

Entrepreneurship in LIS-education

Michael René Kristiansson, Ph.D. zqr410@iva.ku.dk
Henrik Jochumsen, Ph.D., jrd560@iva.ku.dk
Royal School of Library and Information Science

Background

Entrepreneurship is an increasingly central phenomenon in contemporary society. Currently, entrepreneurship education has been implemented in curricula in many universities around the world. As the labor market in general is rapidly changing towards a situation in which candidates have to create their own jobs, entrepreneurship education is also relevant for the LIS community and education.

There is no consensus on the concept of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship can take many forms, and the concept is closely related to other notions such as creativity, value creation and innovation. The terms are used differently in various professional environments. This poster presents an expansive and evolving understanding of the concept: Entrepreneurship in a LIS university setting encompasses learning activities promoting students' ability to initiate and legitimize an entrepreneurial project that represents value to people outside the university environment based on the students' academic skills/professionalism; enhancing the employability of the students. In this context, it is important to keep in mind that value is not strictly an economic issue but also related to cultural and social improvements.

As is the case with defining entrepreneurship, there is no consensus on how to plan and manage entrepreneurship education or to organize entrepreneurship teaching. This poster illustrates a promising method named effectuation (c.f. Sarasvathy 2001, 2008). The method has been tested at RSLIS in teaching settings for a number of years.

LITERATURE

Sarasvathy, SD (2008). *Effectuation. Elements of Entrepreneurial Expertise*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, New Horizons in Entrepreneurship Series

Sarasvathy, SD (2001). Causation and effectuation. Toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency. *The Academy of Management Review*, 26(2): 243-63.

Entrepreneurship at RSLIS

Course offerings covering entrepreneurship have been offered by RSLIS every year since 2010 and it is the experience accumulated from previous courses on entrepreneurship, which underlie the recent course, labeled "Entrepreneurship and Partnership". Previous courses have been systematically analyzed. Thus, experiences and reflections emanating from this analysis are utilized and put into practice from one course to another as part of an experimental, iterative and heuristic process. Upon completion of a long-term development work concerned with entrepreneurship education at RSLIS within our Master's program, we developed a parallel launch in the context of the School's undergraduate program. The project-centered modules offered within the undergraduate setting during the fourth semester constitute a very relevant place to implement entrepreneurship education in a way that they enable the introduction of the innovative and constructive elements at an early stage of the program. The present course is well documented through an accompanying evaluative research project.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

Problem

What project can I/we initiate through effectuation?
How to initiate and legitimize an entrepreneurial project in theory and practice?

Method

Effectuation

Empiri

The student project

Entrepreneurship and Partnership – the Course

"Entrepreneurship and Partnership" is developed and offered as a subject specialization. The module is geared to and has to fit in with a special framework conditioned by the curriculum with particular emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences both in theory of science and with reference to project work. To design and implement a curricular sequence with an explicit focus on entrepreneurship thus required certain reflections and adaptive steps.

The wording of the curriculum for fourth semester says that through project work, the student in this semester should acquire the ability to analyze as well as to discuss and reflect on relevant theoretical and methodological issues. In addition, the student should acquire the ability to reflect on theory of science-specific positions within the subject area of the theme-specific unit.

The module is assessed through an external examination. The assessment takes the form of a project based on oral presentation.

The way we interpret the curriculum implies that students will embark on an entrepreneurship project using the effectuation model explained below and we place special emphasis on the students attempting to build partnerships. Accordingly, we interpret the curriculum and syllabus objectives as follows:

- The students should gain knowledge about entrepreneurship theory and methods, especially effectuation and causation
- Students should conceive (initiate) and complete i.e. legitimize an entrepreneurship project based on the effectuation method
- Students must present the project to stakeholders in order to get pre-commitment; to achieve partnership
- The project should be designed/ approached from a theory of science perspective
- Students should illuminate the project process in both a practical and theoretical perspective and describe/ analyze the interaction between theory and practice
- Students should 1) initiate an entrepreneurship project in accordance with the effectuation method; 2) evaluate the development of the process, and 3) describe the relation between theory and practice in this process sequence

