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THE ROLE OF FAMILY BACKGROUND, EDUCATION AND HOBBIES IN STUDENT PROCESSES OF BECOMING ENTREPRENEURS

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of focus-group interviews carried out among a group of students taking part in a pre-incubator program at their University of Applied Sciences. The study portrays the pre-incubator students' growth to entrepreneurship by examining what kinds of element influence in their process of becoming entrepreneurs. The practical aim of the study is to find answers of how to renew our entrepreneurial training programs so that they would better meet the needs of students at the Universities of Applied Sciences. The spirit of entrepreneurship among pre-incubation students arises in a triangulation process of life experiences, such as free-time activities and hobbies, entrepreneurship education, and socialization taking place in the family system. Counseling, coaching and mentoring are catalysts in the process of growth to entrepreneurship. This study strengthens the view that entrepreneurship education and training programs should be concrete and practical. Students should have the possibility to tailor their studies individually and create their own learning environments – this fact is even more important among those students who already possess a set of characteristics known as entrepreneurial spirit.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, growth to entrepreneurship, pre-incubator, hobby

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The future economic wellbeing and economic growth points to a greater need for entrepreneurial activity as the "baby boomers", those born just after the World War II, retire within the next decade. Among this age group there is a relatively large representation of entrepreneurs which means that within the next decade 60,000–80,000 Finnish family firms will face business transfers. In Finland the total number of family businesses is over 200,000 and similarly, we have more than 70,000 family farms. It is a question of billions of Euros how these transfers are managed since there are over a half a million places of employment in those enterprises.

A business transfer can take place within the family, through management buy-outs (sales to non-family management or employees) and sales to outside persons of existing companies including take-overs and mergers (European Commission 2002, 10). According to some estimates less than 25 % of family entrepreneurs can find a continuator in the family, over 30 % hope they can sell their businesses outside the family, and most entrepreneurs cannot tell how transfers will be arranged. Almost 17 % of retiring entrepreneurs anticipate that their businesses will be finished once they retire. So it seems that an increasing number of business transfers will take place to third parties, as the next generation is not willing to take over businesses and become entrepreneurs. If we do not encourage potential entrepreneurs to start new businesses or to continue family businesses, it will mean serious consequences to the entire economy of Europe.

As Finland and the entire Europe need new entrepreneurs, the education systems have to stimulate and arouse entrepreneurial spirit of young people. Moreover, if we want to stimulate and enhance entrepreneurial spirits of young people, we must know youngsters' way of thinking and the ways they choose their careers.

Like their counterparts on other European countries, also the Finnish institutes of higher education have already become more active in

promoting entrepreneurship: It has been included in degree programs, connections to the working life have been increased and pre-incubators to support pre-company formation period have been developed. (Rajaniemi, Niinikoski and Kokko 2005, 4.) However, despite the increasing number of activities and courses in entrepreneurship education and training, surprisingly few students are interested in entrepreneurship studies and even fewer are actually interested in becoming entrepreneurs. For example Pihkala's (2008) study points out that only 2.2 percent of university graduates and 2.7 percent of graduates from the Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) chose self-employment after their studies in the early years of the 21st century.

Becoming an entrepreneur is a long process, and the goal of such education is not to rush students into becoming entrepreneurs, but rather to provide them with tools that enable realistic self-evaluations, even several years after graduation. To better understand the way youngsters think today and how they go about choosing an entrepreneurship career, the context of this study is the pre-incubator activities in the UAS. More specifically, we have particularly focused on those students who have actually started their businesses during their studies. The aim of the research is to understand the students' learning processes that take place in the pre-incubators in the UAS.

1.2 Key concepts

1.2.1 Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education

Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This notion supports individuals in daily activities at home and in society, makes employees more aware of the contexts of their work and better able to seize various opportunities that might arise, and it provides the foundation for entrepreneurs establishing a social or commercial activity. (European Commission 2006.)

These above-mentioned definitions of entrepreneurship make it possible to apply a broad idea of learning in entrepreneurship education. According to the European Commission (2008, 10), the primary purpose of entrepreneurship education at higher education level should be to develop entrepreneurial capacities and mindsets. In this context, entrepreneurship education programs can have different objectives, such as:

a. Developing entrepreneurial drive among students (increasing awareness and motivation);
b. Training students in the skills they need to set up a business and manage its growth;
c. Developing the entrepreneurial ability to identify and exploit opportunities.

A graduate start-up is one of a range of possible outcomes of entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship and new venture creation need entrepreneurial people, who can be said to possess entrepreneurial orientation, behavior, drive and entrepreneurial spirit.

According to the European Commission (2003, 3), entrepreneurship is about people, their choices and actions in starting, taking over or running businesses, or their involvement in a firm's strategic decision making. Entrepreneurs are a heterogeneous group and come from all walks of life. Yet there are certain common characteristics of entrepreneurial behavior, including a readiness to take risk and a taste for independence and self-realization. (European Commission 2003, 3.)

