

Entrepreneurship as everyday practice: towards a personalized pedagogy of enterprise education

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Abstract: *Adopting the perspective of ‘entrepreneurship as an everyday practice’ in education, the authors conceptualize opportunities as arising from the everyday practice of individuals. Opportunities are thus seen as emanating from the individual entrepreneur’s ability to disclose anomalies and disharmonies in their personal life. The paper illustrates how opportunities unfold depending on regional differences, local heritage and gender, to show how entrepreneurship education must take into account differences in context, culture and circumstance. Rather than perceiving entrepreneurship education as universalistic and searching for a generally applicable teaching approach, the authors argue that there is a need to tailor entrepreneurship education to the particular. They therefore propose that the pedagogy of entrepreneurship education should be personalized and they build a conceptual framework that contrasts two opposing views of entrepreneurship education: ‘universalistic’ and ‘idiosyncratic’. Following this distinction, they explore how different elements of entrepreneurship education may be fitted to the particular needs of each individual learner. This insight is relevant for didactic reflections on single entrepreneurship courses and for the construction of an entrepreneurship education curriculum.*

Keywords: *entrepreneurship education; enterprise education; curriculum design; universalistic; personalized education*

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The rapid increase in entrepreneurship education has led to the development of a multitude of different teaching approaches. The field has been blessed with myriad

purposes, methods and learning goals. One may find courses in business planning built on traditional behavioural management logic, courses on

entrepreneurship theory where students are introduced to classic and contemporary entrepreneurship theory, process-oriented social cognition courses seeking to improve the students' self-efficacy, or a variety of apprenticeship-inspired courses based on pedagogies of situated learning.

Most of these educational activities tend to share the idea that entrepreneurship education can, by and large, be perceived as a 'one-size-fits-all' activity. There are disagreements about which definitions of entrepreneurship to adopt, which theoretical approaches to use – business planning, effectuation or others – and disagreement on which pedagogical processes to use. Nevertheless, whether one particular didactical approach or entrepreneurial pedagogy is appropriate for all learners is rarely discussed: it is tacitly assumed that this is the case.

In this paper we challenge that assumption. Entrepreneurship education is analysed through four different but related lenses regarding entrepreneurship: the general assumptions; definition; didactics; and pedagogy. This analytical approach is inspired by Morgan's (1980) conceptual framework (alternative realities, schools of thought and specific tools) and is used in this particular case for understanding the relationship between the nature of entrepreneurship, the purpose of entrepreneurship education and specific approaches to entrepreneurship education.

First, we examine the nature of entrepreneurship and the purpose of entrepreneurship education. We draw on the idea of broadening the conceptualization of entrepreneurship and hence developing a broader understanding of the purpose of enterprise education. Two approaches are introduced to illustrate the broadening discourse: one is entrepreneurship as an everyday practice (Spinosa *et al*, 1997), the other is the idea of educating for enterprising behaviour (Gibb, 2002).

Second, our definition of entrepreneurship starts from Shane and Venkataraman's (2000) understanding of entrepreneurship as an individual–opportunity nexus. However, we adjust their original definition to accommodate the perspective of entrepreneurship as everyday practice by arguing that opportunities do not exist independently of entrepreneurial individuals but, rather, that these are inextricably linked to individuals at all levels of analysis. Accordingly, we conceptualize opportunities as stemming from the everyday practice of individuals and as dependent on the individual entrepreneur's ability to disclose disharmonies and anomalies in their own everyday practices and convert these into opportunities through interaction with stakeholders (Sarasvathy, 2008; Spinosa *et al*, 1997).

Third and fourth, didactics and pedagogy require that the particular everyday practice of the potential entrepreneur sets the scene for the kind of opportunity that it is meaningful for an entrepreneur to create; and it focuses attention on the need for a personalized pedagogy of enterprise education. At the meta-level, we contrast two opposing paradigms (Morgan's alternative realities): entrepreneurship as a 'universalistic activity'; and entrepreneurship as an 'idiosyncratic activity' dependent on context, culture and circumstance. The former suggests that the same engines of growth will benefit all societies and that general models for entrepreneurship education are needed and can be fashioned. The latter suggests that entrepreneurial practice is idiosyncratic and grounded in subjective experiences related to differences such as cultural, location and gender backgrounds.

The remaining part of the paper is used to illustrate in more detail how such a personalized approach to enterprise education can be conducted.

Broadening understanding of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education

In the following we introduce the main ideas and authors behind attempts to broaden both the understanding of entrepreneurship and the purpose of enterprise education. We introduce the perspective of (a) entrepreneurship as an everyday practice (Spinosa *et al*, 1997) and (b) educating for enterprising behaviour (Gibb, 2002). Further, we suggest a revision of the definition of entrepreneurship as the 'individual–opportunity nexus' as proposed by Shane and Venkataraman (2000). We adjust their definition to allow for the broadened conceptualization of entrepreneurship as an everyday practice and argue that opportunities are inextricably linked to the individual.

Broadening understanding of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship was originally singled out as an economic phenomenon restricted to the economic function of innovation that leads to the formation of new markets and organizations (Schumpeter, 1943). This understanding of entrepreneurship as something restricted, heroic and particular can also be found in the school of thought that focused on personality traits (McClelland, 1961), where researchers have sought to differentiate entrepreneurs as distinct from non-entrepreneurs, such as managers or wage earners, on the basis of personality traits (Gartner, 1985).

Recently, researchers have begun to introduce understandings of entrepreneurship as a more pervasive and general activity. These can be labelled in different

ways – for example, mundane entrepreneurship (Rehn and Taalas, 2004); entrepreneurship as an everyday activity (Steyaert and Katz, 2004); or entrepreneurship as a method (Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011): they all suggest that entrepreneurship can exist as more generally disengaged from a restricted business context. This is expressed most radically by Sarasvathy and Venkataraman (2011, pp 125) who claim ‘. . . there exists a distinct method of human problem-solving that we can categorize as entrepreneurial. The method can be evidenced empirically, is teachable to anyone who cares to learn it, and may be applied in practice to a wide variety of issues central to human well-being and social improvement’.

