Shaping and negotiating entrepreneurial selves in academic entrepreneurship education

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship education (EE) appears to be a way to extend the market orientation in academic education into pedagogical arrangements and students' self-understanding. This we argue based on a case study of a startup entrepreneurship course designed and promoted by the international Junior Achievement -network and organised co-operatively by four Finnish higher education institutions. We examine how the course practices aim to shape students' entrepreneurial mind-sets and behaviour. We are interested in how students internalise these practices and, specifically, how they challenge and resist the expectations placed on them. To answer these questions, we analyse the course materials and students' reflections from a governmentality perspective. We perceive EE as a governing technology which intervenes with the formation of subjectivity. Our study contributes to critical EE studies by showing how the pedagogical practices of the startup course utilise market logic in attempting to make students autonomous and proactive entrepreneurial subjects. Students seem to have internalised the favoured subjectivity, but they also subtly break the expectations when given a chance. Based on the study, we argue that applying market logic in the pedagogical practices of academic education tends to disregard and ignore the value of abstract theoretical cultivation and redefines the roles of a teacher and a student, simultaneously promoting practical and vocational approach to academic education.

Keywords: entrepreneurial self; entrepreneurship education; governmentality; higher education

Introduction

We believe in the boundless potential of young people. We share their passion for excellence, respect their talents and creativity, celebrate

their honesty and integrity, harness their desire for collaboration, and create opportunities for hands-on learning. (Junior Achievement Europe, 2019a, para. 1.)

The empowering citation above is from the website of the international non-governmental organisation Junior Achievement (JA). The network aims at preparing young people for employment and entrepreneurship by offering ready-made concepts for entrepreneurship education (EE) programmes to be included in the curricula of educational institutions. As a basis of the JA activities, there is an optimistic belief that 'every young person can achieve success in today's global economy' (Junior Achievement Europe 2019b, para. 1). In Europe, JA activities have been endorsed as best practice by the European Commission. In Finland, for example, JA is financially supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment as well as private partners, foundations, and enterprise federations.

JA activities, and EE more commonly, do not only develop students' business skills for business purposes but also more generally aim to develop students' mind-set and behaviour to make them entrepreneurial in various aspects of life. This is a matter commonly agreed in the research literature (Brentnall et al., 2021; Lackéus, 2015). Indeed, on its website, JA promises to provide students with 'skills for life, growing creativity, confidence, initiative, teamwork, resourcefulness, perseverance and responsibility' (Junior Achievement Europe, 2019c, para. 2).

In this article, we critically examine the shaping of students' subjectivity within the pedagogical arrangements of JA. We analyse how the course practices aim to develop students' entrepreneurial mind-sets and behaviour. We focused on how students internalise these practices and how they respond to the expectations targeted to them. To answer these questions, we employ research material ranging from study guides' course descriptions, course assignments, participating students' learning reports (n = 19) and two group discussions.

EE has, especially in the past two decades, been acknowledged as an effective practice to develop higher education (HE) students' employability in competitive and insecure labour markets (Gibb, 2002; van Gelderen, 2010). Today, EE is both about encouraging students to start up new companies and about turning students into proactive and innovative employees and citizens (Lackéus, 2015). In supranational HE policy, EE is consequently promoted for all students across disciplines (European Commission, 2008). HE graduates as knowledge workers are seen as key players in the knowledge-based economy, and HE institutions (HEIs) are under scrutiny over their efforts to maximise graduates' employment and

economic potential (e.g. Brown et al., 2003; Tomlinson, 2017). Moreover, HEIs are increasingly expected to establish links with the labour market (e.g. Elken & Tellmann, 2019). EE is presented as a solution to these needs. In academic education, the pragmatic and vocational emphases of EE challenge traditional scientific and theoretical approaches; doing rather than thinking is highlighted (e.g., Philpott et al., 2011; Siivonen et al., 2020). Until recently, research on EE has largely neglected the questions of political, ideological and ethical starting points (Farny et al., 2016).

In this study, we address these questions by critically investigating the pedagogical arrangements and students' participation in producing, negotiating and challenging the given starting points. The JA programme analysed for the study aims at both creating new enterprises and entrepreneurs and developing employable entrepreneurial HE graduates, thus illustrating the functions of EE.

