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Entrepreneurial education: reflexive approaches to entrepreneurial learning in practice

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Abstract

Even though entrepreneurial education is quite a new phenomenon in higher education, as a field of inquiry it is one of the most rapidly growing areas of research. However, there is a wide spread consensus that traditional pedagogical methods of learning alone are insufficient to adequately develop entrepreneurs to deal with the complexities of running and creating innovating business opportunities. There is a wide spread consensus that traditional pedagogical “instructional methods” alone are insufficient to adequately develop entrepreneurs to deal with the complexities of running and creating business opportunities. As a consequence, there is a growing need to cultivate innovative ways of thinking and new modes of pedagogy to fully enhance and develop entrepreneurial approaches to education and learning. It is argued that traditional approaches to entrepreneurial education tend to ignore, and not address, the ambiguities and uncertainties which surround the entrepreneurial process. The historical pre-occupation with an individualistic approach to entrepreneurial learning has continued to marginalise and de-value the broader social context in which the entrepreneur functions, (Goss, 2005). Current writing on entrepreneurial learning has shifted attention towards “learning for” as opposed to “learning about” entrepreneurship. The authors adopt a social constructionist perspective which draws recognition to the importance of inter-subjective knowledge exchange as a means of developing entrepreneurial learning. While there are numerous approaches to a social constructionist paradigm, the critical features of the perspective provide the manner by which “we” come to experience the social world. The approach suggests towards developing a pedagogical approach which explores the social processes that constitute entrepreneurial undertakings and thus shifts the focus away from the traditional positivist approaches to entrepreneurial learning. The paper seeks to contribute to a growing need to cultivate innovating ways of thinking, diverse skills and new modes of behaviour to fully enhance and develop entrepreneurial approaches to education. The paper sets out to address this problem by examining the role reflexivity can play in entrepreneurial education, as a method of critiquing what it means to practice as an entrepreneur.

Key Words: Pedagogy, Entrepreneurship, Social Learning, Reflexivity.

Introduction

In 2002 the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) showed the UK's entrepreneurial activity to be in the bottom half of the studied nations (Reynolds *et al.*, 2002). Around the same time, the Small Business Service recognised that enterprise and entrepreneurship were crucial to boosting productivity, increasing competition and innovation, creating employment and prosperity, and revitalising communities. The role of small business was emphasised as a major contributor to the health of the economy and to the diversity of opportunity in society. In 2008, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform reported on the Government's renewed strategy and vision to make the UK the most enterprising economy in the world and the best place to start and grow a business (BERR, 2008). It laid out a new enterprise policy framework based on five separate but interlinked themes which acted as key enablers for the country's enterprise performance: culture of enterprise, knowledge and skills, access to finance, regulatory framework, and business innovation. The report highlighted the need for enterprise education, the Government's vision of inspiring an enterprising approach, and the promotion of innovation as a core driver for enterprise. The current Government laid out a similar vision in July of their first year of office (BIS, 2010). Here, the need for an enterprising culture, in which everyone with talent is inspired to take up the challenge of turning their ideas into successful enterprises, and the need for enterprise education - within Higher Education - was reiterated. The drive for enterprise education within Higher Education was an element of the recent White Paper for Higher Education (BIS, 2011), and universities' commitment to entrepreneurship has been praised (HEFCE, 2011). European policy has also stressed the need for entrepreneurial education and university engagement in the drive for economic growth (European Commission, 2006 and 2008). As a result universities have been challenged to deliver inspiring and enriched entrepreneurial programmes, instilling in them the necessary skill sets and abilities required for dealing with uncertain business environments,, (Bumpus and Burton, 2008; Tan and Ng, 2006; Matlay,2011). Entrepreneurship through education was seen by many policy and strategy leaders as a positive venture, however the growth in the early 2000s did not appear to be co-ordinated or have a consistent approach with most curriculum-based programmes being offered through Business Schools (NCGE, 2008; McKeown *et al.*, 2006; Matlay, 2005; ISBA, 2004; see also Brush *et al.*, 2003 for provision in the US). ISBA (2004) argued that there was a need to develop programmes tailored to the specific needs of target markets, rather than providing generic courses.

