

The Career Life Narrative of Chinese Clinic Director Fu

The Perspective of “Entrepreneuring”

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Abstract

It aims at the study on the transitional process of the one from professional worker to entrepreneur. What makes such study interested is that it unlocks some given assumptions concerning innovation and entrepreneurship, and the research perspective employed here also sheds some inspired insights for further study in entrepreneurship. The stance of this study suggests that the definition of entrepreneurship is not necessary related to venture creation, the struggle and devotion that ordinary people make for their daily living can be deem as the act of entrepreneurship through the perspective of “Entrepreneuring”.

The story of Fu, who is a Chinese medical doctor, clinic manager and an entrepreneur as well, is illustrated, observed and interpreted to represent how he transits from one identity to another, how he processes and reacts to strange circumstance and enacts entrepreneurship along the way his clinic business developed.

From his story, we found that: 1) managerial sense is a drive that motivates people to practice entrepreneurship; 2) the personal theory which comes from practice is the fundamental presentation of entrepreneurship; and 3) diverse contextual stimulation is necessary to reinforce entrepreneurship.

Keyword: Entrepreneuring perspective, entrepreneurship, narrative inquiry

Introduction

The presentation of innovation and entrepreneurship is a major factor in sustaining the on-going function of today's organization, society and economic system. Generally, the understanding of entrepreneurship is like the two poles of a spectrum. Some scholars focused on the strict definition of entrepreneurship, which means creating new venture (ex. Gartner, 1985); others focused on the definition that entrepreneurship equals to innovation (ex. Drucker, 1995).

In early studies, scholars from either part took an objective viewpoint to study entrepreneurship and regarded it as a mean-and-end relationship. That is, innovation is the major way leading to venture creation, given the innovation itself as the nature of heroic entrepreneur. However, it yielded miscommunication in some parts of entrepreneurship.

Firstly, the definition of entrepreneurship is not necessary related to venture creation, the struggle and devotion that ordinary people make for their daily living can be deem as the act of entrepreneurship in present scholarly discussion. Secondary, the discussion of how innovation is emerged has been simplified mostly in entrepreneurship study. Third, the idea which creativity of entrepreneur is not given naturally, but can be cultivated by the living experience has been surfaced scarcely.

For such concern, we took the position of “entrepreneuring” as the analysis lens. It suggests that entrepreneurship is an economic also social activity that can bring about new social, institutional, and cultural environments through the actions of an individual or group of individuals. It encompasses a wide variety of change-oriented activities and projects. “Entrepreneuring” is associated with efforts to conduct something differently—a new approach, a new way to conduct thing, a new insight that inspire the entrepreneuring individual or group and/or for other actors in the environment to create a new set of possibilities for their better future.

Four sections are illustrated as followings: Entrepreneuring perspective as major analytic lens in this study is introduced firstly. Methodology and study process are presented in the second section. Stories which Fu has told are presented and interpreted in the third section. Then the study findings are manifested in the last section.

Entrepreneuring perspective

Revisiting entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is well known and usually been linked with some ingredients within it, which are entrepreneur, opportunity recognition, new venture and innovation. Schumpeter's view of the entrepreneurship has been extremely influential. At its core is a new way of combining existing resources. Schumpeter equates entrepreneurship with innovation, and he proposed that entrepreneur create a destructive creation make the market equilibrium shift from one stage to another (Schumpeter, 1934).

Furthermore, Knight (1921) focused on the connection between entrepreneur and innovation. He argued that entrepreneurship is a kind of mental trait which entrepreneur possessed, and who has such spirit can endure uncertainty and has initiative to do self-control and self-efficacy then create the innovation to earn profit. Late on, Gartner(1985) stressed that entrepreneurship as venture creation.