Our aim is to contribute to critical studies in EE (see e.g. Berglund & Verduijn, 2018; Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019). Adopting a theoretical perspective absorbed from the Foucauldian analytics of government (e.g., Dean, 2010; Miller & Rose, 2008), we scrutinise the governing of students' mind-sets and behaviour in EE's pedagogical arrangements. Governing refers here to control and power that are simultaneously targeted at subjects and internalised by them, thus shaping their conduct, desires and attitudes to the direction that is considered virtuous in the prevailing context (Dean, 2010; Miller & Rose, 2008).

Drawing on critical research literature, we address EE as a governing technology, which, using various pedagogical arrangements, assignments and materials aims at developing students' employability by shaping their subjectivity and making them work on their 'entrepreneurial selves'. In EE, the entrepreneurial self refers to desired abilities, attitudes and characteristics, such as creativity, proactivity, flexibility, responsibility, autonomy, perseverance and ambition, which educational practices develop. The entrepreneurial self perceives life as an enterprise and aims to constantly develop and maximise human capital to become the best version of oneself. Optimising personal economic potential becomes a source of success in competitive markets, while various aspects of economic and social life become markets. (Berglund, 2013; Bröckling, 2016; Komulainen, 2006; Peters, 2001; Rose, 1998) In HE, the fostering of entrepreneurial selves is a manifestation of neoliberal reasoning[1]. According to Olssen and Peters (2005), in

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[1] Leaning on Olssen and Peters (2005), 'neoliberalism' is understood here as a political rationality that determines how society should be organised. In the neoliberal rationality, the central governing position of the state is replaced by market regulation, where individuals are governed through regulated choices to become economically self-interested subjects. In higher education,

this reasoning, the free market is not only acknowledged as an efficient mechanism but also a philosophically and morally superior rationality. Arguably, EE has established neoliberal ideals and generates an instrumental understanding of the purpose of HE (Laalo et al., 2019).

In the light of the course materials and governmentality literature, we will examine the shaping of the entrepreneurial self in the practices of academic entrepreneurship education. Further, we will analyse students' discourse on these practices, hoping to illuminate subjects' experiences and counter-conduct that is often under-examined in governmentality studies (for exceptions, see, e.g., Komulainen & Korhonen, 2021; Komulainen et al., 2013; Laalo & Heinonen, 2016).

We conclude that the course at the centre of our case study draws on all-encompassing market logic, representing increased market orientation in the goals and practices of academic education. Students seem to have partially internalised the favoured discourse, but not entirely: they also subtly divert from the discourse on occasion.

The article unfolds as follows: first, we will examine the pedagogy of EE and situate our case study. Next, we present the theoretical framework for our analysis. Thereafter, in our case study, we analyse the pedagogical practices of the course and construction of subjectivities in the course, and then move on to examine the students' negotiations regarding the course.

Pedagogical practices and endeavours in EE

Pedagogically, EE aims to facilitate the learning of entrepreneurial skills and competences, such as creativity, problem-solving and managing uncertainty and resources (Bacigalupo et al., 2016; Rae, 2010). Simultaneously, EE pursues to develop entrepreneurial characteristics and personalities to foster individuals who are capable, enterprising and self-responsible in all aspects of life and who contribute to well-functioning markets and economy (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019; Davies & Bansel, 2007). Thus, the qualities of an entrepreneur are seen as universally beneficial and applicable.

Johnson (1988) and Fayolle and Gailly (2008) have sketched three dimensions of EE based on different pedagogical choices: EE is teaching 'about' (a general understanding of entrepreneurship), 'for' (entrepreneurial skills and

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neoliberalism has produced an understanding that emphasises economic goals and encourages connections to business and the development of entrepreneurial skills.

knowledge) and 'through' (experiential approach) entrepreneurship. These approaches direct teachers to use prescriptive teaching methods to support the learning of entrepreneurial thought and action (Neck & Greene, 2011; Sarasvathy & Venkataraman, 2011). Currently, these methods follow popularised practice-oriented methods, such as lean startup and design thinking (Harms, 2015; Mansoori & Lackéus, 2019). These methods imitate a process of new venture creation, beginning from idea generation to launching a new business that exploits a tested idea and business model (Blank, 2013; Mansoori & Lackéus, 2019). The learning embedded in the concurrent practice-oriented methods encourages students to apply and adjust their knowledge and ways of learning in a context of uncertainty, in which the outcomes – and the means of reaching them—are unknown in advance (Packard et al., 2017). This kind of EE draws on the concept of effectuation (Fayolle & Gailly, 2008), which puts students in the position to initiate an iterative process of value creation for stakeholders outside the classroom (Lackéus et al., 2016). Effectuation as a learning model is seen to be particularly useful in helping students learn how ideas can be examined, modified and delivered to customers (Mäkimurto-Koivumaa & Puhakka, 2013).