Current criticisms of entrepreneurial education have sought to highlight the emphasis which is placed on rational systematic approaches to learning; scholars have argued that such a practice, that is the application of traditional management theory and techniques to entrepreneurial situations, fails to recognise or consider the reality that entrepreneur's have to deal with, such as ill-defined, complex, unique and emotive issues. In practice, these rational approaches to entrepreneurial education do not necessarily equip the entrepreneur with the ability to gain a real insight into the natural practices of what it means to be a practicing entrepreneur, where experience and learning is gained through the natural process of social enactment. There is a growing need to cultivate innovative ways of thinking and new modes of pedagogy to fully enhance and develop entrepreneurial approaches to education and learning, (Gibbs, 2002). The historical pre-occupation with an individualistic approach to entrepreneurial learning has continued to marginalise and de-value the broader social context in which the entrepreneur functions, (Goss, 2005). Such a rationalistic approach has resulted in a bias against a focus on the meaning entrepreneur's make of themselves and their social worlds, or learning about the knowledge they possess from a careful study of their practice. The implication of this position in terms of an educational agenda involves challenging the "self-conceptions" of what does it mean to be an "entrepreneur", inviting openness to alternative meanings and political agendas (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Martin, 1992; Linstead, 1993). This perspective represents a movement away from the pre-conceptualisations of rationality, to a method that embraces introspection of self, critical reflection of activities and the creation of learning practices that enable and facilitate the exploration of alternative actions.

This paper draws upon a postmodern debate to raise critical questions in regards to epistemological and pedagogical methods currently used and the impact these positions are having on entrepreneurial education, (French & Grey, 1996; Giroux, 1988). The postmodern debate has sought to question the established practices and narratives embodied in rational epistemological suppositions, current educational practice control the entrepreneur's perception of social reality. The authors' position learning as an enacted practice, in that learning is a process of knowing; a means of accounting for and shaping the entrepreneur's experiences revealing their tacit and embodied knowledge. From this view the importance of everyday conversations and interactions are critical to how the entrepreneurs practice is influenced, this is not simply a question of introducing or thinking about new teaching methods but rather requires a critique of the very idea of learning, identity and educator/practitioner relations. This view changes the perception of the educator's role and level of involvement, from that of a transmitter and disseminator of knowledge to that of a facilitator of learning, (Goodlad, 1992; Brookfield and Preskill, 1999; Sarasin, 1999). Such pedagogy draws focus to the exposure of differences between the individual entrepreneurs' espoused perceptions of theories and actual practice; it seeks to probe into the politically defensive routines used by the entrepreneur to be rational and controlling over others. In this way, it allows for the exploration of hidden tensions of resistance and conflicts that are embedded in social discourse.

The paper seeks to adopt an epistemology of practice to entrepreneurial learning in order to achieve greater consistency, clarity and coherence of purpose, towards effective entrepreneurial education. Entrepreneurial education for many years now has continuously overlooked the role of practice as an epistemological means of learning, and how practice can contribute to entrepreneurial development which is distinctly different from traditional pedagogical approaches. What is ultimately required is a synthesis of theory and practice if we are to develop thoughtful entrepreneurial practitioners. The paper adopts conceptual and practical approaches from the social constructionist orientation, in order to help entrepreneurs to appreciate and understand the social structures and process that embed their environments. In elucidating this argument the authors draw upon conceptual notions of social learning, practice and reflexivity as a method for reshaping entrepreneurial pedagogy. A reflexive pedagogy centres on the question – How can one convey the idea that learning is an enacted product of experience?, where educators and entrepreneurs are co-constructors of the learning experience. This involves focusing on the details of teaching and learning as it is through interactions and conversations with others, who have differing perspectives and ideas, which can cause one to question their practice through exploring alternative ways of acting. The paper begins with a review of the literature surrounding entrepreneurial education and learning, which suggests that heavily programmed learning is an obstacle to effective learning-by-doing. The authors argue that by addressing this issue, through incorporating the practical role reflexivity, as a critique, can play in developing effective entrepreneurial education.

Entrepreneurial Education: a critical perspective

The ability to learn through gaining and applying new knowledge is of huge importance for enhancing entrepreneurial performance (Jones, Macpherson and Thorpe, 2010). Historically HEI (Higher Education Institute) business schools have had an increasing impact on the dissemination of business knowledge to the entrepreneur (Gibb, 2009). The institutionalised nature of Business Schools requires entrepreneurship to be taught in a certain manner, rendering it a marginalised and isolated subject on the business school curriculum, (Pittaway and Cope 2007b; Gibb 2009). For many years functional orientated pedagogy has been unquestioned in its application. Business schools have been criticised in their use of pedagogical approaches which have neglected or even dispelled the notion of experiential learning, "learning by doing" as a basis for practice, and have further neglected the associated inductive ontological based views to understanding the framing of real world "live" concepts and problems, (Pfeffer and Fong 2002). The end results being the development of an "entrepreneur" with no supporting analytical framework for understanding and appreciating real management based issues, treating the process of entrepreneurship not as an art or craft that is deeply rooted in the practice of everyday life, but something that is functional (Mintzberg, 2004). Educational programs which are structured on this epistemological perspective tend to leave participants with an abstract and unconnected set of knowledge and skills which at times have very