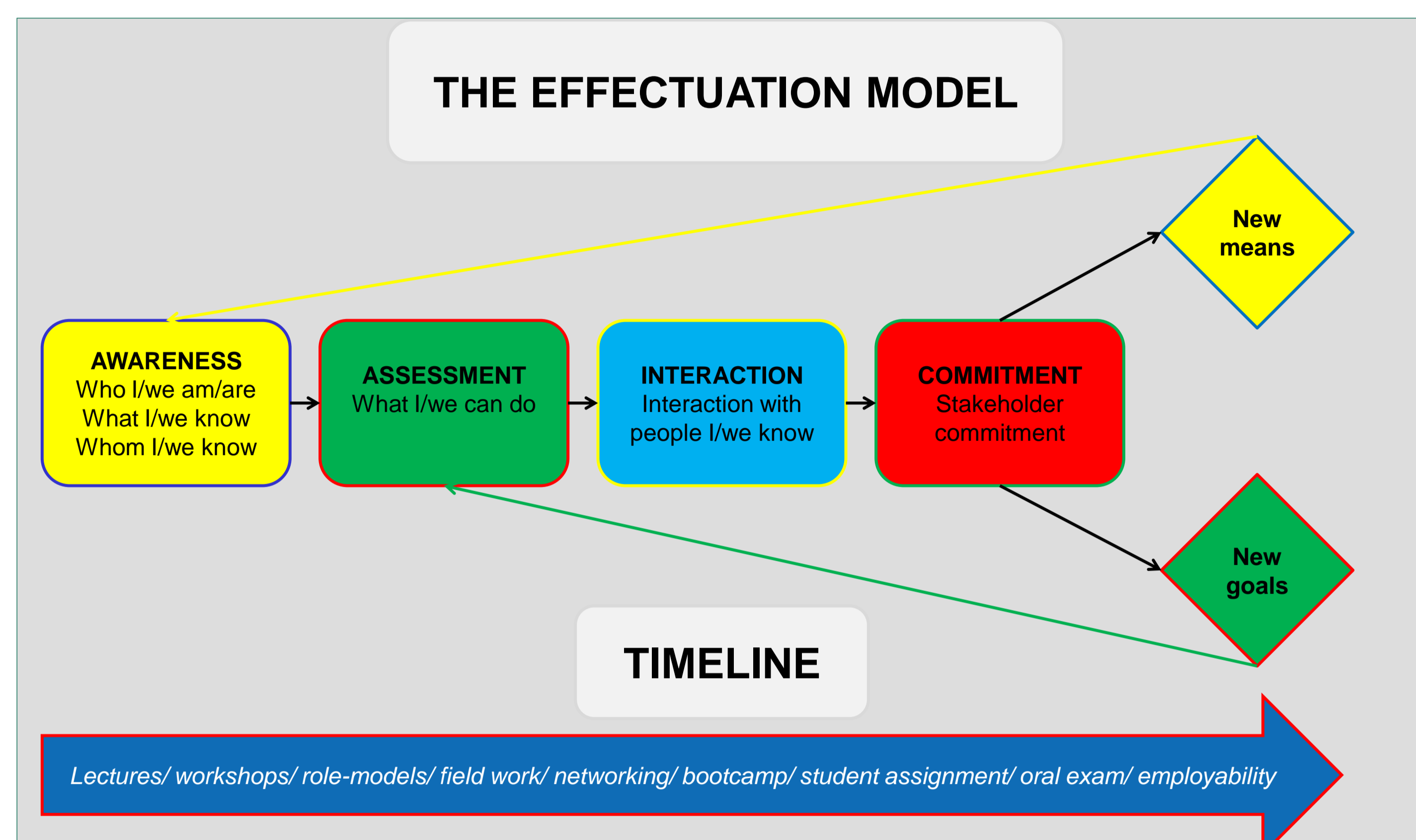
Theoretical framework – The Effectuation Model and Method

In a project assignment context, students are normally free to choose both the problem and the methodological approach within the subject of the unit/ module. But the special feature of this project assignment is students being required to do their work adhering to both a predefined problem statement and a pre-agreed method. Thus, the issue for examination is defined and agreed in advance; from the outset, all students are required to explore the same issue and apply the same method, namely effectuation.