According to this view, entrepreneurship has the potential to unleash a valuable and creative potential that lies in every human being (Goss *et al*, 2011). Entrepreneurship is thus not merely for the chosen few who can identify business opportunities in the marketplace, produce a business plan, provide the necessary financial capital and build a new venture. Rather, it is argued that engaging in entrepreneurial processes is fruitful for solving a broad spectrum of social problems and for creating a better life in general, by empowering people and setting them free to pursue value creation for themselves and others.

Broadening understanding of entrepreneurship education

A similar and related agenda can be found within the discourse on entrepreneurship education that establishes a distinction between ‘entrepreneurship education’ and ‘enterprise education’ (Garavan and O’Cinneide, 1994; Gorman *et al*, 1997). To some extent this distinction has been geographical. North American researchers have primarily used the term ‘entrepreneurship education’, while researchers in Great Britain and Europe have preferred terms such as enterprise education (Hannon, 2005; Rae, 2010), enterprising education (Anderson and Jack, 2008) or entrepreneurial learning (Cope, 2003; Rae, 2005). The distinction is important because it is more than simply a geographical or semantic difference. It involves fundamentally different perceptions of the classic didactical questions of target group, learning goals and curriculum content.

‘The major objectives of enterprise education are to develop enterprising people and inculcate an attitude of self-reliance using appropriate learning processes. Entrepreneurship education and training programs are aimed directly at stimulating entrepreneurship which may be defined as independent small business ownership or the development of opportunity-

seeking managers within companies.’ (Garavan and O’Cinneide, 1994 pp 4)

Differences thus exist between enterprise education, enterprising education or entrepreneurial learning, but the idea of broadening is a joint ambition.

Rae (2005, 2010) elaborates on how a broadened idea of learning takes place. Entrepreneurial learning is described as ‘learning to recognise and act on opportunities, and interacting socially to initiate, organise and manage ventures’ (Rae, 2005, p 324). To Rae, entrepreneurial learning has both a particular learning goal in the form of ‘learning to behave’ entrepreneurially and a particular pedagogy in the form of ‘learning through entrepreneurial ways’ (Rae, 2010, pp 594).

Jones and Iredale (2010) broaden the learning goals even further. They interpret enterprise education as an active ‘learning enterprise education pedagogy’. This pedagogy holds the potential to create the personal competences needed to function as a citizen, consumer, employee or self-employed person; and involves the development of personal skills, behaviours and attributes for use in a variety of contexts, not only in business but also as an enterprising individual in the community, at home, in the workplace or as an entrepreneur. Hence, they stress that a pedagogy which produces enterprising skills, behaviours and attributes can be used throughout a person’s life.

Gibb’s (1993, 2002) concept of ‘enterprising behaviour’ has been one of the central inspirations for the arguments presented above. Enterprising behaviour refers to the formation of general innovative and enterprising qualities in the individual. To Gibb, ‘enterprising behaviour’ is a positive, flexible and proactive attitude to change which denotes a broader meaning of entrepreneurship, in that it does not need to include any commercial aspect, but involves initiative and an attitude attuned to enterprise and new ventures. Hence, enterprising behaviour can find expression in many different contexts. In order to encourage such behaviour through the educational system, it is essential for students to learn how to perform and internalize this behaviour. The challenge here lies in re-designing educational programmes aimed at teaching people how to tackle, create – and, perhaps, even to thrive on – entrepreneurial circumstances of uncertainty and complexity (Gibb, 2002).

In the remaining parts of the paper we shall use the concept of ‘entrepreneurship education’ as a general umbrella covering the wide variety of educational initiatives related to entrepreneurship. The concepts of ‘enterprise education’ and ‘enterprising education’ are regarded here as identical and are used more specifically to portray education initiatives that seek to train students

to develop enterprising behaviour that can be used in many different aspects of life. Furthermore, entrepreneurial learning is seen as the particular pedagogy that can be used in these training processes.

Accepting such a broad perspective on entrepreneurship education implies that everyone can learn enterprising behaviour. On the one hand, entrepreneurial competencies are useful in many different contexts but, more importantly, they may simply help people to create a better life for themselves. Entrepreneurship education, on the other hand, can train students for autonomy, where they perform the leading role in their enterprising way of life (Van Gelderen, 2010).

Nevertheless, these attempts to broaden the conceptualization of entrepreneurship and the purpose of entrepreneurship education may prove destructive to the academic discipline. If the concept is diluted by the suggestion that entrepreneurship is anything and everything, then the discipline loses its defining characteristics. As a result, we argue that attempts to broaden the context and scope of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education must necessarily be accompanied by precise definitions and choices of relevant theories and pedagogical methods. In the following we therefore turn to the definition of entrepreneurship in order to adjust it to the aims of the broadening project.

Reconsidering the individual–opportunity nexus

From the above, it is clear that there is a need for a definition which is both sufficiently broad and widely accepted to incorporate the relevant elements of education and learning processes. For this purpose, inspiration is found in Shane and Venkataraman (2000). They suggest that ‘... entrepreneurship involves the nexus of two phenomena: the presence of lucrative opportunities and the presence of enterprising individuals’ (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000, pp 218). This definition has been both heavily utilized and criticized. For example, it has generated the theoretical controversy on the ‘discovery *versus* creation’ view of entrepreneurial opportunities (for an overview see Korsgaard, 2011). Moreover, their definition has engendered a consensus around the idea of an individual–opportunity nexus as the defining aspect of entrepreneurship research. However, it has also produced fundamental disagreements concerning the particular contents of this nexus.