little relevance to the actual complex practice of being an entrepreneur, (Zhang and Hamilton 2010; Cope 2005; Corbett 2005; Politis 2005). This position is not unique to the entrepreneurial field, for some time theoretical and methodological heterogeneity, pedagogical fragmentation, and segregation have been a matter of contentious debate for scholars working in the field. There exists a strong belief that entrepreneurship is most suitably taught and delivered outside of business schools. How HEI's are currently delivering entrepreneurial programs is impacting entrepreneurial growth and coming under increasing pressure, especially when government sectors are having to report on the investment in policies and expenditure to support these incentives (Thorpe et al, 2009; Anderson and Gold 2006; Pittaway and Cope 2007a; Taylor and Thorpe 2000). The demand for Business Schools to rethink their pedagogical approach to entrepreneurial education requires a strong shift away from the rational methods of business education to innovative methods which seek out and facilitate experiential learning, (Cope 2005a; Hamilton 2005; Pittaway and Cope 2007a; Hamilton 2011).

The social constructionist view encourages the entrepreneur to identify narratives which constitute their understanding of how meaning is created through interactions with others. Here, the self is acknowledged as part of the knowledge creation process. Learning as a process of practice illustrates clearly how life experience influences assumptions and choices which are made by the entrepreneur. The application of reflexivity as a critique of practice invites the entrepreneur to question their existing knowledge claims and the process of knowledge creation; reflexivity introduces notion of critique. Merleau-Ponty (2004 [1962]) suggests that knowing and learning are embodied, linked with attuning oneself to situations which require skilful and experiential responses. Such responses are not based on representation, but on mediated understanding in which the actor experiences the tensions between what is aimed for and what is achieved, which becomes habitual in the sense that it is intuitive. Reflection is often held as a key skill, as suggested by Schon's (1983) process of reflection-on-action, where entrepreneurs construct understanding by drawing upon experiences and organisational knowledge, and engage in a reflective process, with that situated experience. The entrepreneur is thus constantly engaged in a process of questioning their own ideas and assumptions and those of others as they explore spaces of alternative action by engaging in social interactions and the micro-practices of knowledge. Here, learning is both transferable and momentary as the entrepreneur adopts and reviews their social practices and the relationships which sustain them. Reflexivity views the generation of knowledge from a critical position, namely the social context in which an entrepreneur finds themselves at any moment and time, with the view that any insight may not be necessarily generalisable to future activity. This perspective sets to challenge traditional positivist's ideas by acknowledging the actions of entrepreneurs and the social tensions, such as power and political issues, which they are exposed to as they enact their practice.

Entrepreneurs' tend to speak in rather practical terms and use very informal and taken-for-granted methods for making sense of their activities; in other words they develop their own means of sense-making of situations from the experience of the activity. However current entrepreneurial pedagogy would seek to de-contextual experience in order to allow the entrepreneur to understand, and thus as a result of this process learn to act in more effective ways, however entrepreneur's tend to make sense of their activities in more responsive and practical ways. This process does not necessarily allow the entrepreneur to understand the construction of these practices in the moment of acting which can often be unselfconscious and responsive; after all we draw upon everyday social interactions and respond to these interactions through our sense and feelings in the moment. Drawing upon the entrepreneurs tacit knowing which is held deep within them, what is required is a strong pedagogical method which has the ability to critique and recognise everyday lived experiences. Entrepreneurs do not exist in a vacuum which is devoid of emotion or social feeling. Issues such as social tensions, joy, guilt or even helplessness are part of the entrepreneur's life, these issues are not addressed in conventional pedagogies which favour more objective, factual or functionalist views the implicit message being that these are not business issues but they shape the very existence of the entrepreneur's reality. Many scholars, for example, Kolb (1984), assume learning is a sequential process and that learning is under our conscious control however in practice this not necessarily the case, (Burgoyne 1992).