Hytti (2002, 5), referring to the European context in particular, argues that entrepreneurship has three meanings: (i) (external) entrepreneurship that means setting up and managing small businesses and/or growth-oriented entrepreneurial ventures, (ii) intrapreneurship denoting to an entrepreneurial way of acting within an organization, and (iii) enterprising behavior that deals with skills and attributes of any individual in all spheres of life. She also categorizes the objectives of entrepreneurship education as follows: Learning to understand entrepreneurship, to adopt entrepreneurial attributes in life, and learning how to become an entrepreneur. I propose that we must have all these objectives if we want to enhance entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behavior in the society and especially at the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). It is not possible to encourage people to start their own businesses by only teaching them how to write a business plan and to manage a firm; a more comprehensive and individual plan is needed.

1.2.2 Three learning categories

Adopting entrepreneurship as a career option does not depend solely on individual's knowledge of the field, but also on attitudes and the willingness in adopting it as a way of life. Kyrö and Carrier (2005) argue that this view assumes breaking the boundaries of traditional school environment

and considering learning as a process that takes place everywhere, at home, in free time activities and hobbies. Learning entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behavior means developing new ideas and actions in new pedagogical environments.

This new perspective follows the European Commission's (2000) definition of purposeful learning activity. It divides learning into three basic categories: (1) Formal learning that leads to a certification and is typically provided by an educational or training institution; (2) Non-formal learning, not provided by an educational or training institution, is however from learner's perspective structured and intentional process; (3) Informal learning is a consequence of daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. Informal learning may be intentional, but in most cases is not.

According to the European Commission (2006, 5), entrepreneurship competence is developed in both formal and non-formal settings (e.g. youth work and various forms of participation in a society). Similarly, tools for recognizing and validating entrepreneurship-related skills acquired in non-formal learning should be further developed. However, we also suggest that informal learning is essential in understanding the ways youngsters think and choose a career. Thus learning is an interactive process between formal, non-formal and informal learning where students' ideas and actions are in focus. Adopting this definition also influences the teaching methods in entrepreneurship. (Heinonen and Akola 2007, 29). As Thompson points out, this view means that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all method or training, but education should embrace talent spotting, advising, counseling, training, mentoring and coaching (Thompson 2006, 78).

1.2.3 Growth to entrepreneurship

Many previous studies have shown that no predetermined amount of training or education makes an entrepreneur. Rather, it is important to identify those individuals with entrepreneurial potential and create an atmosphere where entrepreneurship can thrive. Entrepreneurship will, most likely, increase in organizations or environments that have entrepreneurial orientation. According to Lumpkin and Dess (1996, 137), the key dimensions that characterize entrepreneurial orientation include: A propensity to act autonomously, a willingness to innovate, a willingness to take risks, a tendency to be aggressive toward competitors and to act proactively relative to marketplace opportunities.

Florin, Karri and Rossiter (2007) have found that preference for innovation, non-conformity, proactive disposition, self-efficacy, and achievement motivation promote entrepreneurial behavior. Entrepreneurial drive means being pro-active, innovative, having willingness to take risk and enlarge business (Chirico 2007a, 58; Chirico 2007b, 142). Entrepreneurial spirit is widely used in articles and everyday language, but we have not yet found an exact definition for it. The concepts of entrepreneurial sprit and entrepreneurial drive are used as synonyms in our study. Entrepreneurial spirit arises from positive self-esteem and entrepreneurial attitudes. Growth to entrepreneurship stems from a long learning process that typically begins as early as in childhood (Koiranen 2004). Becoming an entrepreneur depends on entrepreneurial spirit, attitudes, skills and motivation.

It is not only entrepreneurs who need to behave entrepreneurially: In today's work life and society, there is demand for entrepreneurially-oriented individuals who also have good command of relevant knowledge and diversified social communication and cooperation skills. In addition, the ability to work in different contexts with experts from other fields and the ability to select critically, acquire and use knowledge are essential competencies: Experts need to construct and reconstruct their expertise. This means a lifelong learning process, and such requirements pose considerable challenges to our educational system, and to higher education in particular. To develop such expertise, the central question deals with integrating theoretical, practical and self-regulative knowledge. Curricula and teaching methods should be developed so that they would assist in integrating formal theoretical knowledge and informal knowledge as well as meta-cognitive and self-regulative knowledge. All these elements lead to constructivist learning and learning environments. (Tynjälä 1999, 357–358, 427–429.)