The definition may be read in several ways, depending on whether the focus is on the nouns (‘opportunity’, ‘individual’), which results in quite a broad definition of entrepreneurship, or on the adjectives ([presence of] ‘lucrative’, [presence of] ‘enterprising’), which latter focus represents a more

restrictive and particular definition. Shane and Venkataraman’s (2000) definition thus contains a particular and confining ontology in the sense that they emphasize the presence of opportunities and of ‘enterprising individuals’. The term ‘presence of’ indicates that opportunities already exist independently of the individual, waiting to be discovered. The term ‘enterprising individual’ indicates that some individuals are already, in advance, entrepreneurial. Accepting one part of the nexus – the broad definition of entrepreneurship as the nexus of the individual and the opportunity – does not however automatically lead to the acceptance of the restrictive elements (Blenker and Thrane, 2007).

In the following, we accept the broad definition, perceiving entrepreneurship as arising in and emerging from the interaction between individuals and their environment (Jones, 2006). In this perspective entrepreneurs and social systems co-evolve. However, using the individual–opportunity nexus as the basis for discussing entrepreneurship as ‘an everyday practice’ requires some fundamental ontological changes to the original ideas of Shane and Venkataraman. In particular, we refute the assumption that opportunities have objective existence. Instead, we place emphasis on a reflective and emergent ontology for both individuals and opportunities (Venkataraman *et al*, 2012); and thus we advocate the view expressed in more recent entrepreneurship research based on pragmatic, constructivist and structural ontologies, which perceive ‘opportunity’ as something that is created in an entrepreneurial process where individuals are intensely involved in changing their everyday practice. This broad notion of entrepreneurship underlines that the important aspect is neither the individual nor the opportunity, but rather the hybrid or the meeting itself. Furthermore, it provides for a richer understanding of the social dimensions of opportunity creation. Entrepreneurial individuals, in this view, depend on the input, commitment and collaboration of others in the development of opportunities (Fletcher, 2006; Korsgaard, 2011). Central concepts in the attempt to describe such processes where individuals create both opportunities and themselves as entrepreneurs, include: bricolage, co-construction, co-creation, effectuation, negotiation, improvisation and transformation (Venkataraman *et al*, 2012).

Performing entrepreneurship on the basis of everyday practice?

The perspective of entrepreneurship as an everyday practice has been primarily accounted for as a broadening attempt. The concepts of mundane

entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship as an everyday activity, or entrepreneurship as a general method, were introduced to suggest that entrepreneurial behaviour can exist more generally. For this to serve as a useful guide in the construction of enterprise education initiatives, we need to know in more detail how the everyday practice of individuals may serve as a foundation for exploiting opportunities.

In the following we therefore examine first the disclosure of opportunities on the basis of general, individual everyday practice and then we illustrate this process with a selection of empirical cases which illustrate how these processes unfold.

Disclosing opportunities on the basis of individual everyday practice

In their seminal work on the subject Spinosa *et al* (1997) introduce an understanding of entrepreneurship as an ontological skill of disclosing new ways of being. The everyday practices of individuals are central to this process. According to Spinosa *et al* (1997) the outset for entrepreneurship is how we deal with ourselves and our everyday practice. The key question becomes this: 'How, then, do we ourselves, other people and things appear in average, everyday human activity?' (Spinosa *et al*, 1997, p 17). Hence, they emphasize the importance of sensitivity toward one's own everyday practice in preference to detached theory and abstract knowledge that is not explicitly related to the everyday practice of the individual. Even dealing with disharmonies in everyday practice is portrayed as a skill of intensified practical involvement that, at least initially, cannot be converted into a detached intellectual problem in one's life. 'The best way to explore disharmonies, in other words, is not by detached deliberation but by involved experimentation' (Spinosa *et al*, 1997, p 24).

In this view, everyday practice is not only the target for the entrepreneurial process, in the sense that opportunities have the potential to change everyday practices for other people: it is also the means by which individuals disclose opportunities from the disharmonies they experience in their everyday practice. Therefore, showing sensitivity towards one's own everyday practice becomes a fundamental aspect of entrepreneurship education which, in many ways, contradicts the traditional academic objective of seeking detachment by extracting students from their everyday practice and their passion of the moment. As suggested by Spinosa *et al* (1997, p 17) '[We should] direct our thinking away from the mistake of starting . . . with our Cartesian preconceptions of what we and things are – and begin with how we, in fact, deal with ourselves and things in our everyday of coping'. Then, instead of

focusing on what *is* (for example in terms of teaching students about products, markets, industries and market gaps), we should direct our focus toward what can *become* because of who we are and what we do as a particular entrepreneurial way of being.

From an educational point of view, the everyday practice of each and every student is different. Students of the natural sciences share one particular everyday practice, which is different to those in the social sciences and to those from the liberal arts. They understand the world differently, learn differently and solve problems differently. This means that even if they are presented with exactly the same problem or disharmony, they will understand and solve it in different ways. However, even within each group, disharmonies present themselves differently, so each student, depending on their particular cache of experiences and capabilities, will conceptualize disharmonies in an individualized way on the basis of their everyday practice. We could presume further that students from urban backgrounds conceptualize differently to students from the rural backgrounds. Presented with exactly the same task, students will thus approach disharmonies in a variety of ways. As a result, neither resources nor opportunities are objectively given *ex ante* in the form of a gap in the market but are constructed as a procedural interplay between thought and action. Let us provide an example, as follows.

Two male engineering students lived in very small apartments with their girlfriends. Both girls became pregnant and gave birth at about the same time. Both families were confronted with the challenge that their bathrooms were too small to keep an ordinary baby bathtub. So, the two fathers started discussing how to solve this problem and come up with the foldable bath – the 'Flexibath'. Now, although this problem had been experienced by numerous young families in cramped apartments, no one had previously experienced this 'eureka moment' leading to a solution. The prototype saw the light of day about two years ago: the bath is now (2012) sold in 50 countries. The idea did not arise because the two young men identified a gap in the market but, rather, because they wanted to solve their own everyday disharmony.