Academic pedagogies centred on logic do not always help us make sense of experience, rather the entrepreneur tends to make sense as they interact in the moment and with the social tensions (emotion, power or politics) which often trigger new methods of relating and engaging, but how can educators incorporate these into a learning process? It is of huge importance for educators to understand the need for a strong philosophical framework which would underpin a pedagogical approach and enable the development of a greater understanding in terms of how and why entrepreneurs behave and practice in the manner they do. In order to impact on entrepreneurial education, the focus needs to be on helping entrepreneurs to develop critical reflective practice from their experiences as a means of helping bridge the gap between theory and practice, by arguing that in order to become entrepreneurial one must acknowledge and embrace the chaotic nature of entrepreneurial practice. An essential step in developing such pedagogy is a required fundamental abandonment of current Business School pedagogies and the resultant knowledge which they propagate, rather one needs to embrace and cultivate a critical stance towards practice. The recognition of critical incidents does not go far enough in aiding entrepreneurial learning or the entrepreneur to think in a more reflective manner. Whilst certainly the concept of learning through experience is valid and opens up conventional forms of inquiry, the reality is that when one speaks with an entrepreneur, they rarely speak critically about their practice, rather they speak in quite practical terms about issues associated with relation based practices such as – what they did, what they said, how they felt etc.

Entrepreneurial Practice: a relational learning approach

In the context of the above argument there have been calls in the entrepreneurial literature for the consideration of a new approach to replace the failing traditional educational philosophy (Huff and Huff, 2001; Georges and Romme, 2003; Starkey and Tempest, 2005; Stern, 2008), as yet this debate has seen little evidence of substantial progress. Contemporary issues and problems which the entrepreneur faces in their day-to-day practice require them to have the skills and ability to embrace their experience (their know-how) and the adoption of new practices (know what) in order to explicitly link the relationship between practice and theory; as a result educational programmes which are centred around the idea of learning as an enacted practice are ideally positioned to address this relationship. There is in existence an emerging body of literature into entrepreneurial learning which views entrepreneurial learning as being best achieved through activity and experience, (Reuber and Fischer, 1993, Gibb 1997; Cope and Watts 2000; Minniti and Bygrave, 2001, Cope 2003). The above perspective is not essentially new by any means, but how one captures and develops experience through educational methods remains a serious question. Cope (2001; 2003), drawing on both adult and organisational learning theories, emphasised that experiential learning was triggered by the use of reflection on learning experiences. This work as a holistic piece suggests that reflective process and learning are linked inextricably. Taylor and Thorpe (2004) and Cope (2003) suggest that reflection can be triggered through the enactment of everyday practice, where events or breakdowns in the practice of the entrepreneur can trigger “transformative learning”. The engagement of the entrepreneur in experiential learning necessitates one to move from passive ideas of learning to a method of learning which requires them to take control and ownership of their own learning, assuming the role of an inquirer, negotiator, decision maker and mediator. Thus, two main challenges emerge for the establishment of effective experiential learning as a practice, firstly determining a relevant context and secondly the importance of a strong underpinning pedagogical approach which seeks to support and frame the acquisition of skills and competencies.

By focusing on experiential learning as a process (knowing), an act of generating the social world, which is bound to the entrepreneur’s senses and past experiences, the social process view, does not define the world as universal, but rather defines a self-organising system, which re-creates itself in an open and autonomous way. Knowledge is dependent on context and is closely linked to observation; it is not abstract, but rather specific to the individual entrepreneur, (Giroux and Taylor, 2002). Experience allows for the understanding and definition of a problem but not the necessary solution. This experience is located in the mind and body and the social system in which the entrepreneur operates, it depends on the

past and on the observer and is shared through active engagement. To develop an understanding of the methods in which entrepreneurs learn, it is critical to appreciate the processes by which one acquires knowledge, as learning cannot occur if the individual does not engage in the learning process. Entrepreneurial learning could be described in terms of the varying skills which are required in order to effectively draw in new information and attribute meaning and context. This suggests that the creation of knowledge involves both procedural and contextual elements; procedural knowledge involves the process of knowing how to take data and develop this into information, contextual knowledge bears attention to the environmental domains and awareness of the entrepreneur; of their influence on the environment and the issues which arise from it. Learning in this case is not conceived as a method of learning the world, but as a way of actively participating in the world (Gherardi, 2000). Gherardi *et al.*, (1998) draw attention to the large repository of literature in existence on the social dimensions of learning and the social constructionist perspective. Current academic literature has widely acknowledged that entrepreneurs' learn through action oriented processes of social based interactions, and much of this learning is context dependent and experientially based (Rae and Carswell, 2000). This view moves away from the traditional, Cartesian, mechanistic ontology and epistemology of knowledge and learning in which both the "what" and "how" must be constructed through a conceptual understanding of learning. This subscribes to the pragmatic doctrine for understanding organisations as social worlds. This represents a way to understand the relationship between the individual and the collective as encompassing both the business environment and the entrepreneur as potential active participants who may not engage in the firm practice.

