A CULTure of Entrepreneurship Education

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High hopes are invested in a rapid institutionalisation of an enterprise culture in Higher Education. This has heightened the importance of entrepreneurship education (EE) in most Western societies; however, how values and beliefs about entrepreneurship are institutionalised in EE remains relatively unchallenged. This study applies the lens of the cult, in particular three elements Rituals, Deities and the Promise of Salvation, to reflect on the production and reproduction of entrepreneurship in EE. In doing so, the paper addresses uncontested values and beliefs that form a hidden curriculum prevalent in EE. We argue for greater appreciation of reflexive practices to challenge normative promotions of beliefs and values that compare with forms of evangelising, detrimental to objectives of Higher Education. Consequently, we call for a more critical pedagogy to counteract a 'cultification' of entrepreneurship in EE.

Keywords: cult, entrepreneurship education, hidden curriculum, enterprise culture institutionalisation.

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Introduction

In recent years, entrepreneurship education (EE) has become a topic of growing

interest in Higher Education Institutions. Policy has positioned EE as a key intervention in

the promotion and realisation of an enterprise culture (Holmgren and From 2005; EC 2012).

Since, 'education is society's media of manifesting fundamental ideas' (Kyrö 2005: 75), the

policy objective is to embed EE across the curriculum at all levels of education (EC 2012),

and dramatically increase the number of university entrepreneurship courses (Kuratko 2005;

Blenker et al. 2012) in order to support a cultural shift in Western economies. By advocating

this logic, policy has also fed a growing academic interest in supporting these aims through

research and education. As a result, entrepreneurship becomes a 'cultural movement', created

and reproduced as a cultural ideology through channels such as education (Rae 2010: 592).

In spite of a growing interest in exploring the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship

and the entrepreneur in broader society, the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship in

education has not been through the same kind of deconstruction (Rehn et al. 2013). Still, it is

essential to subject EE to critical reflections by challenging its foundations and assumptions

if it is to progress as a discipline (Fayolle 2013). We therefore ask: How are values and

beliefs about entrepreneurship institutionalised in EE?

To address this issue, we use a religious lens – the 'cult' – specifically, its

components of deities, rituals and promises of salvation, to critically reflect on the role of EE

in reproducing and legitimising a belief system. This methodological choice is a consequence

of the ideological content in entrepreneurship (Nicholson and Anderson 2005; Ogbor 2000)

which defies reflexivity in the conventional sense of the term (Styhre 2005). An ideology is a

belief system (Jost, Federico, and Napier 2008) and represents a comprehensive normative

vision, in the sense that it describes a set of conscious and unconscious ideas that instruct

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goals, expectation, and motivations. Cascardi (1999: 200) argues that ideology consists of "discursive forms through which a society tries to constitute itself as such on the basis of closure, of the fixation of meaning, of the non-recognition of the infinite play of differences." Ideology is therefore always inherent in ways of thinking and speaking and not a detachable layer, which makes it difficult to isolate and analyse using standard procedures for reflexivity (Styhre 2005). It is important to stress, that we do not argue that entrepreneurship in education is a cult, nor that beliefs in entrepreneurship are like religious beliefs. Rather, cult and the notion of religiosity is our way of 'fighting familiarity' (Delamont, Atkinson, and Pugsley 2010), gaining a research position outside normativity by employing a different analytic prism. In this sense, the cult lens acts as our tool to provide analytical distance and reflexivity.

Following a social constructionist ontology (Berger and Luckmann 1966), we position EE as the pedagogical concerns linked to educating about, for, and through entrepreneurship (Blenker et al. 2011; Hannon 2005). Through numerous educational programs, entrepreneurship is offered as a meaningful description of social reality whilst prescribing desirable actions and ways of engaging in this world. This promotion suggests a hidden curriculum that is driven by wider taken-for-granted assumptions of entrepreneurship. Conceptualised as 'what schooling does to people' (Martin 1976: 135), this particular hidden curriculum underpins mainstream practices in EE. In the concept lies a contrast between what the intent of teaching is and what, although not openly intended, students in fact learn (Martin 1976). It includes transmission of unspoken and unchallenged norms, values, and beliefs linked to particular paradigms, and their socialisation function (Gair and Mullins 2001).

In applying the lens of the cult, we contribute to existing research that addresses the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship (e.g. Landström and Benner 2013; Landström, Harirchi, and Åström 2012; Watson 2013; Welter and Lasch 2008). Through classroom

vignettes, and a discussion of deities, rituals, and ideas of salvation evident in EE, we discuss how the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship involves a normative promotion of beliefs and values and therefore compares with forms of evangelising (Tedmanson et al. 2012; Du Gay 1996). Looking at the specific case of EE, thus, enhances our understanding of the potential for embedded agents – educators in our case – to promote or potentially challenge uncritical reproduction of this belief system.

In the following, we present the political incentives constituting the development of EE. Then we explain in more detail how and why we employ the religious cult as an analytical lens. With a focus on three major elements of a cult (deities, rituals and salvation), we discuss the production and reproduction of entrepreneurship as a belief system in EE. Finally, we present the consequences of our analysis and how to possibly escape cult-like promotions through reflexivity into what we teach and what students potentially learn.

