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# From Six Learner Personas of Teampreneurship to a Learner-Led and Co-Creative Entrepreneurial Model?

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**Abstract:** In the context of entrepreneurship education, design thinking and service design, I will present six learner personas, that I have discovered during my design-ethnographic PhD research in Tiimiakatemia, that is a special entrepreneurship degree programme in JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Jyväskylä, Finland. Programme is known by its team ideology and communal and learning-by-doing learning culture. Six learner personas here are equivalents to *user persona*, to present typical/ archetypal users (students) of an educational program or service. Learner personas are also a way to represent cultural understanding and insight collected through an extensive ethnographical study between 2016-2020, that has also included ethnographic interviews and projective, participatory and visual methods, such as Lego Serious Play. In my paper, based on the needs, challenges, learning strategies and insight from ethnographic research and the six learner personas, I will further develop and present an idea of learner-led, open, communal, co-creative and integrative entrepreneurial education model that could serve HEIs in developing their own entrepreneurial pedagogy.

**Keywords:** applied ethnography, learner personas, entrepreneurship education model, LOCCI-model, higher-education

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## 1. Introduction: The case of Tiimiakatemia

I started my 8,5 year personal learning journey of Tiimiakatemia (Team Academy) as a “Team Coach” in August 2012. Officially, in my pay slip I was employed as a senior lecturer, but many central artefacts in the community had been relabeled: teachers were “team coaches”, students were “team entrepreneurs” and courses were absent, replaced by a community of 150 teampreneurs, that were organized in team companies (co-operatives). Team companies were set-up by learners in the first weeks of their 3,5 year bachelor studies, without a business plan and previous experience about entrepreneurship. Established originally in 1993 in Jyväskylä, Finland, Tiimiakatemia was started as an experiment in the midst of the reform of the Finnish higher education, that created a dual university model, striving for educating nearer-to-working-life professionals than the traditional universities focusing on academic research. When I started my learning journey, there were 7 team coaches with an annual intake of 40 students.

The programme is a unique construction of “team entrepreneurship education” (Degree Programme in Entrepreneurship), and culturally it grew isolated from the other university as a “special unit of entrepreneurship”, created originally by a lecturer in marketing, who titled himself the “head coach”. The community appears intensive, and the “teampreneurs are” often enthusiastic about Tiimiakatemia and their own teams. The cultural identity was then not constructed towards entrepreneurship in general, but especially “teampreneurship” and towards Tiimiakatemia community, which was constructed as a separate brand and/or learning organization (Senge, 1990/2006). The program has still its own “leading thoughts” with a mission to “create bold teampreneurs”, and learn teampreneurship with the help of their team company and customers. Since 1993, every teampreneurs’ given goal has been to make a world-around-trip with the funds made during the program.

The communal aspect seem to support most of the high-school graduated learners in the beginning, as their inexperience, insecurity and cultural attitude is open, but diverse interpretations, identities and goals towards entrepreneurship cause disharmonies later in the process. This is the point where Tiimiakatemia’s sometimes one-eyed team ideology pose a challenge for each learner, as its culture potentially interprets individuals from the point of view of a corporate high-performance team. Tiimiakatemia way of thinking of teams were picked up from the rising business culture of the 1990’s, and self-help team literature (Katzenbach et al 1993; Lencioni 2002). Community culture and its pedagogy was affected by (in addition of Senge’s ideas of the Learning Organization) by pragmatism (learning-by-doing), experiential learning (Kolb 1984), the ideas on corporate learning (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995) and sometimes could be referred or understood to as a community of practice (Wenger 1996; Lave & Wenger 1991).