We therefore argue that entrepreneurship is an 'idiosyncratic activity', dependent on context, culture and circumstance, and that these play a major role in how entrepreneurial ideas unfold. In the following, we illustrate the importance of everyday practice as a foundation for opportunity creation and entrepreneurial processes by introducing a number of empirical cases. These cases illustrate how opportunities unfold differently, depending on regional and local as well as gender differences, and could be used to inspire

enterprise education to take context, culture and circumstance into account.

Regional and local differences

In the regional development literature, scholars generally agree that spatial conditions and the local social and economic milieu greatly influence entrepreneurial activities. The immediate environment, culture, history and relations with, for example, family, networks, and role models play an important role with regard to entrepreneurship (Julien, 2007). Hence, entrepreneurship depends to a significant extent on the socio-political, socio-material and socio-cultural context in which it is created (Aldrich and Ruef, 2006; Anderson, 2000). Different localities offer different types of entrepreneurial opportunities. Most research addressing the spatial dimensions of entrepreneurship focuses on the regional level (see, for example, Trettin and Welter, 2011; Hindle, 2010). These studies find that regions with high population density, such as cities and metropolitan areas, with easy access to stocks of human, social and financial capital, have more entrepreneurial activity than regions less well endowed with such resources. However, peripheral areas less well equipped with such forms of capital and infrastructures demonstrate rather unique forms of entrepreneurship. While metropolitan areas offer opportunities of many kinds (for example high-tech, arts and crafts, etc), entrepreneurial opportunities in rural regions are often connected to what the immediate environment and innate resources offer and are thus unique and specific to the everyday practice in the region. This suggests that students with different regional (and national) backgrounds will bring very diverse perceptions of the framework conditions for entrepreneurship into the classroom.

While regional characteristics are certainly important, there are also vital dynamics at the local level which have an impact on entrepreneurial activities. While the regional level is perhaps often understood in terms of structural and cultural terms, localities are best seen as 'places'. A place is defined as a localized complex of material and social relations: it is a meaningful location, where the meaning is constructed in continuing practices, which bring together material aspects such as the landscape, infrastructure or climate of the location, and social aspects such as community, local culture and heritage. In an attempt to address the role of place, we have conducted studies of entrepreneurial activities in rural island settings in Denmark (Korsgaard, 2010; Korsgaard *et al*, 2011; Neergaard *et al*, 2008). In these studies, we find that place can be of vital importance for the creation of opportunities.

In particular, we find that the material and historical elements of place can serve as resources from which entrepreneurs can create opportunities. In one example we found an opportunity being created from the history of salt production and the unique water conditions on the island of Læsø (Neergaard *et al*, 2008). Another example is that of a successful local brewery and restaurant built and reliant on the unique water quality and history of the island Fur (Korsgaard, 2010). A third example is 'Sort Safari', a tourism business in the rural Wadden Sea region in Denmark based on an opportunity provided by the natural resources of this particular region, which possesses a rich and diverse wildlife that includes large flocks of birds that fly, or rather 'dance', in hundreds of thousands in the evening sky. This phenomenon is called the 'Black Sun': the spectacle is highly seasonal and Sort Safari has seized and exploited the business opportunity, specific to the local area, and has created a thriving enterprise based upon the natural resource. Today, the company organizes a wide selection of guided tours in the area throughout the year. Finally, there is 'Ribe Vikingecenter' which displays authentic reconstructions of buildings from the Viking Age of Ribe, Denmark's oldest city. The area is one of the world's most important archaeological sites for the documentation of trade, craftsmanship and farming in the Viking Age. Today, the centre employs 25 local people and 400 volunteers, attracts around 250,000 tourists every year to the area and runs a local production school aimed at activating local unemployed young people. Ribe Vikingecenter is an example of a successful entrepreneurial initiative evolving from an opportunity itself arising from the specific history and heritage of a region.

From an educational perspective this directs attention to the localized resources, knowledge and meaning that students from different localities draw on when making sense of entrepreneurship and which they may draw on further when formulating ideas and opportunities for entrepreneurial action. Indeed, individuals and opportunities are locally embedded and the diversity of localities represented by the students in the classroom may in itself become a resource.

Gender differences

Research on women entrepreneurs has painted a picture of them being disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts with regard to entrepreneurship. Women are often portrayed as lacking in social, cultural, human and financial capital. Their businesses tend to be smaller and to grow less quickly than male-owned firms; and women's business networks are also normally smaller than those of men (Aldrich *et al*, 1989). To these

considerations must be added the fact that women are still likely to take primary responsibility for childcare and household duties, which are also considered to prevent women from accumulating and deploying the resources needed for exploiting opportunities (Brush, 1992). Other scholars point to gender as a result of socialization processes which make women and men develop fundamentally different views of the world. This has an impact on opportunity creation, since these unique stocks of human capital, which men and women develop, lead to somewhat different entrepreneurial processes (DeTienne and Chandler, 2007).

Moreover, studies in gender and entrepreneurship bring attention to the fact that entrepreneurship is in itself a gendered concept (Ahl, 2006; Bird and Brush, 2002) and that women perceive and approach business ownership in ways different to those of men. Bird and Brush (2002) argue that the traditional way of viewing venture creation as a step-by-step process, with opportunity recognition as the first step, is in keeping with this masculine norm and is not the everyday practice of women. This means that women tend to identify and exploit opportunities that originate not from observing gaps in the market but which are based more on effectuation principles that build on their everyday practice. Indeed, it seems that women tend to follow the same effectuation principles as those which, Sarasvathy (2008) claims, characterize 'expert entrepreneurs' and they tend to unfold ideas that have intrinsic links to disharmonies and anomalies in their everyday practice.

