**Creating Meaningful Entrepreneurial Practice: crafting pedagogical awareness**

***Keywords:*** *entrepreneurship education; reflexivity; relational learning; experiential learning*

The manner in which higher education institutions (HEIs) are currently delivering and creating entrepreneurial programmes and their impact on entrepreneurial growth are coming under increasing scrutiny, especially since many government sectors are having to report on their investment in policies and expenditure to support such incentives. HEIs, through government-supported funding, have for some years been encouraged to develop programmes specifically to support entrepreneurial development. There is, however, a need for HEIs to recognize and develop a more focused pedagogy for entrepreneurial education by shifting attention away from the traditional means of delivery towards facilitating learning through alternative methods. Pedagogical choices have tended to neglect the value of experiential learning or learning through practice and the plausibility of inductive approaches to framing and reframing problems and concepts. While scholars are aware of the term ‘soft skills’, there has traditionally been a reluctance to focus sufficiently on their importance. This paper argues that the learning of the entrepreneur (in an educational context) is, in practice, a promising method of addressing issues of knowing, in a manner that exposes the richness and depth of the phenomenon.

**Introduction**

Entrepreneurial education is of critical economic importance to growth in both developing and developed countries (Millman *et al*, 2008; Matlay, 2009). As a result universities have been challenged to deliver inspiring and enriched entrepreneurial programmes, instilling in students the necessary skill sets and abilities required to succeed in uncertain and risky business environments (Bumpus and Burton, 2008; Tan and Ng, 2006). Entrepreneurial education, as a field of inquiry, is one of the most rapidly growing areas of research, and is viewed as the engine for economic growth in the UK (Matlay, 2009). This developing presence of entrepreneurial education on the research landscape, but not necessarily its development into business schools, has taken place over a number of years, for many reasons, such as, politically the governments of many EU countries view entrepreneurship as a key in the future of globalised forces as a result of the need for increased competitiveness and productivity, which can provide opportunities for individuals and communities. For business schools, entrepreneurship provides increased access to applied research funding schemes and can support infrastructural development and capacity building. In terms of an educational agenda, the subject area can act at a multi-disciplinary teaching opportunity through challenging current pedagogical methods and practices, and demands a philosophical and conceptual clarity and underpinning which, at present, is undervalued and under-researched.

The growing challenges accompanying the development of entrepreneurial education have been accompanied with plethora of research investigating entrepreneurial education and learning approaches that seek to capture attention through their relevance and thought provoking approaches. Yet, as highlighted by Frank and Landstrom (2016), there is a need to define what makes research into entrepreneurship field ‘interesting’. While recognising that every research field builds its unique rules of what is regarded as ‘interesting’ (Salvato and Aldrich, 2012), this chapter aims to offer some constructive debates regarding what ‘interesting’ and meaningful entrepreneurial education and learning is by challenging the status quo of existing approaches. The history of Business education has had a profound impact on influencing and shaping the entrepreneurial concept as a basis for formal learning in the current business school education system. Traditional pedagogical disciplines dictate the structure and dissemination of knowledge and learning in universities business schools, which in turn then provides the framework within which teaching and research are perused. Such traditional perspectives, rationale based ideas of management education, tend as a result to dictate the structure of higher education, and influence staff pedagogies and research agendas. Traditionally, the focus of entrepreneurial education remains on the dissemination of knowledge and learning in the process of business education as per the traditional paradigm, without giving better consideration to the pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviour and learning in practice. In this context, there exists a clear challenge of the traditional institutionalised ideas of business schools’ pedagogy to the notion of entrepreneurship as an isolated discipline. It has been argued that the education of entrepreneurs requires a major reconstruction of the idea of the entrepreneur or entrepreneurial firm (Gibb, 2002, 2005, 2009). The development of any value laden entrepreneurial educators programme must, and need to, respond and articulate the needs of current society. The underpinning rationale is that of developing a critically aware entrepreneurial practitioner with strong analytical and cognitive skills and attributes.