Concurrently, EE is based on pragmatism, working-life relevance, problem-based learning, learning by doing and taking responsibility for one's own learning as central pedagogical principles (see, e.g., Heinonen & Hytti, 2010). Moreover, for HEIs, EE channels provide access to external expertise, such as visiting entrepreneurs in educational settings (see, e.g., Komulainen et al., 2020).

In HE, the use of these very methods creates tensions between traditional academic values and the quick capitalisation of human capital (Hytti, 2018; Philpott et al., 2011). This has made space for critical accounts. EE revises academic traditions of learning and teaching since it does not typically value academic achievement and theoretical abilities but emphasises practical and social competences and skills (Siivonen et al., 2020). Moreover, such traditional features of academia as academic freedom and independence are seemingly enforced through the emphasis on self-directedness and self-responsibility (Siivonen & Filander, 2020).

The specific course setting in our case study was organised together among four Finnish HEIs, two of which were scientific research universities and two were professionally oriented universities of applied sciences (UASs). The dual Finnish higher education system includes both traditional science-oriented universities and universities of applied sciences (UASs), which concentrate on providing professional and vocational education. Because of a long-term development trend, these two sectors are getting closer to each other, and especially scientific universities are under pressure to offer students practical expertise. For that, EE

appears as an appropriate answer. Especially in Finland, business approaches in academic education are so far relatively infrequent in other fields than business science, and therefore a startup course targeted to students from all fields is transgressive. Thus, the course at the centre of our case study can be seen to be located in a watershed of Finnish EE, as the course attracts students from all academic disciplines as well as from UASs.

Theoretical framework: EE as governmentality

In our critical examination, we are interested in the ways students adopt and negotiate the discourse constructed in EE, and our analysis thus concerns the formation of student's subjectivity. This is important as subjects' conduct and resistance have only rarely been examined in governmentality literature. To understand how subjectivity is governed in the Foucauldian sense, one should analyse not only moral rules (e.g., values and practices defined by educational institutions) but also techniques that people use to reflect on themselves as moral subjects (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 1982). We understand discourse as a system of organising reality in a specific context. It shapes subjects' understanding of right and wrong and has consequences to how they perceive themselves and their relations to others, hence creating frames for the formation of the self. Discourses are constantly in flux, reproduced and renegotiated. (Jäger & Maier, 2016.)

Analytically, we are thus less interested in the contents or the methods of the course per se but rather how they aim to shape the subjectivity of the students. As a governing technology, EE uses certain pedagogical methods, learning environments, teaching materials and vocabulary to influence students' thinking, endeavours and ways of acting. We have adopted the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, and thus, as defined by Mitchell Dean (2010, p. 18), we understand governing as

> any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes.

Through governmentality, the conduct of the subject is conducted in a way that is recognised as fitting in the prevailing context (Dean, 2010; Miller & Rose, 2008).

In EE, for example, the conduct of students is conducted according to entrepreneurial ideals. The governing practices make people understand and work on themselves as moral subjects. Hence, governing shapes a desired subjectivity, making subjects perceive themselves as objects, who must refine their manners. To dissemble the self-evident 'truths' maintained by power structures, it is inevitable to investigate the practices and techniques that constitute power mechanisms and govern individuals (Ogbor, 2000). Educated subjects are both objects of governing ('subjection') and, through self-control, active participants of governing ('subjectivation') (Leask, 2012). Subjectivity here refers to selves, identities, personalities, and actors.

However, governing is never completely imperative; instead, subjects have space to negotiate the demands and proposals targeted to them (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 1982). Although Foucault's conceptualisation of power and the governmentality approach has often been criticised on its implicit view of the subject as a passive agent, the subject does not only react to external governance— instead, the process of forming subjectivity grants the subject space to think differently, to question and to resist governance and to find new ways of forming subjectivities (Foucault, 1982.

Data and method

The analysed course annually attracts about seventy students from the four organising HEIs and from various disciplines. The average age of the participants is 26 years old, 55 % are women and about 25 % have some prior experience in entrepreneurship (Renko & Stenholm, 2018). While the JA network frames the analysed course by defining the vision, mission, and values, and shares ready-made concepts, ideas and materials for HEIs to adopt, the course is locally applied to suit institutions' culture and curricula and taken to practice by teachers. However, the defined intended learning outcomes in the study guides as well as assignments given at the course are in line with JA's vision and mission described above. Our data consists of study guides' course descriptions, course assignments, participating students' learning reports (n=19) and two group discussions.

