remains conceptual and requires empirical validation. Its applicability may also vary depending on institutional conditions, available resources and the level of integration with industry partners.

8. Conclusion

The paper demonstrates that effective entrepreneurship education requires a shift from knowledge transmission to its active application.

The proposed conceptual framework represents an approach to achieving this shift through project-based learning, work on real-world tasks and the use of digital tools.

It is expected that the implementation of this model will contribute to the development of students' entrepreneurial competencies and to a stronger connection between education and practice.

The proposed knowledge transfer model, based on the integration of solution development, application and feedback, represents a practically applicable approach to innovation in entrepreneurship education.

At the same time, it should be emphasised that this paper presents a conceptual educational framework that requires future empirical validation. Its practical applicability and impact should be assessed in future empirical research, which represents a direction for future research. The proposed approach also has practical relevance for curriculum designers and educators, as it provides a concrete way of linking theory with practice.

The paper has several limitations. First, the proposed model is conceptual and has not yet been empirically tested. Second, the analysis focuses on a specific sector, which may limit its generalisability. Third, the effectiveness of the model depends on institutional and organisational conditions that may differ across contexts.

Future research should focus on empirical testing and validation of the proposed framework, including pilot implementation and evaluation of learning outcomes. Further studies may also compare the effectiveness of different knowledge transfer approaches across sectors and educational environments.

The paper also contributes to the knowledge management discussion by highlighting how learning environments can support the transformation, sharing and application of entrepreneurial knowledge.

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AI Declaration: AI-assisted tools were used for minor language editing and stylistic improvements. All academic content, arguments and conclusions were developed independently by the authors.

Ethics Declaration: This paper presents a conceptual and design-oriented educational proposal. No empirical data were collected, and no human participants were involved; therefore, ethical approval was not required.

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