The educational challenge here is to focus upon the learning opportunities and methods, which allow the entrepreneur to become “empowered to do” and how such behaviours of thinking can be supported and facilitated by the educational process. As previously suggested, much entrepreneurial education, delivered in the traditional rationalist mode, provides no insight into the uncertainty and complexity of the real world in terms of how the entrepreneur copes and deals with such issues (Gibb and Hannon, 2006), further to this it can also be suggested that traditional methods fail to provide real insight into the “entrepreneurial way” of learning.

The chapter recognises and acknowledges the current and long-standing debate surrounding the area of entrepreneurial education and its related concepts. There currently exists no single agreed theory of entrepreneurship, even though research in the field has touched on several entrepreneurial themes such as the conceptual idea, types of entrepreneurs, the organisational firms, trait, the entrepreneurial process and many others (Ucbasaran et al, 2006). Research in the past number of years has focussed attention away from the identification of persons with particular characteristics and traits, towards seeking more of an understanding of the nexus of enterprising individuals. Such focus requires a much deeper understanding of the opportunity and educational requirements in the entrepreneurial process (Eckhardt and Shane, 2003). Entrepreneurialism is a process of practice, one for becoming; it is a highly dynamic iterative process of intense socially enacted activity, in a holistic process in which existing stability disappears (Bygrave, 1989). Entrepreneurship is about seeking out and identifying new opportunities, creativity, breaking rules, taking risks and co-ordinating resources (Gibb, 2002). Entrepreneurs interact with their environment, discover, evaluate and exploit opportunity (Shook et al, 2003). Schumpeter (1939) suggests that an entrepreneur is a person who seeks to destroy economic order. The growing number of seminars and courses offered by universities, colleges and private practitioners coupled to the variety of academic literature which has emerged, can be reviewed as an indicative account of the current interest in entrepreneurial education (Vesper and Gartner, 1997; Solomon et al, 2002; Henry et al 2003). However, the extent of the teaching method employed in entrepreneurial education is a matter of debate amongst scholars (Fiet, 2000). Entrepreneurship is about creativity and critical thinking, which suggests the need for a contextual shift away from traditional pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning in a more real life application of entrepreneurial practice, where concrete experiences need to be gained through active participations (Gorman et al, 1997).

Business schools in higher education institutions (HEIs) have had an increasing impact on the dissemination of business knowledge to the entrepreneur (Gibb, 2009; Jones *et al*., 2010). The subject of how entrepreneurs learn has developed a considerable body of literature in recent years. In particular, focus has been placed on the role that education plays within entrepreneurship and in particular, the suitability, relevance and effectiveness of passive and experiential learning strategies that are employed. This focus has given rise to the debate surrounding the question of do entrepreneurs find greater effectiveness from learning through strategies of action and reflection, or do the traditional and more passive methods of education remain the only sources of learning?

The institutionalized nature of business schools requires entrepreneurship to be taught in a certain manner, rendering it a marginalized 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. Yet, business schools have been criticised for providing out-of-context entrepreneurial education that does not relate to the personal needs, motivations and life cycles of learners (Klapper and Refai, 2015). Business schools have also been criticized 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. The end result being the development of an ‘entrepreneur’ with no supporting analytical framework for understanding and appreciating real entrepreneurship based issues, treating the process of entrepreneurship not as an art or craft that is deeply rooted in the practice of everyday life (Bechard and Gregoire, 2005), but something that is functional (Mintzberg, 2004).