One particular way of redesign an entrepreneurship curriculum is to shift from a teaching perspective to a learning perspective. The challenge for higher education and their entrepreneurship programs is to design a comprehensive and integrative curriculum in order to facilitate the learning needs of the students. Still many universities have the curricular structure based on separate disciplines and specialties. The traditional curriculum is usually organized and communicated through a menu of courses defined, labeled, and organized by discipline. (Kickul and Fayolle 2007, 2–4.)

The recent strategy of the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (ARENE 2006) underlines the importance of entrepreneurship programs and recommends encouraging entrepreneurship as a career option. According to the strategy, students should be encouraged to work with their plans of starting their own businesses by providing possibilities to

try and test entrepreneurship in a pre-incubator or incubator programs. Entrepreneurship should be offered as one possible and attractive career option to students in all fields.

In higher education, pre-incubators are understood as a part of the learning processes: They not only prepare students to start in actual business incubation, but also enable developing a business idea while still studying. Thus, students may be able to get their activities as entrepreneurs accepted as a part of their degree. A pre-incubation is seen as a wider process of business development that supports activities in higher education environment. (Rajaniemi, Niinikoski and Kokko 2005, 4.) The activities in pre-incubation are typically incorporated in the learning processes, which enables simultaneous completion of both one's studies and the development of business idea (Saurio 2004).

The objective of the UAS pre-incubators is to assess the student possibilities and willingness to become entrepreneurs, either full or part-time at some stage in life. Not everybody taking part in a pre-incubator is expected to become an entrepreneur – at the end of a pre-incubator program some students might conclude that they will start own businesses only after getting more work experience. Pre-incubator programs typically include a variety of exercises, the largest of which is the formulation of a business plan. In addition, guest lecturers and entrepreneurs play an important role.

Free-time activities and hobbies in this study mean those activities that people do when not working or studying. Hobbies are practiced for interest and enjoyment, rather than for financial reward. The aim of a hobby is personal fulfillment but engaging in a hobby can lead to acquiring substantial skills, knowledge, and experience. It is possible to take advantage of those skills, knowledge and experiences in the USA entrepreneurship training and education.

1.2.4 Summary of the key concepts

The definitions of the key concepts are summarized in Table 1.

CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Entrepreneurship	Individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. (European Commission 2006.)
Entrepreneurship education	The primary purpose of entrepreneurship education is to develop entrepreneurial capacities and mindsets (European Commission 2008, 10).
Growth to entrepreneurship	The process in which people learn to become entrepreneurs (Koiranen 2004).
Pre-incubator	Pre-incubator prepares the students to start their own businesses and makes the development of a business idea possible while still studying. Students are able to get the activities as an entrepreneur accepted as a part of their degree. (Rajaniemi et.al. 2005.)
Free-time activity and hobby	A subject or pursuit in which a student takes absorbing interest.

Table 1: The definitions of the key concepts.

2
Theoretic background and research questions

2.1 Three systems influencing students' process of becoming entrepreneurs

The Finnish UAS system aims at developing the entrepreneurship education and training so that the students could make use of their past experiences, their skills and knowledge and living surroundings. We should develop the learning environment so that it would facilitate learning needs of all students who show interest in entrepreneurship during their studies.

According to previous literature (Kirkwood 2007, 46), it is fair to that parents who own a business play an important role in their children's decision to become entrepreneurs. Koiranen (2000, 156) suggests that the growth to entrepreneurship stems from a long process of learning in various environments of home and family, school and the surrounding world.

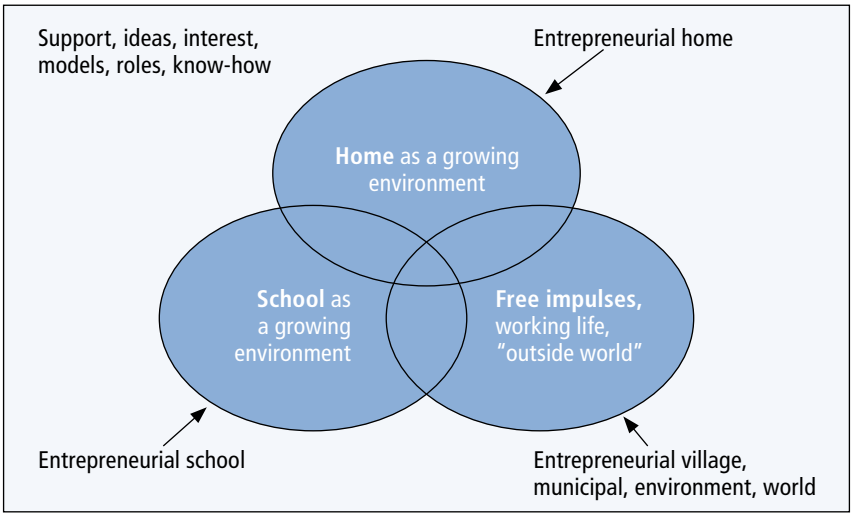

Figure 1. Different environments (or systems) fostering entrepreneurial spirit (Koiranen 2004).

