THE ART OF CREATING IMPACT
by Assoc Prof Michael Heng

According to John Dewey (1938), the entire purpose of education is "to nurture individuals to discover their full power and potential". He later added that "it's not enough for a man to be good, he must be good for something." And the thing he must be good for is to contribute to the community, to the social order, and to the lives of others in some meaningful way. Eleanor Roosevelt (1930) had earlier argued that the full power and potential of individuals is best demonstrated in good citizenship.

Universities can fulfill the desire to have morally responsible, civically engaged graduates. Undergraduate education should integrate cognitive skills and disciplinary knowledge with moral and civic learning, helping students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become active and responsible citizens of a multiracial and multicultural society. Knowledge and skills are, however, only useful when used and applied in action for the community.

For Dewey, education should be conducted in a way that is socially responsible to the present and the future. In order to achieve this, schools must move beyond the formal and rigid modes of traditional education. However, schools should not be simply reactionary and relinquish reasonable management control over education. Rather, teachers and professors should understand and apply the theory of experience from the principles of continuity and interaction to guide curriculum development to obtain a progressively developmental series of experiences.

Teaching, as the noblest activity of the university, is also the process tool to engage students intellectually in the broadest possible manner. The university is the place for meditation, contemplation and wisdom, and not just for the busy activity of knowledge acquisition. The structure of the curriculum, includes case studies pedagogies and Socratic-type tutorials, must be oriented toward the learning goal of engaging professors and students in those forms of analytic reasoning and inference that a heightened sense of curiosity entails.

The impact of scholarship and learning on society will require evaluating both teaching quality as well as the quality and quantity of research, together with other contributions to knowledge, including practice and service to community. The minds and motives of professors, teachers and students, administrators and policymakers and parents can and will influence the most enduring impact on human action.

The creation of impact begins with a curriculum that is committed to the kind of learning that leads to action. Action defines impact. Every program and course must therefore be concerned with the outcome of responsible action, where integrity and compassion combined in students and professors to produce innovations and action programs.

The entrepreneurship project, or E-Project, in the E141 course "Managing Human Resource and Entrepreneurship" is an example of the kind of learning that leads to action.

Entrepreneurship training aims to develop an innate sense of sharpness for opportunities, which is that intuitive belief that questions the notion of certainty, definitiveness, completion and absolute. Entrepreneurs are people who are often uncertain about things, who see chaos, contradictions, paradox, ambiguity, and silence as integrated into the human condition. Like the poet Jorie Graham (1997), they consider "error" as the choice method - "a wandering toward truth" - in creating their very own passage to a life of certain happiness and self-actualization, as they become the best that their human and spiritual potential will permit. Entrepreneurial values empower entrepreneurs to reach out beyond their grasp relentlessly.

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