

Introduction

Value Creation as Educational Philosophy

MARTIN LACKÉUS

Department of Technology Management and Economics, Chalmers University of Technology

ABSTRACT

Purpose

The role of entrepreneurship as a major engine for innovation, economic growth and job creation has made policymakers argue for infusing entrepreneurship into all levels of education. It is argued that citizens must develop their entrepreneurial skills in order to cope with our increasingly globalized, fast-paced and uncertain world. Making the leap of faith from entrepreneurship into education is however ripe with challenges and failures. Most attempts have resulted in isolated initiatives impacting only a small numbers of interested students on higher levels of education. Common challenges to wider adoption are lack of resources, fear of capitalism, organizational issues, assessment difficulties and lack of definitional clarity around what exactly signifies “entrepreneurial” pedagogy. To address these challenges, the purpose of this thesis is to propose and qualify a new educational philosophy grounded in entrepreneurship, allowing teachers to draw on a thoughtful and coherent description and justification of entrepreneurial education when attempting to infuse entrepreneurship into education.

Result

An educational philosophy grounded in entrepreneurship has been defined in this thesis as letting students learn through creating value for others. This is inherently “entrepreneurial” in its reliance on a widespread view of entrepreneurship as being about new value creation for others and constituted by a set of teachable entrepreneurial methods. The resulting process is ripe of interaction with people and triggers a multitude of emotional learning events, allowing for more engaged students and deeper learning of entrepreneurial as well as subject specific knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Method

The new educational philosophy proposed here was developed through an abductive five-year action research process of constant iterations between theory and practice. A total of nine empirical studies on all levels of education were drawn from, involving a few hundred primary, secondary, tertiary and continuing education teachers, around 2000 students and around 100 different educational institutions in three European countries. Two main action research cycles were conducted, each spanning 3-4 years in time. Theory from entrepreneurship and education guided the research, as well as theory from fields such as psychology, philosophy, anthropology, economics and methodology. A number of methodological developments were made in the research process, such as a new “proxy” theory of assessing entrepreneurial education, a mobile app based experience sampling informed interview technique and analytical frameworks for key emotional events and entrepreneurial competencies.

Novelty

This is the first attempt that has been made to propose a new educational philosophy grounded in entrepreneurship. Questions explored in order to qualify the new educational philosophy included why educational philosophy is important when infusing entrepreneurship into education and what is new with an educational philosophy grounded in entrepreneurship. Compared to existing educational philosophies such as traditional, progressive and experiential education, it can contribute with a purposeful movement between opposing philosophical positions rather than being yet another flag on the philosophical playing field of education.

Limitations

Some important challenges and limitations with the proposed educational philosophy have emerged. The powerful triggering of strong emotions that is made possible through the new educational philosophy can lead to negative experiences for students that teachers are responsible for managing or avoiding altogether. The new educational philosophy also risks leading to a similar failure as that of progressive education, in terms of not being put to practice by teachers for a variety of reasons related to educational change. The interdisciplinary challenge of bridging the two very different scholarly fields of education and entrepreneurship was also shown to be significant.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Education, Entrepreneurial education, Educational philosophy, Assessment.