The short introduction here is for the reader to better understand the concept and the history of Tiimiakatemia, but it doesn’t tell you the whole picture. Writing a story about the “whole picture” was my goal after I started

my ethnographical research (Geertz 1973; Van Maanen 2011) in 2016 as a member of the community, and still after I have left the community in the end of 2020. The research has included big and rich set of different qualitative, ethnographical data (research diary, documents, theme interviews and visual Lego Serious Play participatory workshops) including autoethnographical writing (Ellis 2004). This article is connected but separate representation based on that data. The goal of this article is to present some central results of the research, the six learning personas and further develop and present an idea of learner-led, open, communal, creative, constructive and integrative entrepreneurial education model that could serve HEIs in developing their entrepreneurial pedagogy. The idea is to take out a holistic real-life case from Finnish entrepreneurial education and develop and present a generic idea that could be used in developing entrepreneurial educational and pedagogical concepts. The article is presenting a case of processual pedagogy and effectuation (Sarasvathy 2008), that has been suggested by Mäkimurto-Koivumaa and Puhakka (2013). This paper's theoretical framework is multidisciplinary, but still its home is in the applied critical and multidisciplinary cultural studies and social constructionism (see Alasuutari 1996; Hoggart 1958; Grossberg 1992; Berger & Luckmann 1966), that integrates ideas from service design thinking and user-centric design (Brown 2008; Mager 2009; Miettinen 2011; Vargo & Lusch 2004) integrating also educational, organizational and entrepreneurship research.

This aims to be a critical article. That is why Tiimiakatemia is not presented here as an ideal model for entrepreneurship education, but it is a real phenomenon in entrepreneurship education that has achieved international recognition that you can study, and it has produced interesting and good results and very promising impact (see Ruuska and Krawczyk 2013) we can learn from (see Vettraino & Urzelai 2021;2022a;2022b;2022c). Still, it is a cultural construction of its time, that produce special communal identity, special culturally differentiated, closed signification of entrepreneurship. It also contains ideological pitfalls and risks, that are to be avoided when trying to construct an ideal model.

*Culture clock* of Tiimiakatemia is presented in Figure 1. It represents the communal learning practices. It helps to understand processual the holistic learning culture and the circles represent annual, monthly, weekly and daily practices that the learners and the coaches reproduce every day. Through the interpretation of the figure, it can be seen, that the practices and the language are aiming to construct somewhat similar to company organization, not a conventional educational institution. The learners have their own office spaces in the shared open office, that they pay rent for and they arrange meetings with their own clients, without visible control or permission from the teachers. The coaches are still available for consultation. The contact hours (equivalent of teaching) with the coaches are held in bi-weekly 4-hour dialogue training sessions, that are most precious and meaningful communal practice also for sharing communal knowledge, also that is essential for the team identity and practice building.

When we think of a stereotypical start-up incubator culture, event or entrepreneurial community, we think of cultural identity of a hero serial entrepreneur, that is represented also in media production by Richard Branson and Elon Musk (both carry a name for teampreneur community prizes in Tiimiakatemia). According to Hyrkäs (2016), start-up culture is based on canonized model stories of Silicon valley technology companies like Google, Apple and Amazon and their founders. The story constructs on visionary, revolutionary entrepreneur with society-changing idea and working with high-performance team with great risk and reward.

These potential superstar identities carry the promise and meaning for young entrepreneurs for identification and ideology in western culture. Still, although these cultural identity models are affecting also the young beginner teampreneurs, empirical findings show that the local identity map in Tiimiakatemia is more diverse than the typical stereotypes. Tiimiakatemia also uses stories of their own, much down-to-earth, funny stories of fail and success of the alumni, that usually are self-employed entrepreneurs, usually providing services in marketing, sales or real estate.

The diverse identity "battle" at communal level is presented in figure 2, that shows the cultural positions as team identities – the learners can construct their team more as a team of teampreneurs (engouraged by the community values, as *the self*) or construct their team more as team of individuals (not supported by the community values (*the other*)). In these areas continuous dialogue, negotiations and significations are made on *who we are*. By "cultural self", the dominant cultural position is meant, and by signifying something as "the other", is excluding those from the community ideals (Foucault 1972;1980; Hall 1992; Said 1985).



potentially problematic process from the point of view of individual competence development and public education’s basic mission, as everyone should have an equal (legal) right to learn despite the relationship to other students. The fourth phase, *construction and specialization* (4), focuses more on self-actualization and specialization individually and in small 2-3 person groups, where also the business ideas get further experimented and developed and the professional identities are shaped further in practise. Stage five is *graduation* (5) phase, which concentrates on formal graduation (academic thesis work) and dissolvment of the team and close down of the learning platform, co-owned co-operative. The teams and individuals are ready to embark on their world-around-trip or to the working life.