FIVE PRINCIPLES

The Bird in Hand Principle
The Affordable Loss Principle
The Crazy Quilt Principle
The Lemonade Principle
The Pilot-in-the-plane

Effectuation is a method for practicing entrepreneurship, which differs from traditional entrepreneurship-thinking labeled causation. Effectuation represents a dynamic and iterative process for creating new artifacts that can be learned through education. Inherent in the concept of effectuation is a hesitant and questioning position towards the view that one is able to predict the future. Thus, prospects for the future, predictions and long-term planning are not included as tools in effectuation but related causation. As a consequence, students are not taught business models and the point of departure is not an business idea or opportunity.



Instead, the starting point for teaching are the students' skills i.e. the knowledge, the means available to them at the outset.

We ask the students to be aware ("awareness") of their own ability and skills. We literally ask students who they are, what they know, whom they know and what they can ("assessment"). In answering these questions, the students become aware of different entrepreneurial opportunities.

We then ask students to form teams in interaction ("interaction") with other students on the course and with people they know from their social circles. This is done to encourage them to form partnerships, i.e. to try to "persuade" others than themselves to engage ("commitment") in a joint project.

If you manage to get a commitment from a partner your project will typically change. The partner is allowed influence on the project partly through that which the partner is contributing in terms of manpower – supplied means ("means") – and partly in the form of good advice for modifying the goals ("goals") of the project. This produces a dynamic process where you, so to speak, start all over again in the model – see figure above.

The problem for exploration common to all students is phrased as five basic principles: The Bird in Hand Principle, The Affordable Loss Principle, The Crazy Quilt Principle, The Lemonade Principle, The Pilot-in-the-plane:

- **Bird in Hand Principle:** start with what you have and know and whom you know: This technical note explores a framework by which entrepreneurs can evaluate their ideas before going forward based on who they are, what they know, and whom they know. Is it doable? Is it worth doing? Can I do it? Do I want to do it? Don't wait for the perfect opportunity. Start taking action, based on what you have readily available: who you are, what you know, and whom you know.
- **Affordable Loss Principle:** Decide on what you are willing to lose. Evaluate opportunities based on whether the downside is acceptable, rather than on the attractiveness of the predicted upside.
- **Lemonade Principle:** Leverage challenges into opportunities. Embrace surprises that arise from uncertain situations, remaining flexible rather than tethered to existing goals.
- **Crazy-Quilt Principle:** Devise strategic partnerships. Expert entrepreneurs build partnerships with self-selecting stakeholders. By obtaining pre-commitments from these key partners early on in the venture, experts reduce uncertainty and co-create the new market with its interested participants. Form partnerships with people and organizations willing to make a real commitment to jointly creating the future product, firm or market – with you. Don't worry so much about competitive analyses and strategic planning.

- **Pilot in the Plane Principle:** Focus on what you yourself can control: By focusing on activities within their control, expert entrepreneurs know their actions will result in the desired outcomes. An effectual worldview is rooted in the belief that the future is neither found nor predicted, but rather made.

Course Organization and Components

The aim of the course is twofold/ dual: first, through a self-paced initiative, students are expected to try out, i.e. run an effectuation process in practice; second, students shall reflect on the process performed by reflecting on the process from a theory of science perspective and, as previously mentioned, the required end product is a project assignment having a traditional academic structure.

We put much emphasis on pre-commitment/ partnership, i.e. the requirement that students shall achieve pre-commitment from a stakeholder(s) outside the university, i.e. a person who is different from fellow students as well as their teachers.

We ask students to keep and use a log book/ diary as evidence of actions' and processes. The exam is organized as a project task that contains the same elements as a traditional academic-setting student paper: 1) summary (abstract) 2); issue to be examined/ problem formulation; 3) a discussion of the method(s) applied; 4) analysis; 5) presentation of findings and conclusion; 6) source list. It shall be emphasized that there is no requirement that students shall carry out a project in practice; only documentation for pre-commitment. The assessment procedure and the final product is a merely academic writing exercise, i.e. an exercise aiming at providing evidence on students' ability to prepare an accurate and rigorous written presentation of an entrepreneurship project.

IMPORTANT ELEMENTS

Effectuation (method)
Lectures
Workshops
Log book
Role models
Field work
Networking
Boot camp
Seminar
Student assignment
Oral exam
Employability

Employability

Nevertheless we (teachers/ examiners/ censorship) are able to estimate the student's competences to take action and to make partnership i.e. their employability although much of the process is academic.