Educational programmes structured on this epistemological perspective do not recognise the need for developing a mindset that is open to entrepreneurial action (Hytti and Kuopusjärvi, 2004), and tend to leave participants with an abstract and unconnected set of knowledge and skills which, at times, has very little relevance to the actual complex practice of being an entrepreneur (Zhang and Hamilton, 2010; Cope, 2005a; Corbett, 2005; Politis, 2005). This has initiated some recent calls for research investigating the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship in ways that question the status quo of existing practices (e.g. Fayolle et al., 2013). The chapter moves away from the predominant positivist view of entrepreneurial learning that has generally treated entrepreneurs as fixed entities. Some scholars have challenged the dominant conceptions that suggest entrepreneurship is an intrinsic related property of the individual person (Chell, 2007), and instead look towards the interconnected web of entrepreneurial practices with the broader societal and cultural images of the entrepreneur (Bruni et al., 2004; Nicholson and Anderson, 2005; Peterson and Meckler, 2001). These scholars have sought to recognise that the representation of the entrepreneur as a heroin of innovation may be socially constructed, and that entrepreneurial practice operates within a social reality which is constructed and shaped by their actions and that of others in response to their actions (Dodd and Anderson, 2007; Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008). The chapter aims to examine the specific contribution of a practice-based view of learning as a means of entrepreneurial education and HRD development. The chapter conceives entrepreneurial practices as being inevitably and inextricably related to socially embedded experiences and relations (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). This is in direct contrast to a focus on the individual entrepreneur, which is more typical in research on entrepreneurial traits and cognitions (Chell, 2000; Krueger et al., 2000). We suggest that entrepreneurial learning requires an insightful navigation of rules, norms, and objective conditions which seek to facilitate and mediate some actions whilst inhibiting others.

The chapter is structured in the following way; firstly, we review and direct a conceptual argument based onto existing literature on the current role of management education, from a UK point in case, highlighting the role of institutionalism and how this is affecting and shaping entrepreneurial education and development. Secondly, we seek to illustrate how knowledge is constructed through a situated practice of knowing, in other words developing learning through practice, and demonstrate how a practice based perspective might be useful for the study of entrepreneurial education. Finally the chapter concludes by providing some remarks regarding possible future research agendas and applications of the practice based perspective to the context of entrepreneurial education and development.

**Entrepreneurship education and institutionalism**

There is a strong belief that entrepreneurship is most suitably taught and delivered outside business schools. How HEIs are currently delivering entrepreneurial programmes 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.*, 2008; Clarke *et al.*, 2006; Pittaway and Cope, 2007a; Taylor and Thorpe, 2004). 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, 2007b; Hamilton, 2011). One particular concern relates to Hindle (2007) who refers to entrepreneurial development and education as a field of study that lacks legitimacy as a source of true value in the context of the community, that is higher education. At present, scholars and researchers in the field (e.g. Rideout and Gray, 2013; Klapper and Neergaard, 2012) are challenging one another to question what the most effective approach to educating the entrepreneur is.

One of the main challenges in discussing this area is the lack of any solid definition of the term entrepreneurship. Numerous authors have argued that the idea of identifying and acting upon opportunities represents the dominant view of what entrepreneurship is. Shane (2003, p4) defines entrepreneurship as entailing practices that involve the identification and development of ‘new goods, services, ways of organising, market processes and raw materials through organising efforts that previously had not existed’ (Corbett, 2005b; Rae, 2006). Gartner (1985) and others suggest that there is no accepted definition of the term ‘entrepreneur’. This argument is further reinforced by Henry *et al.* (2005, p 98) who suggest that literature on entrepreneurship abounds ‘with theories and discussions related to the issue of what or who is an entrepreneur’. Matlay (2005, p 628) argues that often an entrepreneur is seen as an ‘individual who seeks business opportunities and takes advantage of economic disequilibrium to pursue personal gain’. Matlay and Westhead (2005, p 630) argue ‘Entrepreneurship can take a variety of forms – in new or established firms of all sizes (micro, small, medium and large businesses), as self-employment or as membership within virtual teams of e-entrepreneurs’. The educational challenge from this is to focus upon the learning opportunities and methods, which allow the entrepreneur to become ‘empowered to do’, and how such behaviours of thinking can be supported and facilitated by the education process. As previously suggested, much entrepreneurial education is delivered in the traditional rationalist mode, and provides no insight into the uncertainty and complexity of the real world in terms of how the entrepreneur copes and deals with such issues (Hannon, 2006).

The historical preoccupation with a functionalist approach to entrepreneurial education has not appreciated the fact that entrepreneurial learning ‘does not happen in a vacuum’ (Fayolle and Gailly, 2008, p.580), and has continued to marginalize and de-value the broader social context in which the entrepreneur functions (Goss, 2005). According to Autio et al. (2014), ‘*context must play a central role in our understanding of the origins, forms, micro-processes, functioning, and diverse outcomes of entrepreneurial activities*’. Therefore, marginalisation of the broader context will impose limitations on entrepreneurial education approaches since actions happen within contexts that regulate and define what is known, what the best options are, which options are likely to be applied and what the outcomes are likely to be. Consequently, a rationalistic approach has resulted in a bias against a focus on the meaning entrepreneurs make of themselves and their social worlds, or learning about the knowledge they possess from a careful study of their practice.