## 2. Six learner personas

I hereby present the six learning personas (Figure 3), that have been identified through ethnographical research and qualitative, inductive analysis. Learner personas are equivalents to *user persona*, to present typical/archetypal users (students) of the degree program (Guðjónsdóttir, 2010; Holtzblatt et al., 2005).

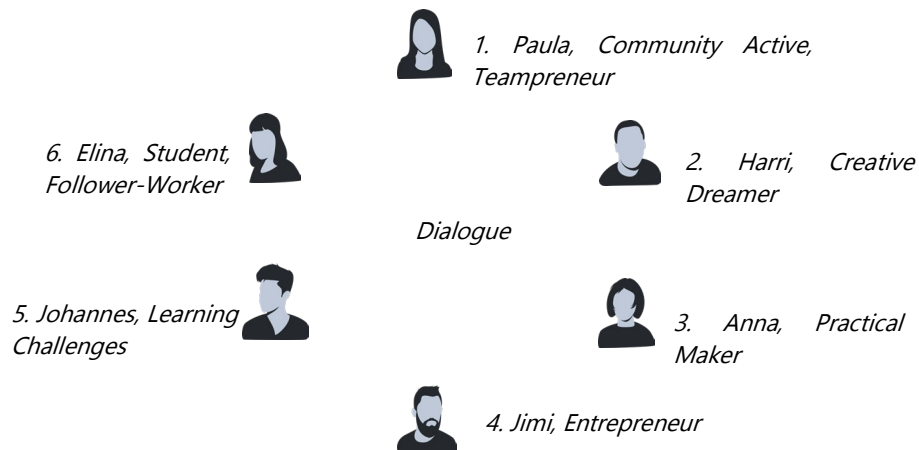


Figure 3: Six learner personas (Ruuska 2021, 2022)

Table 1: Thematic analysis of the learning personas (Ruuska 2021; 2022)

Name	Meaningful	Learning Goal	Strategy (How to achieve Goal)	Strengths	Challenge/Risk
<b>Paula, Community Active</b>	Sense of belonging, teamwork	Team formation, team entrepreneurship	Work as a team (in the beginning), focused small group (later)	Social, communication and leadership skills	Strategic learning skills, understanding diversity, burnout
<b>Harri, Creative Dreamer</b>	Self-actualisation (of dreams)	Becoming yourself, learning, graduation	Focusing on "becoming yourself" - project	Creativity, curiosity, strong inner drive, focused	Strategic learning skills, too challenging goals, lack of support
<b>Anna, Practical Maker</b>	Practical work and learning-by-doing	Develop competence (specialisation), graduation	Working, learning-by-doing and focusing on projects	Focusing and commitment on personal interests/practical project work	Academic learning skills, strategic learning skills, communal team learning
<b>Jimi, Entrepreneur</b>	Achieving entrepreneurial and financial goals	Entrepreneurship, serial entrepreneurship	Experimentation in practise	Ability to put ideas into practice and get results	Communal/team learning, exclusion, dropout

Name	Meaningful	Learning Goal	Strategy (How to achieve Goal)	Strenghts	Challenge/Risk
<b>Johannes, Learning Challenges</b>	Wellbeing, being appreciated/ accepted, finding interesting project, graduation	Challenges in setting and reaching goals, finding interesting project, Graduation	Be a part of projects, study as defined/instructed	Committed in the beginning of the process	Strategic learning skills, academic/practical learning, burnout, exclusion, dropout
<b>Elina, Student-follower-worker</b>	Sense of belonging, student-life, studying successfully	Graduation, grades, academic theory, university/master studies	Studying successfully, work as instructed	Academic learning skills, self-directive in given context, social	Strategic learning skills, practical learning, setting meaningful goals

Paula, Harri, Anna, Jimi, Johannes and Elina represent different learners that have different learning goals, orientation, activity and values, and do not represent natural personalities nor identities, but archetypal cultural learning identities in a given entrepreneurial context. This means that anyone of the actual learners might take different positions of different personas or characteristics during their learning experience. In the end learner personas have to be understood as design tools, that help understanding and illustrating different learners' behaviour and needs. The personas help creating ideas, concepts for new learning concepts in applicable areas, in this case entrepreneurial education in higher education institutions.