The authors suggest that the entrepreneur's reality is socially constructed, based on the process of social interactions and discursive behaviour. These social based interactions and constructions involve both plurality and diversity which emerge through interaction; this perspective views knowledge and learning as a social activity, as opposed to a representation, on which reality is constructed socially. In this case, knowledge and learning can be articulated and re-framed as a process of activity, for this reason it is now referred to as "knowing", (Cook & Brown, 1999; Gherardi & Nicolini, 2000). Cook & Brown (1999) have used the term knowing to refer specifically to the epistemological position of possession, in which knowledge has the following characteristics: it is situated in the process of ongoing practices; it is relational in its intent and mediated; it is dynamic and contextual, in that it is always rooted in a context of social interaction; and it is acquired through some form of participation. Practice may be viewed as the emergent order which arises from pre-reflexive and reflexive domains which gives the firm the necessary order and continuity of that practice.

Practice connects knowing and doing, conveying the image of materiality, and of fabrication. As such, knowledge does not arise from scientific discoveries but rather it is fabricated through the practice of knowledge production and reproduction. The study of knowledge in practice can follow a similar methodological pathway as identified by Latour (1987) in which agents identify ways in which they associate the various elements that make up their social and natural worlds. Understanding how entrepreneurs construct knowledge emerges from the interplay between tacit and explicit knowledge. From this perspective individual knowledge experiences are not considered in isolation, as knowledge in this case is the product of the interaction and co-evolution (Tsoukas & Vladimirou, 2001). In order for experiences and understanding to be thought of as relevant knowledge, it needs to be experienced as meaningful by the entrepreneur. The advantage of this process is that it recognises the importance of a pedagogical structure which is fluid yet sensitive to social relationships, and the needs of the entrepreneurs within their environment. In order for a firm entrepreneur to learn through and from experience, they must engage and develop experience from the physical environment and construct some form of conscious experience. This allows the entrepreneur to develop connections to both the past and the present relational experiences which they can learn from. One can take the view that learning is context dependent, where the process of inquiry and the application of critical thinking provide the necessary conditions for learning and knowing, (Gherardi, 1999; Brown and Duguid, 2001; Chiva and Alegre, 2005; Duch *et al.*, 2001; Brennan, 2005; Burns and Chisholm, 2005; Huggins *et al.*, 2008; Higgins, 2008).

Coping with Concepts of Experience/Inquiry

Dewey (1917 [1980]) drew recognition to the participative nature of learning in relation to the context and method of learning. Dewey's concept of learning is based upon the notion of experience from an interaction with the process of transferring the experience of that interaction, within the context of an uncertain situation (Dewey, 1934 [1987], 1938 [1988]). The role of experience has heavily influenced Dewey's (1917 [1980]) work, in which he believed that experience was the active and actual process of living and emergent patterns. This experience is multi-dimensional, a process, a product, and a result of that process. Dewey criticises the idea of analysing human behaviour as a mechanical sequence, comprised of three events, sequenced in a linear order: firstly a sensory stimulus; secondly a central process; and finally a motor response. Dewey's (1917 [1980]), argument moves towards the idea that sensation; thinking and actions are functional elements which constitute the entrepreneur's social reality. For example, a firm actor's action is not an independent stimulus, as the meaning of that action depends upon the condition and situation the actor is placed in and when that action takes place. This means that the environment and/or the context are both part of the interpretation. For Dewey (1917 [1980]), experience is a series of relational, connected, organic and coordinated interactions, which shape and re-shape the continuous formation and de-formation of individuals and the firm environment.

Dewey (1896 [1972]) regards the notion of inquiry as being attached to the practical process of gaining knowledge and becoming knowledgeable. The initial mode of inquiry is started with a problem in which the inquirer recognises a problem (awareness of this problem may or may not arise through intellect, but alternatively from a simple breakdown in the daily firm patterns). The human actor learns through inquiry into a problem to consider the situational context, by drawing evaluations and making conclusions, thus becoming knowledgeable and competent. It is not until the inquiry starts to define the specific problem area and related factors that the process of inquiry takes a mode of analysis such as human reasoning skills or critical/reflective thinking. Here the inquirer brings personal and previous experiences to the problem from perceived similar situations. Dewey (1896 [1972]) argues that the inquirer approaches the problem by the development and application of numerous working scenarios and solves the problem by testing the developed methodology. Thus, the inquirer successfully solving the problem eliminates the uncertainty surrounding the problem in the first instance, allowing the inquirer to have confidence the problem is solved. Through the practice of inquiry the inquirer gains experience and knowledge. In order for the inquirer to have gained knowledge and new experience the process requires the inquirer to have embarked upon thoughtful reflection on the participants, objects and mediating factors. The use of reflection to establish the relationship between the action and the consequence of the action is a key enabling factor in the attainment of knowledge. When habitual actions are established these create the basis for gaining new experience and knowledge as a result of inquiry into problem-based situations. What knowledge the individual actor gains depends on a complex web of conditions: partly the ability of the actor to reflect upon the relations between actions and the consequences of those actions and also partly on the relationship an actor can establish with past experience. An important factor in this understanding is that knowledge is a sub-set of experience, but all experiences hold the potential to become knowledgeable by making use of and engaging in practice. In order for the entrepreneur to learn through and from practice they must engage and develop experience from the physical environment and construct some form of conscious experience.