We generated our data from two consecutive courses in 2017 and 2018. In 2017, one of the authors was teaching the course, another attended the course as a student. These roles gave us inside knowledge and easier access to the materials and data collection. Being 'insiders' also eased communication with the students. It is important to note that the course was planned and started already before we decided to conduct our research. Thus, we did not shape the course activities

according to our research interests but instead looked at the pedagogical arrangements from an unusual angle. By critically reflecting the course practices from the governmentality perspective, we wanted to make visible those aspects of EE which are not usually seen or which are taken for granted.

In practice, the analysis had two lines. Firstly, we read the course materials by paying attention to both contents and argumentation, and trying to find answers to the questions of how and why, i.e. how and why should students, according to the materials, learn entrepreneurship? We suppose that the 'how' is likely to reveal the governing pedagogical practices that regulate students' behaviour, while the 'why' opens up insights into rational and moral justifications. We parsed the pedagogical arrangements and learning methods described in the materials and itemised various practices. We interpreted these based on the theoretical framework and literature. Our analysis makes visible and problematises the learning environment that seems to be constructed by imitating business, as well as competition which appears as a core principle for learning.

Secondly, in the analysis of the student data, we focused on the concepts and argumentation through which the students produced and negotiated the discourse as a cultural group. Our interest was in how students reproduced the discourse constructed in the course materials but also how they differed from it.

The governing techniques of EE in the JA startup course

Based on its format and methods, the course in our case study can be categorised as 'for' and 'through' entrepreneurship (Johnson, 1988) as it seeks to enhance students' learning of entrepreneurial skills and to support their progress through actual entrepreneurial activities, while theoretical understanding 'about' entrepreneurship, is disregarded. The above-described practice-oriented methods are visible in the pedagogy of the course, and they imitate venture creation. Our analysis illustrates how, in the light of the case study, market logic is fundamentally embedded in EE. Market-oriented reasoning determines both the goals and methods of EE, i.e. why and how entrepreneurship should be learned. It defines the pedagogical arrangements, desired skills and attitudes, and justifies the education of economically capable and employable entrepreneurial selves. Therefore, we find it accurate to view the course as being about learning 'through and for markets', i.e. acting successfully in the markets is both the method and the goal of the course. With regard to pedagogical leading thoughts, learning 'through and for markets' persuades students to work on their entrepreneurial selves to succeed in the entrepreneurial culture where various aspects of economic and social life are

perceived as markets (e.g., Peters, 2001). Indeed, producing capable and skilled entrepreneurial individuals who contribute to economic development seems to be at the heart of the course's intended learning outcomes.

Based on our reading of the course materials, including study guide descriptions, assignment instructions and marketing brochure, we perceive EE as a way of extending market orientation into pedagogical arrangements in HE. We will next look at the course practices that, we argue, aim to empower students to become capable and self-responsible, competitive and successful, employable subjects—that is, entrepreneurial selves. Simultaneously, we claim, the course practices generate interpretations and ideas that for their part reform academic education.

Real markets and students' companies as learning environments
Concerning its core pedagogical principles, the startup course promotes learning by doing and imitating real-life situations. It is explained in the study guides how the student teams function in real markets using real money. Students are to learn through idea development, negotiations with stakeholders and customer meetings. During the course, the students have to craft and test business ideas and find suitable business models for setting up and running a business based on the most viable idea. Students are given assignments that are planned to indirectly guide the new venture creation. The assignments, such as problem–solution-fit testing, making an activity plan and working on the business model, reflect the steps that a new venture takes: generation and validation, marketing, conducting a competitor analysis and estimating the financial performance (Reynolds & Curtin, 2008; Reynolds et al., 2014; Shepherd et al., 2021). Students are required to experiment, test and make the necessary decisions to manage their new ventures.

Hence, the course reflects lean startup methods as students need to construct a hypothesised business model and test it (Blank, 2013). The application of the lean startup model has increased both in the work of entrepreneurs in the labour market and in the practices of EE (Blank, 2013; Harms, 2015), reflecting EE's orientation to develop entrepreneurial competencies via hands-on experiences in actual interaction with markets. Other study methods mentioned in the study guides are practical work, group discussions, pitching events, bulletins and entrepreneurs' visits. Overall, the pedagogical arrangements of the course reflect pragmatism and student initiative. Students are urged to leave the classroom, to put their skills and knowledge into practice and to take responsibility for their learning. There is a pedagogical endeavour to minimise direct intervention.