The above has met with steady criticisms, the thrust of these criticisms is that what is being produced as a result of such educational programmes are entrepreneurs who are overly analytical, narrow and short-term focused, technically deconstruct and uninterested in methods of reflection as a means of understanding. Entrepreneur’s need to become aware of and develop their cognitive skills to aid them in making sense of their actions or own practice (Trehan and Rigg, 2011). Thus, creating a real time learning process by permitting, supporting and encouraging them to explore their judgements and critique their means of inquiry, calling into question the knowing, images, assumption of their actions, and the stories which they account for in their experiences of themselves and others (Anderson and Warren, 2011).

As a result, the conceptual diversity of entrepreneurial education and development has led to a lack of clarity in the integration with purposeful philosophical underpinnings, which has led to confused and mixed purposes. The current demand to develop proficient entrepreneurs requires methods for enhancing and stimulating the learning experiences of the entrepreneur which enhance aspirations, critical thinking skills, capabilities and behaviour. These are more likely than conventional programmes to involve students and tutors in complex social and political processes, where the multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of entrepreneurship is acknowledged, thus, allowing entrepreneurs to develop through ‘a contextual process of becoming’ (Cope 2005b, p.374). This contextual process will involve not only the learners and tutors, but also their pre-assumptions and understandings, shared realities and contexts in which they are acting (Refai et al., 2015). Such engagement of multiple contextual elements improves the appreciation of the various dynamics of entrepreneurial activities and their relation to practice (Zahra and Wright, 2011), thus, emphasising the need for holistic entrepreneurial education and learning approaches that consider all elements in their totality, rather than isolated parts, where all these elements act together and impact the different meanings and understandings that entrepreneurs attach to their experiences (Refai et al, 2015). This chapter seeks to raise points of debate surrounding some key fundamental questions, which need to be addressed in regard to how relevant the current pedagogical approaches are to the development of the entrepreneurial education and the relational learning experience. For example, the current offering raises some fundamental questions:

1. How relevant is the current pedagogical offering to achieving desirable practising entrepreneurs and developing future graduate?
2. How do curricula design and development processes enhance the ‘real life’ learning experience of students?

Such questions represent a number of challenges to the current traditional methods of entrepreneurship education adopted by university business schools, ranging from deeply rooted philosophical debates and beliefs about the nature of entrepreneurship in higher education, to the definitional and conceptual contradictions to the notions of what entrepreneurship practices are, and the pragmatic aspect of educational pedagogy. The above questions are designed to establish a focus towards the methods, which enable one to gain a real insight into the activities of what it means to be a practicing entrepreneur, where experience and learning are gained through the natural process of social enactment (Antonacopoulou, 2007; 2008). [Top of page](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2009.00679.x/full#leftBorder)

[Abstract](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2009.00679.x/full#abstract)

[Introduction](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2009.00679.x/full#ss1)

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[Introducing ‘critical thinking’ into the MBA curriculum](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2009.00679.x/full#ss3)

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The implication of this position, in terms of an educational agenda, involves challenging the ‘self-conceptions’ of what it means to be an ‘entrepreneur’, inviting openness to alternative meanings.

There is a need to establish a clear understanding of what we mean by the term entrepreneurial education and how the role of practice fits into educational theory and learning concepts. The authors suggest that entrepreneurial education and learning can find a comfortable home within a number of clearly established concepts, which come under the umbrella of social constructionist theories of knowledge and learning. While it is impossible to accommodate and explore each ideology in detail, the authors argue that to develop an epistemology of practice as a pedagogical approach, it will be of critical importance to understand how such an analytical perspective view learning and knowledge.