Entrepreneurial family background tends to influence student attitudes positively and increase the likelihood of offspring adopting entrepreneurial behavior. Similarly, if schools and the society as a whole encourage and support active and innovative behavior of young people, it will, in turn, create space for entrepreneurship. Home, school and the surrounding "outside world" are clearly interrelated. (Koiranen 2004.) In this paper, the focus lies on what we call free impulses.

Parsons and Bales (1955, 16) claim that the two basic family functions are (a) the primary socialization of children so that they can truly become members of the society, and (b) the stabilization of adult personalities in society. Family system in our study refers to business family background and its connection with the process of becoming an entrepreneur. Children in business families grow up with parents who have taken an entrepreneurial way of life, which may influence their future career options.

The term educational system here refers to school and education in different levels and in various formal learning environments. Entrepreneurial skills can be developed at all levels of education, and in higher education the focus of entrepreneurship education is both in attitudes and in starting a new venture (Yrittäjyysalan koulutustoimikunta 2004, 17). According to the European Commission (2006, 5), entrepreneurship competences are developed in both formal and non-formal settings (e.g. youth work and various forms of participation in society). There is, therefore, a clear need to develop tools for recognizing and validating entrepreneurship-related skills acquired through non-formal learning. Here, experiences in informal and non-formal systems point to free time activities and hobbies.

According to Erikson (2003), entrepreneurial learning is about developing and strengthening competencies from three sources: (1) Mastery – as we learn from our experience, (2) Observation - we can learn from events (such as successes and failures of others, who may be other entrepreneurs, who, if they remain anonymous and unknown, act as indirect mentors), and (3) Socializing – networking and learning directly from the experiences of others who may act as mentors or coaches.

Home, school and free time activities are the core components that help shape students' pre-understanding as they start their entrepreneurship studies and training at the UAS. Theoretical studies and practical exercises with teachers, entrepreneurs and other experts form a process in which the students' understanding increases. The target of the process is deep understanding of entrepreneurship as a phenomenon. This process can lead to internal entrepreneurship, external entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial orientation.

2.2 Research questions

This article is based on a study (Römer-Paakkanen and Pekkala 2008) on pre-incubator students who start their own businesses. These students, who come from business families, do not want to continue or develop their family firms but instead are eager to create their own business ideas based on their special interest areas or hobbies. We are interested in portraying pre-incubator students' growth to entrepreneurship by examining the interplay of formal, non-formal and informal learning in the pre-incubator process in the UAS.

The detailed research questions are:

1. What is the influence of family (family environment) background in their growth to entrepreneurship?
2. What is the influence of education and studies (formal environment) in their growth to entrepreneurship?
3. What is the influence of free-time activities and hobbies (non-formal and informal environment) in their growth to entrepreneurship?

An individual's growth to entrepreneurship is a holistic process, and without focusing on the third question above, it is difficult provide an answer to the first two questions. The systems mentioned above – the family system, educational, informal and non-formal ones - provide the foundation in the growth to entrepreneurship. The main interest is how the experiences in informal and non-formal systems and environments affect students' growth to entrepreneurship. Through our study, we aim to find some ideas and advice of how to renew our entrepreneurship training and pre-incubator programs.

3
Methodology

3.1 Focus-group interviews

The research material was collected by focus-group interviews and personal discussions with a set of students at the HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences. The students told us about their experiences, activities, studies and background.

According to Flick (1998, 115), a focus-group interview is a short (c. 1.5–2 hours) interview with a small group of people (typically 6–8 people) on a specific topic. Focus groups are particularly useful when the research topic is new or when the aim is to chart new ideas. Pihkala (2008, 61), using focus-group interviews in his doctoral dissertation, found the method suitable for studying students' entrepreneurship intensions during their Polytechnic education.

In addition to our focus-group interviews and discussions, we also carried out observational fieldwork: The informants took part in the pre-incubation of our UAS, and we had the opportunity to follow their study processes and the work on their business ideas for more than a year. According to Hughes (2002, 139), fieldwork refers to observing people in situ, finding them where they are, staying with them in a role which, while acceptable to them, will allow close observation of certain parts of their behavior.

3.2 The informants

Our seven informants, five females and two male, form a special group among the UAS students. They not only study business, and take part in the pre-incubator, but also have business family backgrounds. As pre-incubator student-entrepreneurs they are well acquainted with searching for business opportunities, researching the market potential of their business ideas and products and learning about the process of business building. They are student entrepreneurs since each one of them has set

up a company of his/her own and is managing it alongside the studies (Van der Sijde 2006, 36). We acknowledge that the sample size is small and the topic of motivations is complex, and therefore this study should be followed by more extensive research.