One example is the Rübner case. Bente Rübner was a trained weaver, but had worked in the county (local government) offices for most of her career. In 1990, Bente and her husband had to change the slate roof of their house. Bente thought the tiles were beautiful in colour and texture: each tile was different, both by nature and because it was worn from exposure to all kinds of weather. So, rather than being discarded, the slate tiles were stored at the bottom of Bente's garden. Then, in 2002, the Danish government initiated mergers between counties with the result that many jobs became obsolete; and Bente's job was one of these. She was told that her job was to be made redundant and that she could either accept a different job with the council or leave employment altogether. That evening she wandered to the bottom of her garden. She picked up a slate tile; ran her hand over the top. Then she picked up another – and put the two next to each other, on the grass. Using her artist's sense of texture, colour and pattern, she fitted two more next to them, and then another two, and thought: 'I could make tables'. With this in her mind, she went back to the house and rang the local blacksmith to enquire if he could make a table frame. They made an appointment and, based on

Bente's ideas and his knowledge of what would work, they developed a frame. Bente then cut the slate to fit the frame and her prototype was born. The next step was to sell the product. Bente had never sold anything in her life and she did not want to make a fool of herself in her hometown: what if the local furniture store just laughed at her idea? So she got in her car and drove to a town as far across the country as she could. Here she entered the first furniture store she could find, showed them the prototype and asked if they would be interested in selling her tables. The answer was 'yes'. Thus encouraged, she went into all the furniture stores that she drove by on her way home. In each and every one she made a sale. By the time she got home, her order book was more than full and her business was born. She realized that what had sold the tables was the story: the story about the roof and its origin and that although each table was of the same basic design, each was different because the tiles had been weathered differently. She quickly used up the whole stack of tiles from her own roof and needed to look for another source of the raw material. However, rather than buy new slate tiles from a quarry, she started to buy up old slate roofs. She made sure that with each roof she obtained the story of the house it came from and a small booklet, with a 'certificate of origin' and the story of the roof from which the slate had been sourced, was attached to each table. Thus, the table and its origins readily become the topic of conversation at the (dinner) table. Bente's business is now international both in sourcing and in export sales; and she has also started using other natural materials in addition to slate.

Another example is 'MyDummy'. Pia Callesen came up with the idea when her young son started nursery school. More often than not, when Pia came to pick him up, she found that not only had his dummy disappeared, but another child's dummy was in his mouth. She was very unhappy with this unnecessary spreading of germs, as well as the constant and costly replacement of dummies. As a result, the MyDummy business was launched. It sells personalized dummies on which the child's name is permanently engraved so the lettering can withstand both boiling and sterilizing. As such, which dummy belongs to which child is easy to identify for day care employees. Using knowledge gained from her education in marketing and PR, Pia started the business in 2005 as an Internet-based enterprise: she currently sells between 50,000 and 80,000 personalised dummies each month, in 12 different countries.

Our final example is SanseMotorik, established by Vibeke who trained as a nurse and worked in a maternity ward. Later she became a health visitor, with responsibility for post-natal care in the home. During this work she discovered that many of the children she

visited had motor control difficulties. Vibeke decided that she wanted to do more: she wanted to help these children and, in 2009, she started her business, SanseMotorik. She now offers training for parents whose children have motor control problems and has produced a full programme that covers all the various problems encountered. She also sells courses to day carers and other groups with similar needs and she has developed her portfolio of exercises into a franchising package.

From an educational perspective, the implication is that ideas which arise from a personal disharmony, are widespread; not only – but perhaps particularly so – in women. Many of these ideas use existing competences, sometimes some that have lain dormant for years, or possibly are hobby related, to effectuate the idea into a fully-fledged business. However, this does not mean that these ideas do not have growth potential, as the examples illustrate. Equally, the examples also stress the need for courses that can enhance students' awareness of the importance of anchoring business ideas in themselves and provide them with knowledge about relevant business models and potential alternative growth paths.

From the cases above, it is clear that context-specific aspects, such as differences in region, locality, and gender, have a strong effect on the genesis of entrepreneurial opportunities, the entrepreneurial process itself and how each individual performs entrepreneurially. This has consequences for the way we approach entrepreneurial education: enterprise education should be sensitive to the everyday practice of students and accept that there are different ways of unfolding enterprising behaviour for each student. This is more clearly formulated by Jones and Matlay (2011, p 698) who emphasize that '... a community contains enormous diversity and our students are a clear reflection of such diversity. The important issue for us as entrepreneurship educators is that we understand the nature of heterogeneity that constantly surrounds our students' lives and appreciate the role it plays in their education'.

It can thus be argued that in order to learn entrepreneurship, students should ideally engage with what McMullen and Shepherd (2006) refer to as 'first person opportunities'; that is, opportunities that are interesting, relevant and feasible for the student. This is in contrast to traditional, case-oriented teaching based on third person opportunities; that is, opportunities students can see are relevant for others, but which are neither relevant nor feasible for them. While students can certainly learn from working with third person opportunities, for example through collaboration with real life entrepreneurial companies, this will remain a

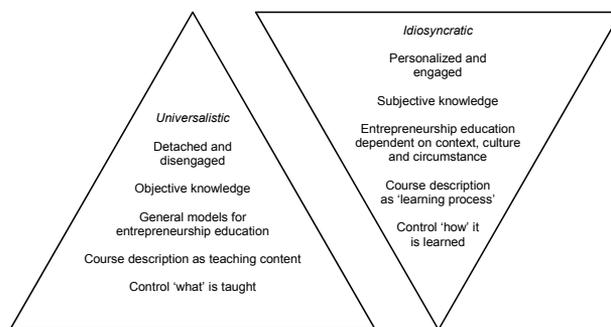


Figure 1. Juxtaposition of universalistic and idiosyncratic approaches to entrepreneurship education.

partially detached learning experience, essentially training the student for consultancy work for and with others rather than entrepreneurship for themselves. 'True' attachment relies on working with first person opportunities derived from the idiosyncratic everyday practices of the students and feasible on the basis of the resources available to the student (cf Haynie *et al*, 2009).