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 entrepreneur’s behave and practice in the manner they do (Bechard and Gregoire, 2005). In order to impact on entrepreneurial education, the focus needs to be on helping learners 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 practice(Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson, 2007). An essential step in developing such an approach is the abandonment of current business school pedagogies and the resultant knowledge they propagate; rather, one needs to embrace and cultivate a critical stance towards practice. Whilst certainly the concept of learning through experience is valid, 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– what they did, what they said, how they felt etc.

**Entrepreneurial Education: a critical perspective**

Learning as a process of practice illustrates how life experience influences assumptions and choices, which are made by the entrepreneur (Chell, 2007;Hindle, 2007). 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 (1964) 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 organizational 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(Higgins, 2011). 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 generalizable to future activity. Therefore, entrepreneur’s need to become aware of, and develop their, cognitive skills to aid them in making sense of their actions or own practice. The term “reflection-in-action”, a term coined by Donald Schon (1983) encapsulates the process whereby the practitioner seeks to discover and re-think their actions and outcomes of those actions. By taking into account influences, such as cultural, historical, and social for example, and their unique interplay between the entrepreneur and their local situated context in which they operate, as well as the interplay between practice and theory. Thus, creating a real time learning process by permitting, supporting and encouraging the entrepreneur to explore their judgements and critique their means of inquiry, calling into question the knowing, images, assumption of their actions, and the stories which they take account of in their experiences of themselves and others.

Consequently, reflexivity supports establishing subtle connections that help learners, educators and entrepreneurs in bringing ‘realism’ to their practice at different moments in time (Zahra and Wright, 2011). This perspective sets to challenge traditional positivist 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 (Cunliffe, 2002). Such perspective is also in line with the notion that entrepreneurship is continuously emerging, and, thus, continuously revealing different realities and practices to reflect upon (Refai et al., 2015). This highlights the significance of the notion of ‘multiple sensitive periods’ (Marquis and Tilcsik, 2013), which emphasises the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial learning. Here, entrepreneurial learning is influenced variably by entrepreneurs’ engagement in different practices at different moments in time, where these practices play different roles of imprinting the entrepreneurial actions of these entrepreneurs (Mathias et al., 2015). Therefore, embedding reflection on these ‘windows of imprintability’ (Higgins, 2005) into entrepreneurial education and learning approaches can enhance the critical position of learning to involve sensitive practices at different moments in time. At the basic level, the primary objective is to provide a learning experience which integrates the entrepreneur’s experiences and lived practices to the dilemmas and complex challenges of operation in differing contexts in relation to social and political conditions. The establishment of an open learning space is of huge importance in order to allow of the generation of ideas, a space to practice, or test, the manner in which they can be used in everyday practice. This idea towards reflecting on one’s practices, through questioning and challenging existing norms, would be an implication to 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.

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. Klapper and Refai (2015) agree with this in their relation between Wenger’s (2009) ‘Learning as doing’ dimension and the question of ‘what to learn in entrepreneurship?, where the focus was on the practices that entrepreneurs engage in; thus, emphasising the need to focus on what entrepreneurs do in the entrepreneurial learning process, rather than who they are (Gartner, 1988). However, current entrepreneurial pedagogy seek to de-contextualize experience in order to allow the entrepreneur to understand, and thus, as a result of this process, learn to act in more effective ways. This process does not necessarily allow the entrepreneur to understand the construction of these practices in the moment of acting; after all we draw on everyday social interactions and respond to these interactions through our sense and feelings in the moment (Cunliffe, 2004). Drawing on 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 recognize everyday lived experiences. Entrepreneurs do not exist in a vacuum 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 that 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 that learning is a sequential process and that learning is under our conscious control, however, in practice, this not necessarily the case (Burgoyne and Reynolds, 1997; [Anderson](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/action/doSearch?target=emerald&logicalOpe0=AND&text1=Anderson,%20L&field1=Contrib) and Thorpe, 2004).

