
Entreprendre & Innover

Thematic issue # 51

Entrepreneurial spirit, are you still there?

Entrepreneurship Education - Critical Approaches

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"Fully mature but not fully legitimate". Katz's words in 2008 remind us to continue questioning entrepreneurship education. This quest for legitimacy, as well as its expectations, are not shared by all and strong resistance to the deployment of entrepreneurship in schools and universities remains. Gaining legitimacy implies responding to the expectations of many stakeholders (Foliard et al., 2019) and, through a scientific perspective, going beyond representations to understand and support complex phenomena, questioning their foundations, their *raison d'être*, and their adequacy in relation to the aspirations of our society.

The purpose of this special issue of *Entreprendre & Innover* is to explore the "taken-for-granted" in entrepreneurship education research: the ideologies that underlie it, the dominant assumptions, the discourses and their language elements, the samples studied or the methodologies used. Entrepreneurship education and support are heralded in a very optimistic and proactive way at the political, economic, academic and media levels as a means of transforming individuals, local ecosystems and societies. The idea is to promote entrepreneurship that creates value and well-being. The teaching models used aim to bring the entrepreneurial experience as close as possible to the reality of young people, novice entrepreneurs. The underlying neo liberal ideology, *entrepreneurialism* (Dejardin, & S. Luc, 2016), places entrepreneurship at the centre of a system of thought and action and establishes entrepreneurship and innovation as the expected individual and collective behaviors. Infused into educational programs, entrepreneurship education is present around the world and takes place at all levels of different institutional and disciplinary frameworks (Valerio, Parton, & Robb, 2014). This ideology then justifies entrepreneurship as an experience for students by identifying and developing in them the learning that transforms them into potential entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon that can take many forms. Entrepreneurship education follows this diversity with a profusion of programmes and great diversity in their

implementation. The knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes promoted in these programs shape entrepreneurial identity and contribute to the entrepreneurial spirit. Adhering to the hegemonic discourse, the pedagogical activities reproduce the heroic figure of the entrepreneur (Germain and Jacquemin, 2017) that students must seek to achieve. If the expected results of entrepreneurship education are more businesses, more value, more and better jobs, then the functionalist approaches (Jennings, Perren and Carter, 2005), which continue to prevail in the academic tradition, are sufficient. They make it possible to explain, gap by gap, the cohesion and consensual development of our societies around entrepreneurship.

But the realities on the ground seem far removed from this deterministic model and the relationship between entrepreneurship education and expected performance criteria is not so obvious and, to say the least, difficult to measure. New insights are needed to understand the dynamics impacting entrepreneurship education, starting with the nature of entrepreneurship education. Our methods of investigation can be questioned, along with the epistemological foundations that guide our research. The same goes for the place ascribed to dominant, hegemonic discourses, the prominence of the "heroic" entrepreneur or of experiential learning, the purpose of these teachings both at the individual level and the societal choices they underlie, etc.

This special issue seeks to question this *entrepreneurialism* in entrepreneurship education and the way in which it privileges certain forms of teaching, certain performance standards, as well as evaluation or impact measurement criteria to complete the field of possibilities. Questioning the theoretical, philosophical, ideological or methodological foundations of entrepreneurship education means questioning a certain number of dominant discourses and elements that are taken for granted. Our purpose here is to bring alternative, peripheral or divergent conceptions of entrepreneurship and its teaching into resonance in order to better understand the facets of complex phenomena and to make room for new critical, ethical, political and educational perspectives. We wish to complement critical efforts in entrepreneurship research and entrepreneurship education by opening up the debate to a wide range of issues or controversies.

Entrepreneurship education draws from many scientific fields and we encourage a transdisciplinary approach when harnessing concepts, tools or methods. We propose three levels of reflection that are not mutually exclusive and that the authors can take up. At the micro level we find the individual, the student involved in an entrepreneurship education program. The meso level relates to that of intermediate institutions, entrepreneurship education systems and the ecosystems in which they are embedded. The macro level is the level of society as a whole.

For each of these levels, we invite a wide variety of contributions that allow for a critical approach to entrepreneurship education. The following questions illustrate this diversity:

- What are the dominant ideologies, assumptions and discourses in entrepreneurship education? What philosophies, ideologies or methodologies can help deconstruct our vision and propose new ones?
- Is entrepreneurship a vector of emancipation? Is it not true that the use of standardized tools to design or develop an entrepreneurial project leading to innovative projects will conform to pre-established rules? Experiential learning and immersion in ecosystems provide authentic knowledge, but what is the role of isomorphism in this learning? How can we avoid the risk of reproducing what already exists and open up more creativity and self-expression? What is the place and the power of the actors within the

entrepreneurial ecosystem in the teaching systems? What are we talking about when we talk about entrepreneurial emancipation?

- Education to, by and in entrepreneurship is becoming more widespread in our schools and universities, but under what conditions can this be a good thing? Are all young people destined to embrace an entrepreneurial career? What impact can these individualistic approaches have on our society and our environment? What are the limits and alternatives to these educational, economic and social policies?
- Entrepreneurship education is often inscribed in an optimistic and purposeful discourse advocating proactivity and individual success. In this sense, programmes offer a watered-down, simplified experience that masks the dark side of entrepreneurial reality. Questions of uncertainty, doubts, fears, inhibitions, but also power relations and opportunistic behaviors are rarely raised in favor of what is achieved or learned. What is the place of these dark sides in entrepreneurship education? What is the place of emotions? What is the status of the individual: a student, an entrepreneur, a student-entrepreneur and for what consequences? What methodologies allow us to grasp this subjectivity?
- Entrepreneurship education as a discipline and field of research is still young and is facing a lot of resistance. To gain legitimacy, it mostly adopts the dominant functionalist paradigm and seeks to explain society. The different possibilities are rarely explored and difficult to explain. What is the place of the radical nature of research? How can entrepreneurship education transform society? How can other paradigms allow for debate, friction, creativity?

These questions are intended to open the horizons of research in entrepreneurship education and are therefore not exhaustive. Authors are invited to propose manuscripts that allow for critical pragmatism and to envisage positively the actions to be taken to improve individual and collective situations.

The main dates to remember are :

- 01/09/2021 : Submission of papers
- 01/11/2021 : Feedback to authors
- 01/04/2022 : Deadline for submission of revised papers
- 01/06/2022 : Publication of the issue

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Editorial line

Entreprendre et Innover is a high-level vulgarisation journal in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation published by DeBoeck University. Its ambition is to make original, scientifically sound or innovative articles available to a readership of executives, entrepreneurs, professionals in business creation networks and business leaders. The journal is open to ALL disciplines and to ALL points of view interested in entrepreneurship and innovation.

As this review is primarily aimed at practitioners, we are careful to ensure that the contributions are concerned with practical applications, business implications and/or policy recommendations. With this in mind, contributions should :

- **have a section making explicit reference to these concerns:** the reader should always be able to say at the end of the reading: so what? how does this article help me to act or to improve my future actions?
- **adopt more concrete and operational language** than is customary in academic journals: theory should not be absent but popularised, i.e. translated into simple terms. Abstract concepts should be made explicit and/or illustrated with practical examples.

- **not accumulate scientific references:** The aim is to select a few reference authors useful for understanding the subject, not to show the completeness of the academic literature on the subject. Scientific references should be cited exclusively through footnotes.

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