Entrepreneurship education on the basis of everyday practice

To design enterprise education which is able to accommodate the heterogeneity of students is a difficult task that contradicts fundamentally the way we usually teach in higher educational institutions. Figure 1 shows how our idea of a personalized or idiosyncratic approach to enterprise education, based on the everyday practice of the students, contrasts with the traditional ideals of universalistic university education.

This alternative perspective, the personalized or idiosyncratic approach to entrepreneurship education, contributes a new approach to entrepreneurship education; but we appreciate that it bears strong similarities with, for example, opportunity centred learning (Rae, 2007), effectuation based learning (Read *et al*, 2011) and an increasing number of learning activities in higher education institutions which incorporate a practical dimension based on students' resources and abilities, such as university based student incubators.

The universalistic approach to teaching entrepreneurship is based on the classic ideals of the university in at least two fundamental ways. First, the universalistic approach builds on what Spinoza *et al* (1997) refer to as a Cartesian logic, where knowledge production and learning takes place through the use of universally accepted scientific research methods, which ensures that the researcher, as well as the learner, has a non-biased, detached and disengaged relationship to the subject matter. The search for and use of objective

knowledge and analytical problem-solving by means of well-established scientific methods lies at the centre of teaching in the universalistic model. In this perspective the ideal for entrepreneurship education is to develop general models or theories for entrepreneurship education. In fact, the goal is not simply to teach theories, but to teach students 'the theory' of entrepreneurship, encompassing a toolbox with detailed causal descriptions of mechanisms relevant to all, or most, students of entrepreneurship.

Second, the universalistic model is supported by what Gibb (2002) refers to as the bureaucratic and corporate cultures or values of universities that maintain an institutional logic of control and accountability and which favours programmed knowledge, in terms of prescribed and measurable outcomes (Rae, 2010). Hence the universalistic approach describes courses and programmes mainly in terms of teaching content being the causal detached description of the world, where the teacher primarily controls 'what' is taught in terms of content. How the student learns is not an issue in the universalistic approach. Whether the student learns by reading and attending class, or by sleeping with the book under their pillow, is of no interest if the student can successfully show knowledge of the content in the exams. Attention is therefore mainly focused on the knowledge content, and the structure of that knowledge, and not on the details of 'how' the course might be taught, which relates to the personal development of the student (Gibb, 2002).

Several scholars in enterprise education research have addressed some of the fundamental problems encountered with the sole focus on content within a Cartesian logic and have called for an alternative. For example, Löbner argues that,

'... traditional management education focuses very much on a content driven education and on understanding existing "roadmaps". This has already been addressed and changed in entrepreneurship education. To create and invent new "roadmaps" for unknown territories, entrepreneurship education should take into account more and more a process driven pedagogy with an open learning process.' (Löbner, 2006, p 20)

Jones and Matlay (2011, p 701) further stipulate that 'What makes entrepreneurship education effective... has less to do with transferable teaching techniques or standardised curricula and more to do with the unique set of dialogic relations.'

Using the idiosyncratic approach we seek to answer these calls for an alternative, based on our understanding of entrepreneurship as an everyday

practice. As such, we argue that entrepreneurship education should rely upon and exploit the particular context, cultural heritage and circumstances of each individual student. Only students themselves possess the relevant knowledge of their individual opportunities. Knowledge is thus subjective and can only be created in a personalized and engaged way. Consequently, the teacher alone cannot decide what is relevant knowledge, but has to listen to the needs of each student and facilitate the learning process. Course descriptions must thus primarily depict the learning process. The challenge for this approach, as Löbner (2006, p 22) perceives it, is that '... if the student and not the teacher governs the learning process, what learning goals should be set by whom?'. In other words, what students should learn cannot be determined in advance by the teacher. It must depend on the students' idiosyncrasies. The task of the teacher thus changes into a facilitating role, addressing issues of the process rather than the content of learning. Whatever universalistic elements we should seek to derive will thus revolve around process issues: how can we plan and facilitate a good learning process for the students that allows the students to exploit their everyday practices and idiosyncrasies, to learn entrepreneurship?

A more critical and basic challenge, specifically relating to the implementation and diffusion of the idiosyncratic approach, is how educators should deal with the Cartesian practice as well as the bureaucratic and corporate culture, as described above. For example, entrepreneurship educators need to deal with the apparent allegation of lack of academic rigour in Cartesian terms, in particular through recognition of the impact of emotions (Gibb, 2002) as well as the impact of students' everyday practice (Spinosa *et al*, 1997) and general competences in terms of 'what you know', 'who you are', and 'who you know' (Sarasvathy, 2001). One way of dealing with this is to draw parallels between the scientific method and entrepreneurship as method, as suggested by Sarasvathy and Venkataraman (2011). The normative implication of accepting such an argument is not only to teach entrepreneurship to everyone, but also to accept the impact of subjective and personal elements, such as students' everyday practice, as an integrated part of the 'scientific' method providing the necessary academic rigour and evidence to an idiosyncratic approach to entrepreneurship.

Moreover, as suggested by Rae (2010), we need to change the balance of power between learners, institutions and educators, to facilitate what he refers to as a personalized learning experience with liberating and emancipatory effects for the learner. At a practical level this includes new forms of assessment which encourage these personalized learning processes at the expense of

Table 1. Comparing three forms for entrepreneurship education.