Even though all our informants have entrepreneurial backgrounds, they are not (at this stage) planning to continue their family businesses. The students have constructed business plans on the basis of their interest areas or hobbies. Three of them have already founded their own businesses, and one student is already earning her living from her business. All the informants are also writing their theses on entrepreneurship. The hobbies forming the bases for the business areas include for instance Chinese board games, dancing and cheerleaders, aquarium fishes, designing, computer games.

In addition to their background information, we are interested in the students' motives in participating in entrepreneurial studies and the pre-incubator programs, their perceptions on the teaching methods (e.g. applicability), and their learning processes. After defining the informants for our study we conceptualized the main research questions and designed the focus-group interview. We also collected some personal information from the informants through personal discussions and an e-mail inquiry.

3.3 Analysis of the data

When analyzing the data, we used conceptual ordering, meaning that we organized the data into discrete categories according to their various properties and dimensions and then used descriptions to elucidate those categories (Straus and Corbin 1998, 19). After organizing the data, we analyzed it against our research questions and reflected the empirical material against our theoretic background and other existing current literature on the topic. The quotations that were used in the analysis are displayed in Figure 2.

Family system	Education system	Informal and non-formal system
Main concepts Socialization Family business Business family	**Main concepts** Entrepreneurship education Entrepreneurship studies & Pre-incubator	**Main concepts** Free-time activities and hobbies
"I think that the conversations are most important. It is fine to have the possibility to tell my ideas to someone who understands entrepreneurship and knows my situation and doesn't leave me alone with my "silly" idea. I sell my idea to at least three family members allowing them to evaluate it." "It is true that my family members encourage me even though people say that entrepreneurship is not the way to become rich. My father has always given me financial advice and he has also helped me financially."	"The best teachers have had entrepreneurial habits and attitudes... they have some experience in working in SME's and also know what entrepreneurship is in the real life." "…to take small steps…" "…learning by doing…" "…personal timing…" "Different ways to carry out the studies and self-orientation" "…transferring existing ideas into new opportunities and task, "…increased know-how..." "…possibility of showing own thinking and business idea…" "…doing tasks that directly benefit oneself" "…possibility of trying harder and thus increase persistence…" "…ability to organize, lead and learn responsibility…"	"I have so much to do on different areas and it is very hard to make choices; the real difficulty is making choices." "I feel that to be active in my hobby means activity in other fields as well - like other hobbies, studies and working." "I really need to do many things in my life" "In the future I would like to have a job in which I can use the competencies that I have learned in my hobby and in pre-incubator. I wish for job in which creativity and self-realization are possible. I want to make my ideas come true." "Would it not be fun if my hobby could be my profession?" "My hobby is my passion… If I can make my living from it… what could be better?" "…opportunity to show creativity and to do things by yourself"
Research problem in this paper: How do family background, education, and free-time activities and hobbies, influence in the pre-incubator students' process of becoming an entrepreneur?		

Figure 2. Overview of the focus-group interviews.

After organizing the data, we listened to the tapes and read the transcripts again as we were seeking for the most significant quotes, key points, and themes that might emerge in the tapes or texts. We also found themes that the participants were interested in talking about. In addition to those topics that provided answers to our research questions, we put special focus on the question why some of the students are in the process of planning their own businesses on the basis of their hobby but not their family businesses.

4
Results: the role of family background, education and hobbies in the students' process of becoming an entrepreneur

We found that growing to entrepreneurship could be understood as a triangulation process of socialization, education and experiences. The process develops in different environments or systems - in family system, school (education system) and in free-time activities and hobbies (informal and non-formal systems). Counseling, coaching and mentoring form a supporting system, acting as catalysts in this process. Counseling, focusing on an individual and producing self-directive actions, aims at to highlighting competent learning and self-management. Tunkkari-Eskelinen (2005, 20–21 and 199) argues that it is difficult to make clear distinctions between mentoring and coaching or parenting, but she however proposes that parenting should not be used as a synonym to mentoring. Mentoring is a one-to-one relationship established between a more experienced person and a less experienced one.