The conceptualization of learning as a practice takes a critical perspective in order to draw attention towards the social and political process of learning by challenging dominant functionalist paradigms and exposing new ways of conceiving the issues of power, politics and learning. The adoption of a critical perspective provides the authors with a method of exploring how learning and knowledge are constructed, by making explicit the values, beliefs and assumptions underlying social learning theory(Chell, 2000). The lack of sociological perspectives in entrepreneurship literature, has led the subject area to become popularized by often over simplistic versions of complex human dynamics, which fail to acknowledge and recognize the complexities of learning, but rather serve to obstruct and obscure the consideration of alternative ideas. For example, learning as an experiential process presents a sociological ideology to help make sense of learning through a set of beliefs and values about how humans acquire knowledge; but the social, and more importantly, the political aspect of this perspective is not explored in the current literature to any great depth(Raelin, 2006). The chapter positions learning as a socially enacted practice, and seeks to critically reject the assumptions posed by the rationalist perspective and by positioning learning as a socially enacted and constructed process, which is firmly rooted in the practices of the entrepreneur, where knowing is only temporary, and where knowledge is the result of continuing emerging practice and enactment (Elkjaer, 2004; Yanow, 2001; Brown and Duguid, 2001, Higgins *et al.*, 2013). This view becomes critical of the cognitivist’s perspectives on learning (Marshall, 2008) as knowing and learning are not situated in the individual mind, but instead are placed in the context of social enactment; what we do together as a collective. In order for learning to emerge, existing practices must be called into question or broken down, because practices are repeated actions which can lead one to interpret practices as appearing to be quasi-objective or taken-for-granted assumptions of social reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Schutz and Luckmann, 1989). In this regard, practices heavily imprint upon the entrepreneur certain values, assumptions, norms and taken for granted knowledge in a self-legitimizing method, that is to say, they are accepted, used and embraced so long as they continue to work (Lyotard, 1984).

Previous research has speculated on the nature of experiential learning in the context of the entrepreneur. However, despite this recognition, the current understanding and appreciation of how entrepreneurs actually learn from experience is still rather fragmented (Sarasvathy, 2001; Sullivan, 2000). A reason for this perceived gap relates to how we approach the idea of learning and education from the entrepreneurial perspective: the study of entrepreneurial learning has traditionally compared the difference between the entrepreneur’s cognitive experiences and awareness at a point in time, and related this knowledge to developments in the business. A significant critique in the literature that seeks to make sense of the role of experience in entrepreneurial learning is that it is very hard to separate and specifically identify the effects of exogenous and endogenous factors that can influence learning. This suggests that it may be much more plausible to explore the influences of entrepreneurs’ experiences on the establishment of relevant knowledge that can both directly and indirectly impact what and how they learn. Another critique regarding the previous idea of the role of learning in entrepreneurial research is that it takes a static perspective on the process of learning, where the term ‘process’ refers to the logic of understanding and rationalizing causal relationships between the entrepreneurs’ past experiences and their current practice. Little attention has been directed towards identifying what pedagogical methods support and seek to understand how entrepreneurs, through experience, develop knowledge that enables them to act and learn.

**Offering Insight to what next?**

The problematic nature of how we view and approach entrepreneurial education and learning is matched by the lack of agreement on the most appropriate conceptual and theoretical foundations of the field. According to Phan (2004), entrepreneurship and scholarly activity in the field need to break away from the more traditional ideas of economies, psychology or positivist perspectives, and, instead, move towards more sociological perspectives and theories, which could provide better appreciative and explanatory powers/means.

This position is not unique to the entrepreneurial field of study, for some time theoretical and methodological heterogeneity, pedagogical fragmentation, and segregation have been a matter of contentious debate for scholars working in the field of entrepreneurship and organisational studies as a whole. One can observe that entrepreneurial education and learning has too often been viewed as similar to research in the physical sciences, which is characterised by a belief in the existence of universal laws.

The authors hold the view that learning arises through the problems entrepreneurs encounter as opposed to the issues, questions and problems of a discipline, but in a context of application. Progress in entrepreneurial education methods may be achieved better through a robust focus on the context of application based issues as opposed to attempts to develop an all-encompassing theory within a single positivist paradigm. In this chapter, the authors starting point in the process of learning is as a practice which is the context-of-application to the entrepreneur.