Very often pedagogical practices used in entrepreneurial education do not engage or encourage this connection as the focus is on the cognitive rather than the applied practice, (Baker & Kolb 1993). If learning is reframed as an embodied process, then it can be seen as contextualised in a social practice which is constructed through emergent action; as such learning is part of the entrepreneur's being, an embodied action as opposed to a disembodied intellect. Carr (2003) reinforces this point, illustrated through Skinner's experiment for teaching a pigeon to play table tennis, Skinner by breaking the game down into constituent logical elements, to a series of molecular skill sets and then systematically reinforcing each action for the pigeon continuously, until the activity resembled the human practice. What Carr (2003, p91) concluded, from Skinner's experiment was that while the pigeon achieved the task through reward, namely the

attainment of food for following the correct instructions, the attainment of food was the pigeons main priority; the animals understanding of the activity of table tennis was nonexistent, in other words through simple mechanical instruction there is no meaningful understanding or recognition and appreciation of what has and is being learnt. Educating and being an entrepreneur requires more insight, purpose, meaning and emotion in terms of what one is doing, why and how and as opposed to simply academic informed practice. While the process of becoming an entrepreneur at times requires early stage development of business skills, being an entrepreneur requires a reflective element in regards to one's actions and practice. For example, how many times have MBA business students reportedly expressed they forget the course material as soon as they finish the course? It could be suggested that the material was not purposeful or resonate with them. That is to say they did not make an embodied connection between their everyday practice or tacit experience and explicit knowledge. The entrepreneur, through their practice, can be viewed as bringing together experience, expertise in their own practice, and to a degree formal learnt knowledge as they attempt to solve and overcome the issues they encounter in practice, (Duch et al., 2001; Tenenbaum et al., 2001; Hytti and O'Gorman, 2004). Experiential learning is not simply the connecting of learning to real life situations in a classroom/training environment, it extends to a much deeper cognitive learning experience where learning is held as reflexive,(Brennan, 2005; Ramsey, 2005; Higgins and Aspinall, 2011; Higgins and Elliott, 2011).

Reflexivity: Identity in the educator and learner

As an entrepreneur engages in practice, they become the creator of their own knowledge and experiences, establishing a sense of self and identify with a community, while also developing a sense of their social actions. The tensions which an entrepreneur encounters in the course of human interaction are key inherent dilemmas which call for the processes of inquiry, mediation, and negotiation as the entrepreneur learns and engages in practice, (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985; Reynolds and Vince, 2004; Schön, 1983). Traditional pedagogy positions the educator as the expert in which relations of power are based around the control of the educator in authority (Chia 1992). However, from a reflexive perspective, learning is a rhetorical responsive activity where both educator and learner are active participants in the creation of new ideas through engaging with one another in a reflexive critique of their current practices. This means both educator and learner act as co-participating practitioners in a relational learning process. In considering such a pedagogical approach, which places the learner and educator in a practice world, learning is generated through human interactions arising from engagement of real world issues, (Pedler 1997, Taylor and Thorpe, 2004). Through inviting inquiry into the dynamics of the interactions specifically, ideas of co-authored action become central as educator/learner relations of power are repositioned from that of the expert/teacher and learner (where the teacher imposes their beliefs and values) to that of shared responsibility for the emergence of new practices of learning. What is being suggested here is that entrepreneurial pedagogy needs to embrace the use of reflexive critiques in order to develop reflexive awareness of their everyday actions, which is fundamental to making sense of and constructing the realities one experiences. Helping the entrepreneur become more aware of their practical enactments or the manner of accounting for and shaping their experiences, the questioning of practice can help to reveal situated and embodied knowing. This is not a rational way of ordering but rather a way of accounting for how the entrepreneur makes connections with others, themselves and their social communities. The impact of this approach on entrepreneurial educational pedagogy is that it moves focus from theoretical basis to actual practice, what we think, how we think, our assumptions, influences and judgements.