These six personas are analyzed thematically in Table 1, that describes persona diversification in more detailed way. Through the analysis it is easy to imagine the challenges in creating a high-performance team, ideological community or unified company without major challenges, as part of the students are not aware of the community ideals and team ideology when starting their studies. In Tiimiakatemia this has caused dropouts, exclusion and challenges in creating quality team goals and projects, and this also affecting the learning results of the different individuals. These disharmonies could though, be resolved by team members with using inclusive (not exclusive) and open dialogue.

Still, there are remarkable benefits in the communal cultural practises, that also support the individual learning and development, and also there are remarkable strenghts gained for giving individual freedom to learners and in the interpretation of *ownership of the learning*. I call them *me-techniques and we-techniques*; independently learner-designed and facilitated team training sessions, community retreats and trips and especially the idea of individual *ownership of learning*, supported a learning tool and a *me-technique* like the learning contract, that seem to produce a great deal of commitment, intimacy to construct and strengthen *pure* internal relationships (Giddens 1991) and social capital between the team and community members. Foucault would call these governing *technologies of the self* (Foucault 1988), which represent an ideal subject and the self-reflexive practices of the modern, neoliberal subject, whose entrepreneurial self-identity is free but fully responsible of his/hers own life plans and actions (Foucault 2008; Giddens1991,75-76;87-98; Rose 1996,60). From the community point of view the practises seem to produce strong communal identity, that also produce relatively active alumni network, that also play a part of being the customers (and later employers) for the freshmen (*penguins*).

### 3. Developing design drivers for the learner personas

In this chapter I will define the design drivers using the thematic analysis presented in the last chapter and present an analysis leading to an entrepreneurial model constructed from and informed by the learning personas, that represent 6 different views to entrepreneurial education. By design drivers I mean the value that should be taken into account and included, when designing future learning concepts. The common factor between these personas is interest towards entrepreneurship. Based on the empirical data backing the persona creation it is evident, that all personas are all eager to construct entrepreneurial identity and activities: learn and explore about entrepreneurship, become entrepreneurial and *become* entrepreneurs, but the goals, activity orientation and the potential of the personas differ.

When we analyze the different personas, we can find different challenges (and risks). These challenges are then included when creating the five design drivers:

**Table 2:** Developing design drivers

Challenge	Description	Design Driver
<b>Strategic learning</b>	Setting personally suitable quality (especially long-term) goals and achieving or working towards them is challenging, the learning is not progressing as fast as it could/should	Constructive & Creative learning, integrative learning, Communality
<b>Lack of meaningfulness</b>	When learner is experiencing lack of meaningfulness, activity and creativity is narrowed to completing tasks required	Learner-led learning, Constructive & Creative learning
<b>Lack of understanding diversity</b>	Focusing on team process and too strict interpretation of it causes continuous inclusion / exclusion game in the team that is potentially unethical, includes misuse of power and is holding back individual learning processes	Culturally open, learner-led learning
<b>Lack of support</b>	Learners experience lack of support in the community	Communal practices, culturally open
<b>Academic or practical learning</b>	Most learners struggling with integration of academic and practical learning	Integrative learning

Creating design drivers by using only challenges is not enough. Also other (positive/supporting) qualities of personas have to be included: what is meaningful for the persona, learning goals, the *habitus* or way of learning - and different activity orientations or special competences are here taken into account when creating the design drivers.

- 1.Learner -led

It seems that the individual *ownership of learning* in Tiimiakatemia is essential ingredient and a starting point of producing creative agency, meaningfulness and commitment and positive feedback towards the community. In Tiimiakatemia learning culture (that is a long-term programme), there are open learning tools, like the “learning contract” that are designed for constructing the history, present and the future of the learner, and produce agency and meaningfulness for and by the learner. By this I don’t mean a traditional personal study plan. This all means radical ownership of learning, where the learner is not just only responsible of his/her own learning but is free to set learning goals individually, not restricted by the curriculum or course structure (only communal structure: values, norms and practices restrict the learner). This is a radical stand, but possible to design in an entrepreneurial setting.