	Description	Pedagogical form	Perspective
1. Generalized entrepreneurship education	Courses on the history of entrepreneurship theory, contemporary theories of entrepreneurship, general introductions to business planning	Lectures, case stories, textbooks and readings	No person's perspective
2. Enterprise education as situated, experiential or problem-based learning	Education initiatives confronting the learner with a specific problem and inviting him or her to solve real problems by using existing knowledge, searching for new knowledge and reflecting on the adequacy of knowledge	Real-world problem solving and reflection	A third-person perspective
3. Enterprise education as an everyday practice	Initiatives that utilize the heterogeneity of the learner's everyday practice to reveal his or her individual–opportunity nexus	Learner's own problems and disharmonies in her or his everyday life	A first-person perspective

the traditional examination system and its main focus on learning content. However, this is still contrary to the bureaucratic and corporate culture of most universities. One clear solution to this problem is that we still need to bring issues of politics and governance into the entrepreneurship curriculum debate, as suggested by Gibb (2002), which echoes his call for a radical Schumpeterian shift in entrepreneurship education. Whilst waiting for Godot, the only apparent alternative is to specify the learning goals not in terms of prescribed and measurable outcomes, since they are *de facto* personal in the idiosyncratic approach, but in terms of the learning processes; that is, 'how' it is learned, which is actually the only universalistic element in the idiosyncratic approach.¹

Translating ideas into the classroom

Thus far enterprise education has been portrayed at a rather abstract level. An abstract idea, a philosophy or a general approach to entrepreneurial teaching and learning has been introduced. The real challenge is to translate this general idea into the particular demands of the classroom and translate ideals into a specific pedagogical practice. This challenge has recently been described by Jones and Iredale (2010, pp 14) who argue that,

'... [as] a generalised philosophy its actual practice is loose, decentralised, non-prescriptive and fluid. Enterprise education practice within the same educational phase is inevitably open to change in part to meet the specific needs of different classroom practitioners, and learner requirements as well as to meet whole school, college or university expectations.'

In order to ensure that the recommendations presented above become more than just the claim of an ideal, two things need to be proven:

- (1) that this approach differ significantly from other approaches; and
- (2) that it is possible to design enterprise education based on an everyday practice perspective.

How the everyday practice approach differs

Before demonstrating how an everyday practice approach differs from other approaches to enterprise education, we will summarize the insights produced so far.

First, students need to understand opportunities as individualized and context specific, in the sense that their particular opportunities can only be created on the basis of their individual and idiosyncratic background, where region, culture, locality, territory, gender or heritage are but some of the elements that constitutes this background.

Second, in order to use their individual and idiosyncratic backgrounds students need to become aware of problems or disharmonies in their immediate, personal context that need to be dealt with and to be able to evaluate whether these may serve as a foundation for solving more general anomalies in society (Spinosa *et al*, 1997).

Third, students should be made aware of the historical, cultural, natural or regional resources that abound around them. What are the context-specific resources at hand and what can the students as entrepreneurial individuals do with them (Baker and Nelson, 2005; Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011)?

In Table 1 these characteristics are compared with the two other approaches to entrepreneurship education

mentioned in the introduction. We place traditional university teaching at the foot of the table. In recent entrepreneurship education research this traditional teaching has often been criticized for being solely an approach that is 'about' entrepreneurship and for being unable to train students 'for' entrepreneurship (Hannon, 2005; Blenker *et al*, 2011). The content of the two bottom rows of Table 1 are often confused in discussions on enterprise education. By separating them clearly, we are able to distinguish between educational initiatives that invite learners to solve other people's problems by situating them, the learners, within a particular problem situation. This learning context is often fruitful because it will provide for experiential learning (Kolb, 1984); but it should not be confused or equated with our suggestion of enterprise education as an everyday practice.

The everyday practice perspective differs because it deliberately uses problems and disharmonies in the student's own everyday practice as the outset for learning. These problems and disharmonies are often linked closely to the way the student interacts with the world which, in turn, is inextricably related to experiences of existential growth. The power of this approach to enterprise education is thus twofold. First, by being anchored in the students themselves it can harness a high level of energy within the individual, since something perceived as relevant to one's self is more likely to resonate and help transform the person concerned from student to aspiring entrepreneur. Second, by building on context-specific resources that are actually accessible to the student, the barriers, and hence the potential fear of taking the next step, are reduced. The everyday practice approach builds on the paradigm of existential learning which holds that vital learning experiences are those that alter and reshape existing perceptual cognitive patterns and bring about transformation (Frick, 1987). Indeed, according to Frick (*ibid*, pp 411–412) such transformations come from a creative process within the person and help release the highest potential for learning. In everyday practice education we seek to sensitize students towards entrepreneurship in such a way that they internalize entrepreneurial behaviour.

Can enterprise education be based on an everyday practice ideal?

During the last five years the authors contributing to this article have been involved in the design and implementation of various enterprise education courses that are based on the everyday practice perspective. One of these is a Master's courses designed for postgraduate

arts students. These students each arrive with different educational backgrounds in the form of a Bachelor's degree in either arts or social science.

The course is process based, in the sense that five assignments drive the process (Bager *et al*, 2010). The assignments focus on the relationship between, on the one hand, the students as individuals and groups with an everyday practice and, on the other hand, the disharmonies and opportunities they face in their everyday practice. In Figure 2 we have set out the progression of the process over time along the dimensions of the individual–opportunity nexus.

Figure 2 shows how the course is built on two premises. First, it builds on the individual–opportunity nexus; and, second, it seeks to relate and build every assignment on the everyday practice of the learners. The students begin with themselves and their everyday practice, seek to identify disharmonies in their everyday practice that need to be dealt with, analyse whether a solution to these problems can be of more general relevance, work with opportunities and solutions that they are able to realize on the basis of their everyday practice and, finally, seek to use people from their personal networks in developing eventual solutions. The course thus seeks to control the learning process, but leaves the specific course content open for each student to decide for themselves. We do not claim that this is the ideal course; only that it is possible to build a process oriented course on the basis of a philosophy of everyday practice.