The literature suggests that much of the learning, which takes place within the context of the entrepreneur, is experiential in nature (Cope, 2005b; Sarasvathy, 2001; Sullivan, 2000). Entrepreneurial learning is often described as a continuous process, however, while literature has attempted to explore the process of learning in the context of the entrepreneur’s experiences, little effort has been made at distinguishing between “experience” and “knowledge” in the entrepreneurial context. One way of understanding the distinguish between experience and knowledge can be to view experience as a means of participation, while practical knowledge results from what the entrepreneur encounters during the activity, representing the knowledge derived from the experience of the practice (Reuber and Fischer, 1993).

The challenge to develop current business schools methods can create challenges in the form of questioning deeply rooted beliefs and epistemological issues in terms of the nature of entrepreneurship, and the conceptual contradictions in regards to the understanding of what entrepreneurship is, and especially to the pragmatic aspects of andragogical or pedagogical approaches. It is noticed, and has been suggested, that the conceptual diversity of entrepreneurial education coupled to the lack of clarity on integrity educational epistemology has led to confused methods.

The starting point for addressing this issue and building a firm foundation is the conceptual linking of entrepreneurship with an educational pedagogy, which protects and enhances the naturalistic nature of entrepreneurial learning. By drawing on a postmodern debate to raise critical questions about pedagogical methods currently used and the impact they are having on entrepreneurial education and training (French and Grey, 1996; Winch and Gingell, 2004; Bechard and Gregoire, 2005). The postmodern debate has sought to question the established practices and narratives embodied in rational epistemological suppositions; current educational practice seeks to 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.

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 (Lewis, 2011). What is ultimately required is a synthesis of theory and practice if we are to develop thoughtful entrepreneurial practitioners. The chapter adopts conceptual and practical approaches from the social constructionist orientation, in order to appreciate and understand the social structures and processes that are embedded in the entrepreneur’s practice. In elucidating this argument, one can draw on conceptual notions of social learning, practice and reflexivity as methods for reshaping entrepreneurial pedagogy (Higgins *et al*, 2013). 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.

From this view the importance of everyday conversations and interactions are critical to how an entrepreneur’s 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(Down, 2006). 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 (Carey and Matlay, 2012; Chapman *et al.*, 2011). Such pedagogy focuses on 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, by exploring and addressing the following:

1. The implication of this position in terms of an educational agenda involves challenging the ‘self-conceptions’ of what it means to be a ‘entrepreneur’, inviting openness to alternative meanings, as a central discussion point.
2. This perspective represents a movement away from the pre-conceptualizations of rationality, offered through current HEI institutionalism, to a method that embraces introspection of critical reflexivity as a means to enable and facilitate the exploration of alternative spaces for learning and for possible actions.
3. Another key discussion point would be directed towards 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, which is consistent with a reflexive pedagogical approach. Such pedagogy draws focus to expose differences or gaps between the individual entrepreneur’s espoused perceptions of theories, and allows for the exploration of hidden tensions of resistance and conflicts that are embedded in social discourse.
4. A final focused point of discussion would be brought back to the focus of the student, and how they bring realism towards their practice - understand how they and others select bits of knowledge from learning experiences and then draw almost immediate conclusions from these bits of knowledge without understanding their embedded assumptions or attributions.

The above perspectives are not essentially new by any means, but how one captures and develops experience through educational pedagogies remains a serious question. Cope (2003), drawing on both adult and organizational learning theories, emphasized that such experiential learning was triggered by the use of reflection on that learning experience. This work as a holistic piece suggests that reflective processes and learning were linked inextricably. Suggesting that, as the entrepreneur learns, while enacting in an activity by reflecting on the practice of that activity, one can begin to draw new understandings. Taylor and Thorpe (2000) 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 challenge then is how one introduces and facilitates this idea of learning into entrepreneurial pedagogy, and what would the theoretical underpinning and value be (Cope 2005b, Higgins, 2011; Jones and Matlay, 2011).