- 2.(Culturally) Open

Entrepreneurial education should act and think openly and not only include all its members, but be open to the world and multidisciplinary. This design driver is lead from the challenges of the exclusive insider team & communal culture (inclusion/ exclusion game of “us and them”) and the need to include and approve diverse learners (6 personas). Openness is also an attitude towards others and important value in learning. If the communication and knowledge is not culturally open for exchange, transformation, new ideas and thoughts, the risk for maintaining the status-quo predicts the reactive, protective community of regression and anxiety.

- 3.Communal

Entrepreneurial education should nurture openly holistic (e.g. Multidisciplinary), inclusive communal model that is flexible, participatory and supportive for the diverse learner personas in different levels (individual, group, community). In the group level, flexible and open learning teams/groups formation should be supported. In the community level, different community events for sharing knowledge should be supported and structure for community-led projects should be arranged. The setup of the open organization should seek open-ended, flexible but repetitive communal models, practices and rituals, which support long-term and holistic learning processes, learner-led and communal development of ideas, experiments, projects and relationship/network building. The communality should support the creation of multidisciplinary competences, connections and cross-communal and cross-cultural practices.

- 4.Creative & Constructive

Entrepreneurial education should support the development of creative agency and processual pedagogy, where building something meaningful and novel is a learning goal. This process aims to (co)create artefacts of tangible

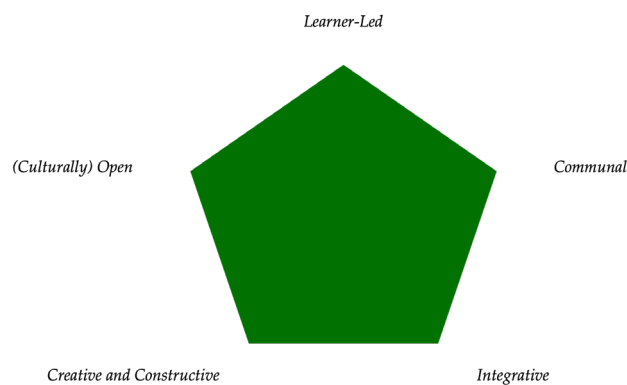


or intangible knowledge, projects and receiving (learning) results for all learner personas. The creative activities here are interlinked with communal support and group/team creation, openness, and to be able to set and pursue independently set learning goals. By the term *creative* here, I mean supporting individuals' capability to act or think innovatively (Giddens 1991, 41), which is linked both to effectual and causal entrepreneurial thinking (see Mäk Mäkimurto-Koivumaa, S. & Puhakka, V, 2013). By supporting constructive and creative activity, customized support for learners is needed. These individual processes should be supported and strengthened by the peer community, the coaching, facilitative and mentoring models and other supporting cultural (e.g. multidisciplinary) or technological structure.

- 5.Integrative

Entrepreneurial education should integrate practical, theoretical/academic and experiential activity to a holistic, learner-led process and long-term -program (e.g. 3,5 years). This means not just learning-by-doing, but exploring (researching), experimenting and reflecting during the real-life projects, where there is space, time and support for learning. In Tiimiakatemia, running real business with similar peers, without any experience often results of projects (e.g. subcontracted phone sales projects), that produce little special competences. On the other hand, by running your own business is the only way to institutionally *become* an entrepreneur and experience entrepreneurship in practise.

#### 4. Conclusions: LOCCI model for entrepreneurial education



**Figure 4:** LOCCI model for entrepreneurship education

In figure 4, design drivers are here presented as the LOCCI model for entrepreneurship education. The drivers defined in the last chapter can act as values for entrepreneurial degree programmes and hence produce identity work and holistic competence development (21<sup>st</sup> century skills and beyond) for different learner personas. I argue, that these personas are applicable in more generic level, despite the empirical case study presented here. This is because the learner personas presented here are generic enough, that cover individual, communal, creative, practical, academic and learning challenge cultural dimensions and hence are applicable in general level. In practise, this model can be used to create an education program and start developing learner-led and open, competence-based curriculum, that enables the learners to start integrative, creative and constructive learning activity, where the goal is to become co-creative entrepreneurs with working with their peer learners, customers and teachers, whose role is transforming from controlling teacher to facilitator, mentor, coach, consultant, tutor and advisor. With so many historically constructed pedagogical roles existing, it is important to acknowledge, that the teachers' role is essential in supporting every learner's identity work. As this is easy to say in one sentence, the challenge for these new programs in higher education are paradoxically cultural, as the pedagogies applied have seem to connect their historically constructed teacher-centric, academic practises or in the case of Tiimiakatemia, to practice- and team-centered. The Tiimiakatemia example shows, that the creation of quite similar entrepreneurial learning community is possible, and it is already adapted in higher education all over the world (see Vettraino & Urzelai 2021;2022a;2022b;2022c).