Thus, in the course setting, the traditional role of a teacher is redefined: traditional academic teaching methods, such as lectures or exams, are not involved. Instead, teachers act as facilitators, mentors or coaches by asking students questions

and helping them find solutions and progress in their self-regulated learning processes. As underlined in the study guides, the course does not involve lecturing or exams but the main focus is on the team's activity in the markets. The evaluation of learning is based on self-assessment and team progress during the course.

The emphasis on pragmatism reveals how theoretical orientation and abstract thinking without practical application are implicitly considered moot when learning entrepreneurship (see also Siivonen et al., 2020). Farny et al. (2016, pp. 518–520) note that in EE activities, students tend to acknowledge only 'real' entrepreneurs as experts on entrepreneurship, implicitly constructing theoretical knowledge as inferior to "actual work" and "hands-on experiences". The innovative learning environment at the startup course fosters active market subjectivity, while academic skills and the command of theoretical knowledge are implicitly redundant. Lecture halls and classrooms are replaced with real markets and student companies as academic learning environments. This is reflected in the educational settings: instead of lecture halls or seminar rooms, the course meetings take place in a local startup community that aims to provide services and support for nascent entrepreneurs and businesses. The choice in setting further promotes the image of real market action at the centre of the course.

Learning by competing
Market logic is also embedded in the numerous competitions organised for the student companies during the course: student teams compete in the areas of pitching, online presence and video making. Moreover, the course itself takes shape as a competition. It culminates in national finals where the best student teams from different national districts compete for money and a place at European finals. The emphasis of the European finals is on the viability and investment potential of the student companies (JA Europe Enterprise Challenge, 2021), further highlighting the concreteness of the market action students are to learn.

The course thus aims at developing students' competitiveness by encouraging them to develop and optimise themselves in order to pursue profit and to become more entrepreneurial. While in the business context competition is a natural element, as a guideline for academic education and learning the endeavour turns problematic. One might ask whether learning by competing is a solidary or sustainable principle for learning, or even motivating for all students while it produces losers as likely as winners. However, competitiveness is a key element for the entrepreneurial self who is supposed to pursue success in life by being better than the others are and by becoming the best version of oneself.

An optimistic ethos of entrepreneurship is shown in the materials, which encourage students to challenge themselves: anything is possible, as long as one is

ready to compete, develop and optimise one's economic potential (Bröckling, 2016). Hence, entrepreneurship appears as an empowering opportunity for self-fulfilment and for finding one's passion. It is thus much more than just business—a mind-set and a life attitude.

Students' negotiations on entrepreneurial ideals

As a governing technology, EE intervenes with the formation of subjectivity. Governing shapes a desired subjectivity, making subjects perceive themselves as objects that must refine their manners. (Miller & Rose, 2008.) In EE, educated subjects are thus both objects of governing and, through self-control, active participants of governing (Leask, 2012). As governance is never completely imperative but is lived and negotiated by the active subject (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 1982), our interest was in how students adopted and reproduced the entrepreneurial ideals and practices promoted at the course and in the ways they diverted from them. We found challenging especially interesting since we were eager to reveal the space of active subjects in negotiating the normative expectations positioned in the educational setting.

Students' personal learning reports (n=19) and two group discussions were collected with students' permission at the end of the course[2]. In the reports, students were guided to reflect on their startup experience in terms of their roles and responsibilities in the team as well as their personal goals, achievements and learning outcomes. Students were further asked to evaluate both their own and their team members' performance and to give feedback for developing the course. The reports were evaluated by teachers and considered in grading.

In the discussions, we welcomed volunteers from all the HEIs, which opened up an opportunity to consider the nature of the programme as a form of cooperation between HE sectors. Furthermore, the group discussion worked as a forum for constructing a shared understanding between students from various fields. The teachers were not involved in the group discussions. In the first year of data collection, we had six discussants altogether, four from universities and two

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[2] In conducting the study, we followed the guidelines for the ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences in Finland by Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK). According to the guidelines of the University of Turku (https://www.utu.fi/en/research/ethics/ethical-review-in-human-sciences-research), no ethical review was required in this research setting. The collected data is not sensitive, and participation did not cause any harm to participants. We have provided anonymity for the participants and made sure that they cannot be identified.

from UAS, while in the second, we had three UAS students and one university student. Both group discussions took little over an hour and they covered, for example, the motives for participation in the course, experienced success and failure, offerings of the course, entrepreneurship as a career option and the perceived characteristics of an entrepreneur.