Reflexivity as a critique implies the questioning of one's practice and assumptions. It seeks to make the practitioner become aware of their practice and the assumptions which underlie how they make sense of their actions and the knowing which is gained from the experience, (Shepperd 2000). Rather than accept preordained methods and principles, reflexivity as a critique of inquiry searches patterns of knowing while continually questioning existing practices. In others, what the practitioner knows and the manner in which they become knowledgeable becomes the foci of critique, coupled with the awareness of the social collective and how social tensions are complicit in the construction of knowledge. Reflexivity is a process of looking outwards to the entrepreneur's social community/environment, to the social, political and cultural

artefacts and assumptions which structure practices and looking inwards in order to challenge the processes by which one can make sense of the world, (White 2001). As a conceptual perspective, reflexivity recognises the complex interrelations which exist between social tensions and knowing as a way of reframing emancipatory objectives in practice, (Humphries & Truman 1994). Such reflexive critique provides the entrepreneur with the power to think about the details of their practice and actions, to steer their emotions, and to move and question their established practices. These qualities are central to reflexivity, as well as a practice orientation based on the idea of critical choice, as one learns by enacting. Reflexivity as a pedagogical tool encourages a critique of the manner in which an entrepreneur views and understands their practice, their experiences and dominant assumptions. In this sense the educator/learner constructs an understanding that they are co-responsible of their learning, by incorporating it into their practices. As a result practical activities of learning are created between the educator and learner - as they construct meaning to a situation they encounter the emergent the resulting practice is the articulation of their sense making. The position above places the entrepreneur at the centre of the experience. They are an active participant in the construction and enactment of their own practice, letting them “sense that they are collaboratively shaping something as they interact” (Bickford & Van Uleck, 1997, p17). In this regard, learning as a relational practice can be seen as a way of establishing connections by creating shared meanings through the questioning and challenging of current practice, engaging with issues in an embodied way rather than logical deconstruction of the issue at hand. By recognising the co-construction of practice, the educator/learner can make sense of their reflexive activity and construct practical accounts through a reflexive critique of their learning practice. Business Schools and educators who adopt the traditional institutionalised approach to entrepreneurial education tend to focus on content as opposed ways of acting and relating. Current pedagogical methods ignore the complexity of social practice and its shared construction, this is not to suggest that the responsibility for learning is directly shifted to the learner, but it does mean placing the educator as a collaborator in the process of learning. This process can be achieved through the creation of a reflexive questioning/critiquing by encouraging learners to recognise their taken-for-granted assumptions and how they have constructed their own practices. This involves drawing emphasis to a reflexive process of creating reflexive questioning through interaction and helping learners to both understand and recognise moments when practices breakdown, are challenged or called into question, and in which they are forced or given the opportunity to re-think how and why they act in the manner they do. This reflexive critique encourages the learner to question their ways of being, understanding, and acting in the world by encouraging them to establish an awareness of their own beliefs, assumptions and the impact this has on their learning.

Conclusion

By drawing on the post modern debate one can raise some important and meaningful questions in regards to epistemological and pedagogical issues surrounding entrepreneurial education (French & Gray 1996, Giroux 1988). The authors suggests the need to develop a more critical pedagogical approach which could take the form of a reflective critique, in order to gain a critical interpretation of what it means to practice as an entrepreneur. Drawing on a social constructionist perspective the paper conceptualises learning as a relational social and enacted process/practice as a way of being and acting, (Wittgenstein 1980). The above viewpoint is not simply a question of thinking about a new pedagogical technique but rather involves re-conceptualising how one views entrepreneurial education and learning. For example – how can entrepreneurial scholars and students, co-construct practical experiences of the learning process and develop new means of reflexive practice?

The purpose of introducing the use of reflexive practice into entrepreneurial education is to enable the provision of a more informative pedagogy. Such a pedagogical position provides the entrepreneur with the opportunity to think about their own learning and growth, to create for them a space to reflect and consider the depth of their lived experiences and practices. As a way of seeking to expand and explore the interconnection between experiences and knowing as practising entrepreneurs. The process of a reflexive critique offers the suggestion that if entrepreneurial education is to make a impact on how entrepreneurs understand their practice and the process of social learning, then this learning must reflect the dynamic

and continuous life experiences and the struggles which the entrepreneur faces in their daily activities. The establishment of an open learning space is of huge importance into allow the generation of ideas, a space to practice or test the manner in which they can be used in everyday practice. This idea of reflecting on ones practices through questioning and challenging existing norms can create opportunities to contemplate the efficiency of one's judgments and actions for balancing identity, and practices as a member of a community and a wider society. Practicing, in the context of this paper, is about rehearsing, renewing and reshaping, seeking to balance and mediate the exploitation and exploration of actionable knowledge, through the roles of experimentation in order to foster the questioning of existing practices. This suggests that practices direct attention both on the process and outcome, the emergent practice. By taking this collective view of learning it enables a situated mode of learning which encompasses the dynamic unknown to be a central element in the generation of challenges or questioning of existing practices.