As above, we can tell the notions regarding what entrepreneurship is and whereby one universal framework is surfaced by which characterizes entrepreneurship in terms of three nouns— entrepreneurs, new ventures, and opportunities— reflecting the tendency of entrepreneurship research to focus on entities. Low & MacMillan(1988) has identified some significant shortcomings which emerged from entity-centric prerequisites in entrepreneurial research and proposed that the emphasis should be put on entrepreneurial process.

Lately, the focus has shifted from static characteristic discussion to dynamic process discussion in addressing entrepreneurship. As Shane & Venkataraman (2000) have proposed that entrepreneurship as the nexus of entrepreneur, opportunity and entrepreneurial process. In such argument, they explained how entrepreneur incorporate his past experience and learning then contribute to successful venture creation. Scholars who posited in the same vein have already realized the importance of entrepreneurial process in conducting the entrepreneurial research. However, they did not elaborate how and what this process proceeds.

To promote attention to research that investigates more thoroughly the doing, Entrepreneuring perspective (Steyaert, 2007)-one of recent developing ideas which focus on entrepreneurial process more than entities has been emerged to relax and open the traditional perspective in addressing entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneuring perspective

The core idea of Entrepreneuring perspective (Steyaert, 2007) is following Weick's (1979) notion that verbs draw attention to actions and processes geared toward change creation. Major thought of it was to encourage researchers to study a broader set of actions (e.g., activities, projects, and processes) intended not only to create new wealth but also to bring about new states in relevant economic, social, institutional, and cultural environments.

“Of what do entrepreneurs dream?—self-interest maximization, creative expression, empowerment, autonomy, or enhancing the quality of life?” Despite the abundance of evidence about diversity and richness in entrepreneurial motivations, entrepreneurship research has paid little attention to how aspires for autonomy, expression of personal values, and making a difference in the world can be accomplished (Baker & Pollock, 2007).

As above, the Entrepreneuring perspective indicates that entrepreneurship research could (and perhaps should) focus on the genesis of new ideas, new things, new markets, new institutions, new modes of organizing, new forms of exchanges, and new elements in our environments. As Steyaert (2004, 2007) regarded, the formulation of entrepreneurship is as an individual's social interactions in facing everyday situations. Therefore, it directs more research to the study of entrepreneurial activities as generators of change, the way how an ordinary people shift to be an innovative entrepreneur along his struggling to survive. Hence, we focused on the entrepreneurial process and asserted dynamic and becoming nature of entrepreneurship. In other words, entrepreneurship is the result of everyday's actions which accumulates each tiny doings into some kind of innovation and change and such achievement does not belong exclusively to the Great Man but also to everyone (Steyaert, 2004). By such concern, our previous understanding of entrepreneurship was transformed from emphasizing a single key-person (ex. entrepreneur) to focusing on the dialogue of the whole entrepreneurial process.

And we thought that engaging in entrepreneuring not only relies on entrepreneurship but must also realize the invisible factors of entrepreneurship in an entrepreneur's everyday practices. Therefore, we studied the narrations of a Chinese medical director who later became an entrepreneur to understand the invisible factors of entrepreneurship and how to develop entrepreneurship.

Methodology

Research Field

The “X Chinese Medical Service Network” was established by chief director Fu in 2006. Fu integrated Kaohsiung and Ping-tung branches to provide a comprehensive service for patients. Now the headquarters of X Chinese Medical Service Network is located at the Ping-tung main clinic, which consists of eight branches and two hundred staff. The total capital is approximately NT\$ 1.5 hundred million and annual sales is approximately NT\$ 2.98 hundred million.

Data Collection and Analysis

The narrator, Fu, used to be the first author’s colleague during their study in the University. The datum were collected from Fu’s narration regarding his entrepreneurial process and rebuilt the structure of each event with our help. During this period, we had nine two-hour discussion sessions. Aside from rebuilding the structure of each event, we also made clear the background and context in many events. Therefore, the data collection and analysis in this paper had two main stages: 1) from narrative materials to field texts and 2) from field texts to research texts. The first stage involved the cooperation between narrator and researcher. The narrator tape-recorded records his own experience and discussed with the researcher to develop systematic stories as field texts. In the second stage, the researcher began to search for theory to interpret the field texts. We deconstructed and recombined the stories through theoretical perspectives and configured several story lines as research texts.