The analysis revealed a contrast between different kinds of data. While the learning reports indicated relatively uncritical adoption of entrepreneurial ideals, the informal discussions opened space for challenging and counter-conduct. In the following, we analyse the dynamic of conforming to and questioning of the entrepreneurial ideals constructed in the course.

Internalising the ideals

Generally, students seem inspired by the course. They represent entrepreneurship as a meaningful career option by talking about it as a passion and personal fulfilment, further contrasting it with boring and forced wage work: 'For me, the biggest fear for the future is that I'll end up on a treadmill, I don't want that and that's why I see entrepreneurship as a reasonable thing' (Discussant2, 2018). Students share the idea that, as an entrepreneur, 'you have the opportunity to do those things that really make you happy' (Discussant6, 2017). Hence, entrepreneurship appears as an empowering opportunity for self-fulfilment and for finding one's passion. These qualities are seen to be lacking in wage work, which in turn is associated with security-consciousness and aversion of risk-taking (see also Siivonen et al., 2020): 'I prefer to work in my own business 24/7 for my own business, doing exactly what I want instead of working for somebody else's business in a semi-interesting job, waiting for the weekend.' (Discussant2, 2017.) Accordingly, students express interest and admiration towards entrepreneurship, constructing it as an ideal way of self-expression: 'In wage work, you're working on an idea somebody has already invented, but as an entrepreneur you can find a whole new solution in this world. (Discussant1, 2017)'

Similarly, when students describe entrepreneurship, they mention abilities and characteristics with positive connotations, such as action, commitment, persistence, open-mindedness, courage, creativity, innovativeness, self-reliance, a tolerance of uncertainty and a desire to develop. This can be seen as a reflection of the all-encompassing nature of entrepreneurship in current society (e.g. Bröckling, 2016).

Overall, students' attitudes to entrepreneurship in general seem mainly positive, and especially the reports include expressions that could be from an EE textbook. For example, in terms of employability, students describe the skills and networks gained during the course as being useful for their future working lives, for

instance, because 'the need for creative and innovative thinking increases all the time. This is part of the so-called idea of intrapreneurship, and I believe that we all have an opportunity, and even a duty, to develop and change our own thinking' (Report17). This reasoning is an apt example of the ideal of the entrepreneurial self—self-development becomes an almost moral duty, and one's pursuits are channelled to entrepreneurship.

Not only have the students internalised entrepreneurship as an ideal orientation to work, but they also seem to have adopted the principles of taking the initiative, skill-centredness, pragmatism, efficiency and peer learning as being valuable in HE. In the context of the startup course, practical behaviour and actions are emphasised while reflection appears to be a waste of time. In students' discourse, it is acknowledged as important that 'the hours are not just used for pondering and thinking (…) but for going and doing. Yeah, doing what you like' (Discussant 1, 2017). The ethos of doing is aptly crystallised in reference to a well-known slogan: 'Nike's advertising department has been right all along, Just do it! Things happen when you want them to happen' (Report9). Furthermore, as part of the framework of learning through and for markets, the students internalised the presence of risk in all activities. In the reports, failure is conceived as positive: 'This [startup experience] was our great blunder, and I learned to even like and get excited about failing' (Report18).

The learning reports function as a governing technique by asking the students to work on their entrepreneurial selves via evaluation of their own characteristics and performances, as well as those of their peers, in relation to ideals, with the criteria that they had adopted. One's own active orientation and the team's energy were asserted:

> I was interested in developing myself in several ways. (Report6)

> Every one of us is extremely committed and believes in each other and the common goal. (Report1)

> All members are taking it [the student company] seriously and are working with great attitudes in terms of taking the company further. (Report9)

Also, confessing one's own shortcomings, as well as regretting and disapproving of others', mainly team members', weaknesses illustrates the internalising of the ideal entrepreneurial self and the intention to constantly develop and give one's best. Success and effort are praised, while a lack of motivation is apologised for.

Being sorry about insufficient investment can be read as a sign of students internalising the entrepreneurial ethos: 'I couldn't squeeze out of myself nearly as much as I would have wanted to/hoped for' (Report18). The reports reflect an adoption of the need for continuous development and commitment—characteristics required from the entrepreneurial self (see Berglund, 2013).