Conclusions and implications

We have argued that enterprise education should be based on the idiosyncrasies of the individual entrepreneur and we have demonstrated how entrepreneurial everyday practice differs for each individual with respect to context, culture and circumstance. Further, we have explained what constitutes an everyday practice approach to entrepreneurship education. The idea is that underlying all entrepreneurial activities is a value-creating enterprising meta-competence. We can see this as a general entrepreneurial mindset, or an enterprising approach to life, which can find its expression in many entrepreneurial endeavours. This mindset, approach or entrepreneurial resource can be used not only for starting business but also for intrapreneurship, civic entrepreneurship or cultural entrepreneurship (Spinosa *et al*, 1997; Gibb, 2002; Mauer *et al*, 2009; Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011).

This broad notion of entrepreneurship as everyday practice is, we claim, a *sine qua non* of other forms of entrepreneurship because it is ontologically and

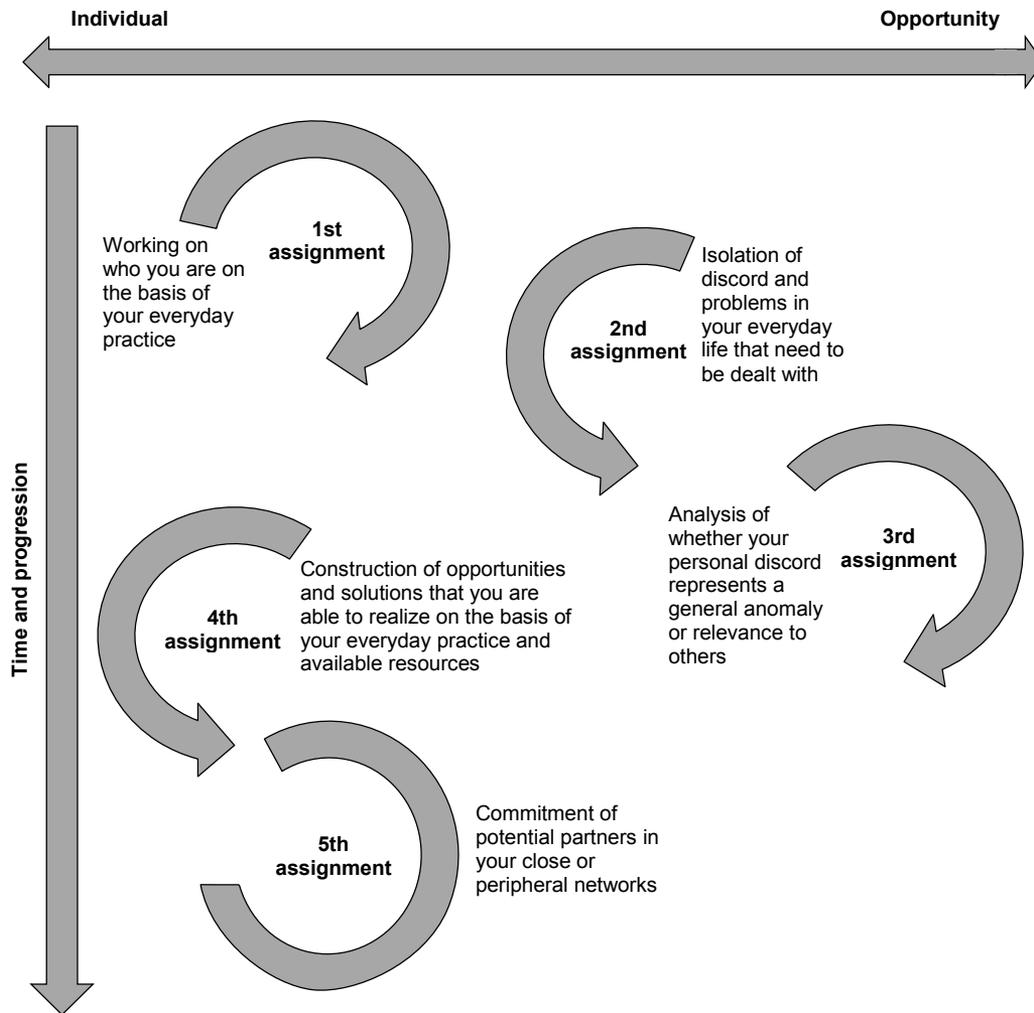


Figure 2. A learning process based on everyday practice.

temporally prior to other forms of entrepreneurial activity. Accordingly, we would therefore argue that something exists which actually is universal in entrepreneurship education – and we suggest that any entrepreneurship education programme must somehow incorporate this universal element. We thus assume that an enterprising activity is always present where individuals meet opportunities through reflection, action and creation. This universal element can be found in all other, more specific expressions of entrepreneurship. It underpins new firm creation and growth and the instigation of social change. Entrepreneurship education that is not somehow based on the everyday practice of the participants is unlikely to generate the desired outcome, be it new venture creation, growth or social change.

The conceptualization of entrepreneurship as an everyday practice allows us not only to embrace the idea that initiatives for enterprise education need to

differ according to context, culture and circumstance, but also to suggest how individualized enterprise education must make a move from focussing on ‘course content’ towards ‘learning process’, where educators concentrate less on ‘what’ is learned and more on ‘how’ it is learned.

A radical and far-reaching consequence is that the learning objectives in entrepreneurship education are related only to the process elements of ‘how’, whereas the ‘what’ is a highly idiosyncratic element only meaningful in the context of the specific everyday practice experienced by the student. Then, if the course description requires a description of what the students will or should learn during the course, we need to describe these as process elements or methods for disclosing everyday practice. We find this insight highly relevant for pedagogic reflections on single entrepreneurship courses and for the construction of an enterprise education curriculum.

Notes

¹The reference to Godot relates to the stage play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, in which two characters wait, by a tree on an otherwise featureless road, for 'Godot' and, in doing so, encounter and engage with others; but Godot never arrives.

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