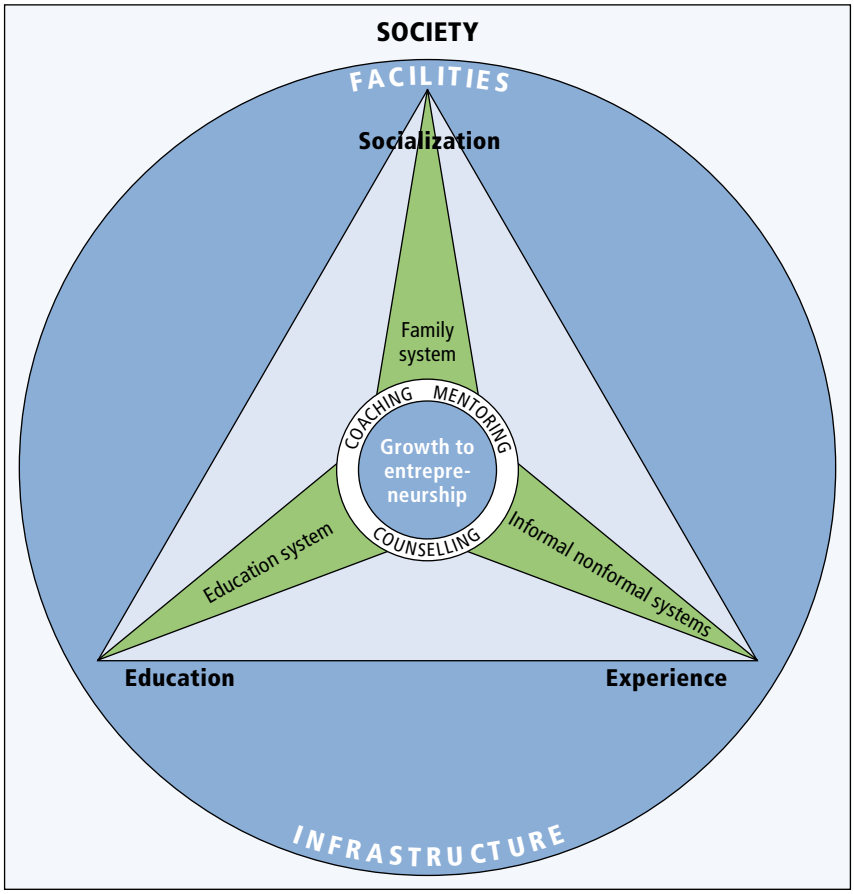

Figure 3. Growth to entrepreneurship: Triangulation of socialization, experiences and education (Römer-Paakkanen and Pekkala, 2008).

The three different environments and systems influence each other and it is not easy to study them separately. Although the main focus in this paper is on the influence of the free time activities and hobbies, it is possible that other, yet unknown, systems might also play a role in the process. We will next discuss the triangulation process displayed in Figure 3, and will then present our results through our research questions.

4.1 Family system – socialization

The decision to become an entrepreneur or start a new venture is complicated and multi-faceted, and there are previous studies by Kirkwood (2007) and Heck et al. (2008) that support our finding that parents appear to be a strong influencing factor in the process. According to our inform-

ants, family members provide assistance in the process, and sometimes help in finding the capital needed. The nature of family influence is not entirely known (Kirkwood 2007), but our study indicates that family values, adopting the active life-style and the attitudes towards work in particular, are among the most decisive factors that matter when students start thinking about their career options.

Business families often have a mutual dream of a successful family business and family wellbeing. But when one examines personal needs and goal setting in more detail, mutual dreams may to be based on personal needs of the founder of the firm. When the offspring start planning their personal lives and careers, they have to be ready to face the hard decision of whether to continue the family firm or not. If the dream in the family is still mutually shared, the offspring may be interested to continue the business. Plenty of reasons may exist for not opting to continue (Römer-Paakkanen and Rauhala 2007.) Family business, in addition to being a family matter, is also a personal matter for children. An entrepreneurial career is very much influenced by what takes place in personal life and family. It is fair to say that offspring of business families start their "incubation processes" in childhood.

The students in our study feel that it is necessary to have the time to study and develop their businesses or ideas according to their timetables during their pre-incubation at the UAS. They prefer taking small steps with their business ideas and not hurry to continue their family businesses. Our results indicate that the pre-incubator students who come from business families also tend to have tacit knowledge, which they also utilize when developing their ideas (cf. Westerholm 2007, 144) who also argues that entrepreneurial expertise could be explained through tacit knowledge.)

4.2 Education system – entrepreneurship education and training

According to Thompson (2006, 116), entrepreneurs do not necessarily learn in classrooms but clearly prefer experimental learning. Training programs – even though they might be useful – tend not to be the main learning vehicles, but instead the so-called on-the-job experiences are preferred. Current and future entrepreneurs learn from other successful people (as well as failed entrepreneurs and revered role models), but yet again the trick lies in making sense of the information and the stories that are around.

Similarly, our informants point out that entrepreneurship cannot be learned in classrooms solely, but by "doing it yourself". They also prefer getting acquainted with "real, positive and realistic" entrepreneur stories. Such "success and survival stories" encourage our students to continue their own businesses so that they do not feel discouraged when facing the first (inevitable) setbacks.

The informants appreciate being able to complete all their study projects in their own businesses or at least closely related to them. They feel that those who have their own firms can benefit most from the various projects and studies. Moreover, they express suspicion whether other students who do not have real experience of operating a business can even ever understand it. They also highlight that it is important to have the SME (small and medium size enterprise) point of view in studies.