The fact that 'the focus was on the team's own responsibility and ideation' (Report17) is described as a positive feature of the course. Students describe the minor amount of guidance through the notion of freedom, saying for instance that 'the atmosphere on the course was relaxed' (Report7). The emphasis on students' initiative is commended and understood as a teaching method for entrepreneurship. It is deemed important because 'if you are an entrepreneur, no one will come to give you specific tasks to take care of …' (Discussant3, 2018). The reports indicate an internalisation of the entrepreneurial ideal of being an autonomous learner and doer, and the best way to become one is to take personal initiative.

> What I liked was that a lot of things were left for students to study and take care of themselves, and that the instructors did not spoon-feed us. (Report11)

Relatedly, students view the course's pragmatic approach as a refreshing contrast to theoretical academic studies. For example, in the reports, they praise the entrepreneurs' visits to the course meetings, which indicates the value based on 'real-life' expert knowledge (Farny et al., 2016). Learning practical skills for working life appears to be a central motive for attending the course. The course is said to have fulfilled the wish of getting 'some sort of concreteness regarding the academic knowledge …' (Discussant3, 2017) as a counterweight and of learning 'by getting your hands dirty' (Report3).

In the sense-making evident in the reports, competition is mostly construed as a natural and positive element: students comment on how 'the races during the course and finals were unforgettable experiences' (Report6). In the light of comparisons that students make between teams, achievements in the competitions signify success and are construed as a prize for hard work. Using this logic, a lack of success could be interpreted as failure and insufficient effort.

Critical whispering
However, we also found that students redefine these entrepreneurial conceptions and ideals and negotiate the governing practices targeted to them, when given the chance. In our study, the informal group discussions opened up more opportunities for students to question and resist than the formal learning reports. Criticism in the

reports takes shape as formal and sober development suggestions that do not question the underlying principles of the course as such, while expressions in the discussions are more overtly critical.

In the discussions, startup entrepreneurship is discussed more ambiguously in comparison to the declamatory tone of the JA program. Students speak of startup entrepreneurship with an ironic tone and bring up their suspicions, by recounting, for instance, how 'I'm personally scared of this startup activity, I mean how students sit many years in the living room and then they almost get something done.' (Discussant2, 2017). The students thus make a distinction between startup entrepreneurship and "traditional SME entrepreneurship" and express more interest towards the latter: 'traditional entrepreneurship pulls me more…' (Discussant1, 2018). Startup entrepreneurship is spoken of as a side business or a hobby by saying, for instance, that it is 'more that kind of fun hobby activity, which may then grow into something bigger' (Discussant6, 2017).

This observation can be interpreted from a cultural perspective: in the Finnish context, startup entrepreneurship in the vein of Silicon Valley can easily draw negative attention because of the flamboyance and self-promotion associated with it. These qualities tend to have negative connotations in the Finnish context, which might be the reason why the students voice a preference for traditional SME entrepreneurship, which is more associated with hard work. (Koskinen, 2020.) This is acknowledged in the discussions: 'startup entrepreneurs work in a sort of bubble, like "we're doing something great here," and outside people are giggling at them.' (Discussant1, 2017). Moreover, despite the title indicating a startup approach, the students do not consider the course to be especially focused on startup entrepreneurship: 'I would identify that startup thing here [on the course] mainly from this space and this funny buzz […] and because there is beer in the fridge' (Discussant1, 2017). In addition, the term startup in the title of the course did not seem to be the reason to enrol to the course.

Furthermore, in contrast to the emphasis on real markets and real money in the course materials, the group discussions suggest that the students conceptually separate entrepreneurship within and outside the course, conceiving the course as a risk-free opportunity to try and prepare for entrepreneurship, while the real-life risks of entrepreneurship cause hesitation. Economic uncertainty and responsibilities related to entrepreneurship are pondered, and thus 'the jump to the unknown scares' them (Discussant2, 2018). Sceptical reasoning appears as an interesting contrast to the desire to increase innovative and risky growth entrepreneurship among the highly educated population, which is visible in policy agendas (see Koskinen, 2020) and an important justification for the startup course.

Both in the reports and in the discussions students express a dissatisfaction

with the pedagogical arrangements. For example, the emphasis on pragmatic knowledge is challenged as some students long for lecturing, theory, and the 'bringing of some facts to the table' (Discussant2, 2017). Moreover, the reports and discussions reveal accounts of inadequate guidance and a lack of planning, which questions the pedagogy emphasising students' initiative orientation.