Based on the studies of Rae (2000) and Johansson (2004), we gained some insights on “identity,” “entrepreneur’s learning,” “practice theory,” and “imitative innovation”...etc. Finally, we focused on the themes of practice and entrepreneurship. And based on “entrepreneurship perspective,” we recombined the whole story’s plots as our research texts. Then employing this theoretic lens and narrative inquiry method interprets the story of Fu, who is a Chinese medical doctor, clinic manager and an entrepreneur as well, observing how he transits from one identity to another, how he processes and reacts to strange circumstance and enact entrepreneurship.

Story and Analysis

Fu was born in a Chinese medical family. His father conducts a conventional Chinese medical clinic and hires his four children to serve there. Fu was different from his three younger brothers. What he wanted was to be a resident doctor at his father’s clinic. Nevertheless, the third younger brother -Geo persuaded him to run their own

business and expand their father's clinic. The conflict between Geo and his father was so fierce that Geo broke up with his father and started his own clinic. Two years later, Geo has owned two clinics and invited Fu to manage one of them. And the exciting journeys of Fu have set out back to his managing the Ping-tung branch. For couple years, he learnt and conduct well from the scratch and took over the Feng-shan and Dung-gang branches as his brothers had not managed well. By accumulating much managerial experience, Fu wanted to set up his own clinic. Therefore, he established his own clinic in Zuo-ying district of Kaohsiung City. As the clinic went well, he later set up other clinics in Kaohsiung and Ping-tung successfully. Furthermore, under the influence of Geo, who had studied in the EMBA program at National Singapore University in 2001, Fu joined the EMBA program at National Sun Yat-sen University in 2004. Followings are elicited from his career narratives and form three thematic episodes for further analysis.

1. The initial stage of being a dean

As Fu was graduated from Chinese medical university, he worked as a professional doctor. However, brother's request to be the director of Ping-Tung branch put him into a dilemma. During the first month, Fu became uncomfortable with his work by overwhelmed with daily routines (e.g. patients' complains, senatorial works, administrative bureaucracies) as the Director of Ping-Tung clinic. With deep frustration, an occasion in a nearby coffee shop as his getting away from troublesome and messy workings happened to him. The harsh comment from the coffee shop owner to his manager- "What an administrator should care about is the whole process of operation, not only the tiny details." like an alarm triggering Fu's mind, reminding him that he is also a manager in addition to his profession.

Then he had realized his dual responsibilities to play both roles by such reminding. He tried to deal with his clinic administrative works in some ways. The memory as he studied at "China medical university" conveys an implication to his doings on arranging messy stuffs in the clinics. Thus, he tried to classify the issues which are proposed in the meeting and found that there are some patterns in those messy stuffs, and he prioritized clinical stuffs and classified them into different hierarchical categories and assigned them to employees who should carry out the tasks.

The process Fu has demonstrated is what Bruner (1986) proposed as "narrative knowing." Fu found different ways about his managerial works from his personal real life experiences and stories that had significant meanings and provided contextual and spatial thinking, therefore he gained some clues from narrative structure and identified the ways to deal with his problems.

2. Practices in conducting business of clinics

Couple years later, Fu was asked to take over the Dong-Gang branch by his younger brother. The very first month he realized there were many unexpected challenges of administrative efficiency and performance. The past experiences in Ping-Tung branch provided useful implications for promotions such as free registration fee and provided some free ointments to the patients. Application is functional and boosted up the business. By those doings indeed increased the number of patients' visit and improved financial condition in Dong-Gang branch.

Such well performance made the other brother requested Fu to take care of his clinic in the Feng-Shan district. The similar business problems presented in this clinic- less efficacy and low patient visit rate. The initial tries to employ operation system in Dong-Gang branch had failed in the Feng-Shan branch. In order to get the deeper understanding how these malfunctions happened, he moved to Feng-Shan and observed why different results came out in these two branches.