Further development, design drivers and *30 entrepreneurial actor positions for the learner personas* (value potential) are presented in Table 3. Through the matrix, based on design drivers, you may find different actor positions, potentials and entrepreneurial value that is possible if diverse needs and interests are supported by the entrepreneurial learning culture or learning environment. It can be then argued, that they can represent and fit also a wider entrepreneurial learner (student) population.



I understand the limitations of the paper and the preliminary contextualization of the LOCCI-model, and further research is needed in conducting systematic literary review and comparative research to evaluate the connections, similarities and differences to existing entrepreneurial education models and impacts that have been previously introduced (see Fayolle et al, 2008; Fiet, 2000; Gibb, 1993; Krueger et al,1993; Kuratko, 2005;

Nabi et al, 2017; Thrane et al, 2016). Still, the demand for more long-term programs, pedagogical evaluation and community creation (and creation of ecosystems; Spigel, 2017) is evident, that concentrate to integrate

the theoretical (supply-model) into practical, experiential experimentation and action (demand and competence -models) to create tangible impact (Nabi et al, 2017; Béchard and Grégoire, 2005). The purpose of this paper though, has been introductory and practical; to use a case, and informed developmental framework (applied ethnography /service design thinking) in formation of a cultural and partly pedagogical model for further discussion and experimentation to create working and sustainable degree programs for entrepreneurship education in higher education.

**Table 3.** Design drivers and 30 entrepreneurial actor positions for the learning personas (value potential)

Design/ value Driver	Learner-led learning	Communal practises	(Culturally) Open	Creative & Constructive learning	Integrative learning (practical, theoretical & emotional knowledge)
Learning persona activity and value potential					
<b>Paula, Community Active</b>	Work and learn together, fulfill the need to belong to a community	Develop sustainable, respectful and collective learning practices for all	Develop culturally open attitude and practices	Work together as a team towards meaningful, constructive goals	Learn entrepreneurship in a personal, collective and a strategic way, combining theory and practice
<b>Harri, Creative Dreamer</b>	Create individual and long term goals, work towards individual self-actualisation	Have support when working towards individual goals, get feedback to learn, increase of self-knowledge	Have support of diverse ideas, inclusion of individuality and diverse goals	Construct creative projects of self-actualisation and experience project results personally, concretely and tangibly	Experience personal dreams to come reality
<b>Anna, Practical Maker</b>	Have support for learning by doing and work for realizing tangible results	Work together in projects, Have support and get feedback	Working, learning-by-doing and focusing on projects	Focusing on personal interests/practical project work & see results	Integrating practical work successfully into academic knowledge
<b>Jimi, Entrepreneur</b>	Have support for reaching individual entrepreneurial and financial goals	Developing and sparring ideas together, finding team members, creating networks, sharing risks	Have support and help to develop his/her ideas	Put ideas into practice, see and get entrepreneurial results	Integrating practical, entrepreneurial work successfully with academic knowledge

Design/ value Driver	Learner-led learning	Communal practises	(Culturally) Open	Creative & Constructive learning	Integrative learning (practical, theoretical & emotional knowledge)
Learning persona activity and value potential					
Johannes, Learning Challenges	Have expert support in setting meaningful, suitable goals and achieving them, get constant feedback to learn	Have communal support, to be included in suitable projects, get constant peer feedback to learn	To feel included and appreciated	Working towards meaningful, clear and suitable goals	Have support when integrating suitable practical work into academic knowledge
Elina, Student-follower-worker	Have support to learn, graduate and belong to a safe student community	Have support when working towards individual goals, get peer feedback to learn	To have "licence to learn", to feel included and appreciated	Working towards meaningful goals	Integrating practical work successfully into academic knowledge

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