Our study supports the idea that it is important that the entrepreneurship education or training programs are considered concrete and practical enough by those who participate in them. Student entrepreneurs seek for studies that serve their needs and provide them with the support that they need when developing their ideas. This is to say that they try to create a suitable learning environment for themselves. Our results, similar to a recent study by Westerholm (2007, 122), show that there is a distinct line between competencies and attitudes crucial to an entrepreneur and those needed in business administration.

Our results indicate that students learn entrepreneurship by applying things into practice, by doing and experimenting, using examples and making mistakes – by doing things by themselves. Moreover, they like to hear realistic, but positive success and survival stories. Learning outcomes are created in a process in which a potential entrepreneur experiments and then applies theoretical knowledge into real-life situations.

4.3 Informal and non-formal systems – free time activities and hobbies

The students, having created their business ideas from their activities and hobbies, are enthusiastic and highly motivated in what they do. In many cases, they are also relatively active and effective in their studies as they search for different ways of completing the courses and also take part in many special courses, such as intensive courses abroad.

Carrier (2005, 141) indicates that many of the business ideas proposed by management students tend to involve copying and imitating

what other people have done. According to our informants, learning from what others do is an important way of learning, but when becoming an entrepreneur one should find one's own path in the process of discovering opportunities. This perspective might also be the reason why they do not want to continue their family businesses at this stage, so instead of developing their parent's ideas they want to create something of their own. The possibility to use own skills and competencies, self-esteem and creativity, and the joy of work seem to be the most important motives in developing one's own business. Our students want to build something by themselves and not just follow their parents' way of life and decisions. This fact shows that they really possess entrepreneurial spirits and the passion of finding their own way.

Instead of trying to expand their businesses during studies, our informants are satisfied with if they can finance their hobbies by the profit generated through business. Alternatively, they might even be noble-minded and aim at getting more devotees to their hobby circles. Our results show that the work contents produced a greater joy for our informants than just the money earned.

Berret, Burton and Slack (1993, 104) stress that entrepreneurs often share common features: Firstly, they want to provide quality products and services. Secondly, they want to be their own bosses, and thirdly, they do not necessarily expect to get substantial financial rewards while operating own businesses. Many entrepreneurs are in the business because they have a direct personal interest in it, or they may even feel enthusiastic about the main activity in their business operations. The primary target is activity, such as sports or leisure, rather than making money.

In our study, many of these features mentioned above appear to be present. The students reveal that they want to control their lives and not join family businesses at this point of their lives. They also told that the financial side is not the most important motivation for them. In fact, some respondents seemed to be a bit afraid of a situation of businesses growing too fast and expanding to other countries for instance. Their feeling is that it is risky if a business grows too fast. The interviewees also feel that everyone will need an entrepreneurial mindset in the future - intrapreneurship and entrepreneurial spirit in particular.

4.4 Summary of the results

There are many factors influencing individual's growth to entrepreneurship: The include participants such as family members and other entrepreneurs, educators and teachers, and coaches in hobbies. Social values are nurtured in the family context, education and studies offer the structure that supports the growth to entrepreneurship and hobbies develop the self-esteem and passion required.

According to our study, teachers and family members, depending on their abilities and skills, can act as counselors or coaches. Teachers in a pre-incubator provide individual advice in topics such as personal requirements and abilities, accounting, business administration, market analysis, legal advice, advertising and marketing. Students tend to reflect and discuss their ideas with family members, and highly appreciate their opinions. It is also important to find good mentors for students as they can learn from other entrepreneurs' experiences. Additionally, people involved in hobbies, a couch in sports for instance, may turn out to play an important role when students are eventually making their future plans.

Our analysis allows us to suggest that people with entrepreneurial characteristics are active in many fields. The student entrepreneurs investigated here had three simultaneous processes of commitment going on: their studies, hobbies and running their own businesses.

We preliminarily considered the idea of various learning environments (Figure 1) when we planned our interview themes, but it should be pointed out that those three environments also popped up spontaneously in our discussions with the students.

The main result of our study can be seen in Figures 3 and 4 that summarize our findings and portray the students' growth to entrepreneurship.