"I found there was something different in those places; I felt the residents had more close ties and connection in Ping-Tung and Dong-Gang, they always communicated with each other frequently...but this was not the same in Feng-Shan...I felt residents didn't interact intensively in Feng-Shan.."

Ping-Tung and Dong-Gang belong to more close community ties, where as Feng-Shan belongs to a more open community. This unique assumption was made from his field observation and contributed to his personal theory formation to explain what situation he encountered. The word-of-mouth and emotional promotion is workable in close community by closely connection in Ping-Tung and Dong-Gang, but they are failed as applied in the area incorporated lots of immigrants from adjoining cities, especially most of them are young people working in high-tech or international trade companies. They are unfamiliar with one another. Thus there is less interactions between them. These people are educated in the Western system, which makes them more newfangled and like to challenge the traditional medicine. Fu began to introduce some instruments from western medicine in order to attract and engage residents in Feng-Shan branch. (e.g. infrared rays to treat muscular problems and relieve pain)

Couple months later, Fu was able to increase the number of patients in Feng-Shan branch. Hence, our understandings of entrepreneurial learning turned from individual's mental operation to the process of interaction between individual and social context (Minniti & Bygrave, 2001). Therefore, we knew the entrepreneurial learning came from interactions in real business world where filled with much

contextual factors to affect entrepreneur's practices.

In concluding this part of the story, we realized how Fu formed and utilized personal theory to solve problems from his narration. Just like Maturana & Varela(1998) mentioned: "Every action is knowing and every knowing is action." From Fu's narration, furthermore we saw the process of how he put his knowing into action. Fu used his words to conduct in his daily practice, reflected upon them, came up with solutions through continuous exploration and adaptation, and accumulated business know-how that eventually formed his personal theory.

3. The experience in the EMBA

It would shape out various frameworks for an individual to recognize the world as he has conducted different social interactions and experienced various contexts (Ricoeur, 1987). Following such concern, Fu's narrative regarding his EMBA experience intrigues our attention.

Fu's classmates in the EMBA program came from diverse working fields, and they were quite experienced in conducting business. Fu had mentioned a story that he participated in the "Class Regulation Proposal Contest," which prompted him to relate to establishment of SOPs for his clinic.

In the very beginning of school day, classmates in the EMBA regarded class rule is necessary to guild and run class matters, they wanted to discuss and made the engagement. Ted who is high-tech engineer and been considered as a brilliant guy has proposed a "Class Regulation Proposal Contest" (the "Contest" hereafter), while most of students kept silent about how to conduct this. The "Contest" required every classmate to deliver their ideas regarding what and how shall regulated, and those proposals are selected by whole class in the class meeting. It broke the silence, and they are motivated and started to think how to propose ideas. It shaped a platform for classmates to dialogue and to communicate ideas. And the competition mechanism provides a mean for those classmates either as managers or as CEOs can prove themselves is better. As a result, the "Contest" did facilitate them came out a comprehensive regulation. Fu started to ponder over if he can relate this issue to the management of his Chinese medical clinics.

Through the process of the "Contest", he gained some meaningful observations: firstly, the profile of EMBA classmates is quite similar with his clinics' staffs (e.g. administrative, nurses and therapists), as they are autonomous professionals and not easy to be motivated. Secondary, the "Contest" provides a good motivation

mechanism for his classmates and Fu though this probably can be useful to prompt his staffs as well.

The practical action can be an analytic instrument for actors to identify and recognize the connections between practice and living and create meanings from it (Shotter, 1993, 1995). As the “Contest” took shape as a medium which facilitates Fu find the hints and start to relate some critical elements to the establishment of SOPs in Chinese clinics. Firstly, Fu made classification of his staffs according to the professions of clinic’s workers into three kinds-Nursing, Therapy and Administration. Then Fu asked them to deliver their ideas of SOP corresponding with respective profession to the committee. Then the committee will sort out the best ones as SOPs for their clinic alliance. This turned out a failure initially as operating the originated model. Fu elaborately ponder over and compare these different results.