This discussion has sought to draw recognition to the current inadequate pedagogical practices which underpin the existing issues in the entrepreneurial field, (Gulati, 2007; Bartunek, 2003; 2007; Van de Ven, 2007; Van de Ven and Johnson, 2007; Weick, 1999; 2003a; 2003b). Bechard and Gregoire (2005) suggest that entrepreneurial education tends to ignore critical elements which could foster its effectiveness and ensure the avoidance of pedagogical stagnation. However, the current epistemological and pedagogical perspectives in the field hold a number of embedded views, a huge impacting factor is that many scholars tend to stick with the traditional ways, or what they already know and are comfortable with, questioning such traditional teaching practices can be both complex and cause painful reflection, in that educators behaviour's and paradigms are shaped by what one believes in and knows. There exist some informative and interesting accounts in main stream management education literature of the manner in which reflexivity can be employed as a way of re-framing current pedagogical approaches to management education and their supporting pedagogical practices, (Dehler et al., 2001; Grey, 2004). To be critical in a reflective sense could be to develop a form of questioning, a form of reflective accounting and disciplined form of thinking and self appraisal. For an entrepreneur to be critical implies the idea of scepticism in terms of arguments, practices, judgements, and being aware of the political and social dynamics of social interaction and the impact these have on what and how things get done. As such, to be critical in practice requires the entrepreneur to engage in a critique of their actions and associated implications. A critique of an event or learning experience advocates that to be critical is not simply about revealing inequalities or deconstructive reasoning; rather the process must be about the questioning and reflecting of the entrepreneur's own practice. To be critical requires the entrepreneur to question or move away from their own pre-established practices and assumptions in order to find new and alternative ways of practicing; encompassing new meaning and understanding, such a process requires both conviction and strength. The process of framing and re-framing alludes to one of the most powerful implicit qualities of critique as a reflexive practice; this process avoids complacency and pushes the entrepreneur to continuously seek new ways of doing and learning. A reflexive critique offers the entrepreneur the power to consider their practice, encouraging a more synthetic and integrative approach which allows the complexity of interconnections to be evidenced and new learning and practices to emerge which may not have been previously contemplated.

The use of reflexivity as form of critical reflection draws attention to practice as integral to both reflexivity and reflection, through an understanding of learning as a practice it seeks to expose the social tensions which are deeply embedded in the entrepreneur's activities. Such detail can positively impact the pedagogical methods in making entrepreneurial education more purposeful and impactful. The use of a reflexive critique enables the development of critical thinking as a fundamental pedagogical approach. The paper suggests a review of current pedagogical approaches to entrepreneurial education by overcoming the traditional functionalist ideas of what an entrepreneur needs to know, and focusing more on the lived experiences of being an entrepreneur, by reflecting on their practices and questioning, and critiquing their fundamental existence and purpose, and thus encouraging the entrepreneur to think more creatively about the way they practice and encouraging them to draw their own understandings of the complexity of the actions while at the same time encouraging them to critically evaluate how effective their current practices

are. Such a process requires and demands both academics and practitioners to engage in meaningful dialogue in order to co-create purposeful actionable knowledge, by reflecting and renewing the manner in which one conceptualises their actions and context. The development of learning, in the context of the entrepreneur, constitutes the nurturing of knowledge and experience through empowering entrepreneurs to think critically about their practices and decisions taken and how these actions are accounted for in practice. The opportunity to position learning as a practice in entrepreneurial education could enable a better scope of a more refined approach to entrepreneurial pedagogies, by supporting them to engage reflexivity in the application of their actions to theories of practice. The achievement of this process lays in the collaboration between academics and practitioners as a means of co-created shared knowledge, rather than positioning one as the instructor and the other the student or receiver of information. Such a shared endeavour increases the possibility of the co-creation of actionable knowing, supported through reflexive processes, as a means of learning new practices by exercising their knowledge and experiences, as they seek to understand their actions.

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