**Conclusion**

Engagement in entrepreneurial learning at university has been shown to influence entrepreneurial intent (Greene and Saridakis, 2008) and actual business start-up (Blackford *et al*, 2009). This suggests that we should aim to provide more opportunities for our students to actively experience and learn about enterprise if we wish to increase the number of graduate entrepreneurs emerging from the UK universities. Various researchers and commentators state that enterprise and entrepreneurship education must include opportunities for learning by doing and for the student to actively participate and control their learning (for example, NCGE, 2008; Gibb, 2005). In their summary of the literature, Rae and Woodier (2006) and Higgins and Mirza (2010) state that the concept of ‘experiential’ learning is the most powerful learning situation, developing self-efficacy and helping an individual act on their intentions, and influencing the pursuit of a new business venture. Traditional entrepreneurial pedagogical norms tend to analyse entrepreneurship as a series of functional, measureable and teachable processes, there is limited empirical evidence to suggest that current entrepreneurial programmes encourage the use of reflexive perspectives in the exploration of entrepreneurial practice in regards to the learning through and from experiences. For many years, the functional orientated pedagogy of the traditional business school has been unquestioned in its application towards favouring functionalist ideologies. Educational programmes 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 activity of being an entrepreneur. This is further compounded by the lack of integrative analysis of the inter-subjective nature of entrepreneurism which overlooks, and as a result fails, to engage with the political and social artefacts of practice in the context of the entrepreneur daily practice. The entrepreneur exists in very complex and dynamic environments, as such, when the entrepreneur makes a decision or judgement which directs an action, the potential for a change in practice is increased, but in order to learn the entrepreneur needs to be able to both decide on their actions, how they reflect on those actions and the underpinning rationale for making them. Only then can the entrepreneur understand and recognise how practices emerge as a result of these choices and actions.

The importance of criticality in practical knowledge provides a route for the development of entrepreneurial education and learning as a process of knowing in practice, by re-directing thinking and conceptualization towards understanding the social tensions, complex relations and connections which are present in the co-creation of entrepreneurial knowing. Knowledge, which is a co-created process, seeks to illustrate the interconnections between practitioners and scholars and the orientations these groups have towards education and learning as means of integrating differing perspectives, and widening the possibilities for interaction and action.

Rather than presenting the perspectives of academic and entrepreneur practitioners as in opposition to one another, an issue which is central to the presumed gap between theory and practice, it would be more productive to explore and understand the social tensions which exist within the entrepreneur’s activities as a purposeful conceptual basis for informing knowing as a process of enacted practice. In order to achieve this pedagogical method, one must appreciate and recognize the social tensions, which are central to real world lived experiences. It is these tensions that mediate and challenge what one knows, as a mode of inquiry, and facilitate the connections necessary to detail with such complex issues. The social tensions, which an entrepreneur encounters in the course of human interaction, are key inherent dilemmas which call for the process of inquiry, mediation, and negotiation as the entrepreneur learns and engages in practice.

This suggested approach seeks to encourage a view of learning as a socially enacted practice supported through the use of critical thinking as ‘praxis’ in order to provide opportunities for the entrepreneur to actively participate in learning, and recognize the value in and through their experiences (Peltier *et al*, 2009; Schlee *et al*, 2007).

In conclusion, this book chapter set out to debate more ‘interesting’ entrepreneurial education and learning approaches that challenge the status quo of existing practices. In particular, focus has been placed on the role that education plays in entrepreneurship, while emphasising, the suitability, relevance and effectiveness of passive and experiential learning strategies employed (Raelin, 2007). Within this focus, the authors argue for on-going and more meaningful learning, which raises the question of whether entrepreneurs find greater effectiveness from learning through strategies of action and reflection, or whether the traditional and more passive methods of education remain the only sources of learning. Learning in the context of the entrepreneur has been described in terms of the varying skills that are required in order to effectively draw in new information and attribute meaning and context (Thorpe et al, 2009). 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, while contextual knowledge brings attention to the environmental domains and awareness of the entrepreneur, of their influence on the environment and the issues that arise from it. Therefore, the authors acknowledge the dynamic nature of entrepreneurs’ contexts, and argue against over-institutionalising entrepreneurial teaching and learning approaches in ways that render them irrelevant to practice. We highlight the need to acknowledge multiple practices within entrepreneurs’ contexts, and the different imprinting roles of sensitive practices on entrepreneurial learning, where the need to factor context into reflective practices is emphasised in order to create more harmony between the theory and practice of entrepreneurship. In this regard, connectionist or social learning theories can provide a useful platform from which to understand the creation of entrepreneurial knowledge.

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