Apparently, the reason it works in EMBA was because of his classmates wanted to say something but lack of appropriate context for them to deliver their ideas. Under such circumstance, the “Contest” provides a platform for them to share ideas. On contrary, staffs in the clinic do not have this initiative. Thus the imitation exactly to the clinic is failed. Couple modifications were made, such as adding incentives into the SOP proposal contest. Firstly financial rewards to whom who deliver their proposals were added on. And the best winner will receive fifty thousand dollars plus three day off as a reward. And the emotional reward is considered as well, the winner will be promoted as a SOP leader in teaching other clinic staffs how to proceed the SOPs. Such amendments contributed to the SOPs came out in the divisions of Nursing and Administration. However, it did not work out in division of Therapy. Therapists conveyed their vulnerable in conducting SOPs in this way. Since their operations are hard to put into text but have to demonstrate it in site. As this consideration, Fu made an adjustment for Therapy by adding the demonstration contest. All therapists in the clinic alliance were gathered in the Headquarters and demonstrate their therapy to compete their ideal SOPs. Then the best demonstration was selected by the committee, and came out the ideal SOPs.

In concluding this part of the story, we highlight two critical findings which could deepen what Johansson(2005) has argued: 1). Other’s practice can be a good medium for “imitation to creation”: As we can tell from the story, the “Contest” shapes out a template for Fu to ponder over how he can proceed to SOPs establishment. 2). Situated interpretation is a key to make this “imitation to creation” possible: Fu has put the contextual knowing which gathered from his experience in Chinese medical clinic to re-interpret the Class Regulation Proposal Contest, then he made the

appropriate amendments which corresponding the situated context and establish SOPs successfully.

Conclusion and Implication

Through studying an entrepreneur's everyday life and every stage of practice and reflexivity, we learned that entrepreneurship is the accumulative result of an individual's daily interactions. Fu's entrepreneuring process of a professional doctor, manager, and entrepreneur enabled us to have a better understanding of entrepreneurship.

First, "identity" motivates entrepreneurship. In the process of Fu's managing clinical problems, we observed that Fu changed his self-consciousness while facing his problems. Under Fu's managerial identity, he was willing to confront his own problems and searched for solutions by himself. Therefore, identity becomes a motivation that shapes entrepreneurship.

Second, "personal theory" is fundamental in forming entrepreneurship. Fu developed his own business theory from his managerial experiences in Feng-shan and Dong-gang branches, such as the perceptions of "open community" and "closed community." The personal theory that Fu has formed through the process of practice becomes the foundation for establishing a business.

Third, it is important to reinforce entrepreneurship with field trainings. Although Fu formulated personal theory by past experiences, there were limited innovative effects when he applied the theory on medical service environments. When Fu got into the EMBA program, he faced new environments. For example, through "Class Regulation Proposal Contest," Fu came up with ways to run his clinic. Nonetheless, in this process, Fu was not merely a copycat but made reinterpretations according to the situations at the clinic. Hence, new field practice is a source of enforcing an individual's entrepreneurship.

From these discussions, we have realized some of the implications of how to engage in entrepreneurial behaviors. First, we ought to emphasize the shaping of an entrepreneur's identity through encouraging an individual to confront his problems. This way, his issues would not pose serious problems to him. Encouraging one to tackle with problems is the key to construct self-consciousness and identity. Moreover, we ought to develop personal theory through open learning instead of simply following principles. This will enable an individual to face his problems, develop the ability of sense-making and eventually shape his entrepreneurship. Finally, we ought

to encourage an entrepreneur to explore and practice instead of mere control. By doing so, an individual could have various daily interactions in different settings which would strengthen his entrepreneurship.

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