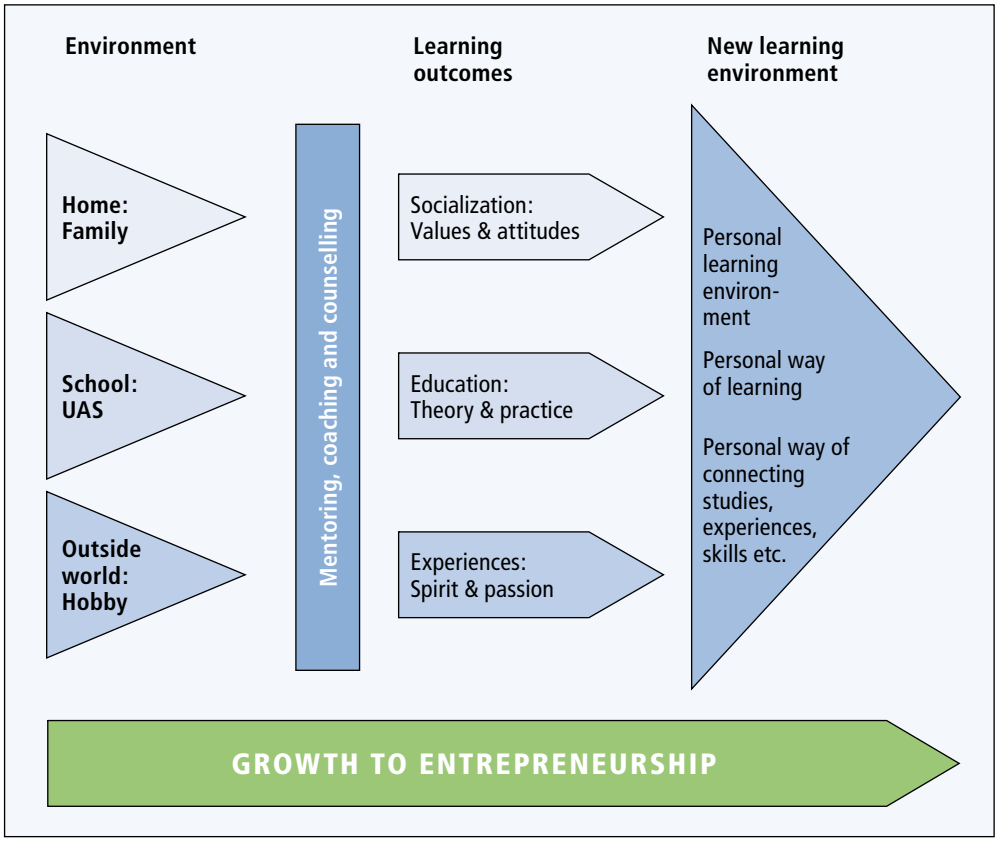

Figure 4. Constructing a new personal learning environment.

As a conclusion of Figures 3 and 4, students create their personal learning environments in a triangulation process of socialization, education and experiences. In this process family provides the values, the UAS enables the infrastructure, and the passion originates from hobbies.

5
Conclusions

In this study we have wanted to explore the successful combinations of learning objectives, substance skills and teaching methods all of which support the learning processes of potential entrepreneurs. Our results suggest that the methods used should be different in different phases of the learning process and also in different stages of the business itself. In addition, students' background and experiences has to be taken into account when deciding on course contents and choosing learning methods in entrepreneurship education.

Learning assignments in general do not seem to support learning unless embedded in real-life situations. For instance, an assignment of writing a business plan becomes better and more effective, in terms of learning outcomes, if participants already have real business ideas. The traditional lecture format may not be the most effective method since it ignores the essence of the entrepreneurial process. Lectures may, in fact, inhibit the development of the entrepreneurial behavior or entrepreneurial spirits, which are requisites for such entrepreneurial process.

Our results show that learning processes of student entrepreneurs are highly personal and holistic. To illustrate this, the problems that entrepreneurs face daily tend to require immediate solutions; there, therefore, is no time to wait for a proper course or other type of formal training in order to find the solution to such problems. For instance, if a student entrepreneur is negotiating with a client and is in need for legal advice, it is not always possible to wait until the next course on business law is arranged.

Our study confirms that it is important for an entrepreneurship education to be concrete and practical enough for the students. It is also necessary to acknowledge that such education is tailored to fit each student and each individual situation. Timing in studies and in advising and counseling are critical. This fact is even more important in cases in which students already possess entrepreneurial spirits. Potential entrepreneurs need support in discovering future opportunities and creating entrepreneurial spirits, whereas entrepreneurs already operating businesses need

help and training in developing their existing business ideas and managing their businesses. We need to provide both types of training since student entrepreneurs in pre-incubators might have planned their own business ideas but need help in developing them. Alternatively, they may need assistance in developing their existing (family) businesses further.

The results of this study can be used in practical applications when planning entrepreneurship education and training for various student groups and potential entrepreneurs at the Finnish UAS. In more particular, those who already know something about entrepreneurship and are active in many fields must be considered as a special group needing counseling and training programs tailored just for them. Some such students have chosen studies at the UAS to create and further develop their business ideas. They just want to be trained entrepreneurs and eagerly look for learning more business skills.

We as educators should broaden our horizons and encourage students to set up enterprises that may not always have to be primarily growth oriented. Such businesses may offer students a solid training ground on their way to future entrepreneurship or on their way to continue their family businesses.

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