> I hoped for more teaching on the course … I felt that we did everything by ourselves and based it on common sense. (Report4)

> At times, it felt a little like there was no clear structure/agenda at the course meetings. (Report3)

> We didn't get that much guidance in the course, so that was kind of a disappointment to myself. (Discussant2, 2017)

> I mean I can google things without needing someone to tell me to google them. (Discussant6, 2017)

In fact, according to a previous study, the lack of teaching and lecturing has been part of the reason why some students drop out of the course right after the boot camp or why some of them get stuck in terms of their venture creation processes (Ilonen et al., 2018; Renko & Stenholm, 2018). Still, self-reliance and the ability to cope without guidance is firmly linked to the notion of entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, although competitions are constructed as indicators of success, the students also criticise them by observing, for example, how 'the finalists got lots of attention, and the last course meetings were maybe slightly frustrating for our group' (Report3). This quotation reflects the competitive and implicitly wretched reality of the startup world: on the one hand, the focus is on fun, easy-going teamwork and pursuing a personal passion, while on the other, winners take all while losers are forgotten.

In contrast to the logical and positive discourse of the course materials that articulated how all difficulties can be overcome with adequate motivation, the students brought up disappointment in relation to the expectations they had about the course. Both in the discussions and in the reports, the students reflected on the challenges they came across during their entrepreneurial experiments in relation to the ideal situation. As factors preventing the realisation of goals and aspirations, the students brought up the lack of know-how and resources, facing difficulties when finding a suitable business idea, problems in the team dynamic and too narrow a timeframe in relation to the objectives. Overall, in the light of the critical reflections,

students' conceptions of themselves appear less omnipotent than the entrepreneurial ideals call for.

Conclusion

It may be concluded that students consider EE relevant for their future (working) lives. Following the discourse produced during the course, they seem to have adopted the virtues of entrepreneurship and internalised the ideals of the entrepreneurial self to some extent. Questioning is subtle and scarce in circumstances that intervene personal characteristics and direct one to think and behave in a specific, market-oriented manner. In the practices of EE, there is little space for expressing doubt, fear, insecurity or feelings of not fitting in (Farny et al., 2016). In our case study, especially the formal learning reports appear as efficient control mechanisms allowing little counter conduct. Although governing is not entirely imperative (Dean, 2010), the study shows how normative pressures make challenging the predominating discourse very difficult.

Of course, students' positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship are not surprising, since the investigated students have voluntarily chosen to attend the course. The analysis shows a conditional internalisation of the entrepreneurial discourse, and within it, the standards of an employable entrepreneurial self, but the students do not fully subscribe to it. Interestingly, they still subtly divert from the discourse in their reflections by expressing scepticism, criticism and irony (see also Komulainen & Korhonen, 2021; Komulainen et al., 2013). While our study suggests how the course makes students control their thoughts and behaviour, it also points out that students are not voiceless marionettes if only they are given the space to be something else.

Our case study illustrates how students participating in EE are controlled to develop their skills through actual entrepreneurial activities and, as a learning outcome, are expected to become capable and employable entrepreneurial selves who have what it takes to succeed in the economic spheres of life. In academic education, this kind of 'learning through and for markets' is an example of breaking humanistic traditions of scientific cultivation and indicates the strengthening of the neoliberal economic agenda. Although work-life relevance is not a new aspect in academic education, simulating business practices in pedagogy takes it to the next level. Embedding market logic in pedagogical arrangements is a logical consequence of neoliberal policy and increasing market orientation in HE.

Of course, it is hardly surprising that a course focusing on startup entrepreneurship emphasises the market perspective. Moreover, it would be

unfounded to claim that bringing entrepreneurship to an academic context was a problem per se. Nevertheless, our study shows how imitating market logic in academic education leaves the students with a narrow frame of thought and behaviour. What we find distracting is the argumentation framing the analysed course, which dismisses and ignores both the value of abstract theoretical cultivation and the production and use of scientific knowledge. Doing in practice rather than academic thinking is emphasised and independent thinking has turned into self-directed and self-responsible entrepreneurial action. While pragmatism, work-life relevance and commercial innovations serve the current needs of the economy and the labour market, and are therefore important, pursuing scientific knowledge and maintaining critical awareness are far-reaching investments to be cherished—also in EE.

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