The Rise of Entrepreneurship Education

It is impossible to isolate activities within EE from wider societal understandings of who and what the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship is (Holmgren and From 2005; Ehrensal 2001; Jones 2014). Entrepreneurship is posited as a remedy to some of the fundamental problems of today's economies, such as unemployment and stagnating economic growth (Rasmussen et al. 2011) and seems to offer a solution to problems associated with the increased pace and turbulence of social and economic change (Anderson and Jack 2008).

Government policy pinpoints the rationales for developing an enterprise culture (Lewis and Llewellyn 2004; OECD 2009). It suggests that EE is an important intervention, since it plays a role in developing and improving entrepreneurial aspirations and abilities, stimulating entrepreneurship and unleashing a 'spirit of enterprise', presented in terms of innovation, creativity, initiative and a tolerance of risk and uncertainty (e.g. EC 2004). These policy interventions frame EE as an entrepreneurial pipeline (Huggins 2008; Kyrö 2006),

expected to unleash the transformational powers needed to create economic wealth. The development of EE programmes is therefore suggested as a way to increase the supply of entrepreneurial talent (Henry, Hill, and Leitch 2005). In short, the main rationale to expose students to entrepreneurship education is to contribute to more entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities.

Consequently, EE in HE aims to transform students' attitudes, values, and self-understandings (Holmgren and From 2005), creating an imperative for all students to become enterprising (Pittaway and Cope 2007). This transformation manifests as an increased focus on the entrepreneur as a person, identified by certain abilities and practices, which should be stimulated and trained. Hence, the entrepreneur stands out as a driving identity in the new economy, which more individuals are encouraged to take up (Lewis and Llewellyn 2004). Although policy goals are not uniformly translated into EE practices, and educators are not necessarily 'victims' of policy discourses (Robinson and Blenker 2014) such glorification risks promoting a deified picture of entrepreneurs that students might feel obliged to aspire to. Therefore, we apply the lens of the cult to reflect on the production and reproduction of entrepreneurship in EE.

The cult as analytical lens

Scholars have emphasised the influence of religious ethics on economic action. For instance, religion has been considered a cultural background for capitalism and the shaping of economic institutions (Weber 2002; Deutschmann 2001). Durkheim (2001) regarded religion as the representation of society's moral rules and collective existence, with all religions involving a set of symbols and feelings of reverence linked to the rituals and deities of a community of believers (Giddens and Sutton 2009). Geertz (1973) defined religion as a cultural system which gains its strength through formulating correspondence between people's ethos i.e. 'the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style

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and mood', and their world view i.e. 'the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are' (Geertz 1973: 89). He argues that sacred symbols formulate this basic congruence between a specific metaphysic and a particular lifestyle, which are both sustained by 'the borrowed authority of the other' (Geertz 1973: 90). Consequently, there is an alignment and mutual confirmation between the 'subjective' qualities of life and what is considered the 'objective' realities of the world. Geertz famously stated that religion as a cultural system, becomes both a model 'of' as well as a model 'for' reality (Geertz 1973: 93). As a framework that simultaneously provides descriptions of the world and prescriptions for how to act in it, such belief systems may thus form a 'totalising discourse' which presses for a single truth and extinguishes alternative understandings (Robbins 1988).

Religion has also been examined as a variable that influences entrepreneurship (Dodd and Seaman 1998). Recent studies in entrepreneurship have highlighted parallels with religious concepts such as the myth of creation (Sørensen 2008). Ogbor (2000) shows how entrepreneurship theory constructs and promotes mythical figures – the deities – such as 'the warrior' (Gomez and Korine 2008) and 'the hero' (Dodd and Anderson 2007). Ong (2006) suggests that the enterprise culture can be regarded as a 'style of living' that provides guidance through given values in line with a particular ethical goal. Hence enterprise culture compares to religion as it empowers a specific 'scheme of virtue fostering particular forms of self-conduct and visions of the good life' (Ong 2006: 22).

In fact, the term 'cult' has previously been associated with enterprise culture, highlighting the existence of hegemony and ideology in entrepreneurship (Du Gay and Salaman 1992). A cult is a 'mystic collectivity' defined by a distinct system of beliefs (Campbell 1977). It is a group or movement that exhibits great devotion to a person, idea or thing often with a charismatic leader, who increasingly becomes the object of worship

(Singer 2003). A cult can also be a secular group e.g. developing around specific brands, events or personalities (Belk and Tumbat 2005).

Gallagher (2007) argues that 'cult' is used as an indicator of 'otherness'. This implies a classification between what is to be considered conventional or unconventional. By choosing membership of a cult, one chooses not to be part of the mainstream. This choice involves stepping out of social conformity to enact alternatives or deviations from conventional behaviour (Campbell 1977). This 'us vs. them' segregation is often accompanied by specific guidance in the form of rituals (Geertz 1973), deities (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956), and explicit descriptions of salvation (Belk and Tumbat 2005).

The cult explains why conventional life is not what it should be and offers utopias where the ills of human kind will be cured (Singer 2003). It provides an account of an alternative perfection and provides the means for salvation (Heelas 1996). Singer (2003) defines cults as thought reform groups, which aim at producing attitudinal changes in individuals and self-improvement. Yet, in academia, the term 'cult' is considered to be a pejorative term that stigmatises certain groups and propagates fear. Cults are also defined by the unethical manipulative or coercive techniques of persuasion and control that they employ (Tobias and Lalich 1994). In cults, people are lured in by manipulative techniques, false promises, and bogus ideology, They are seduced, brainwashed, abused, and controlled in the thought reform process, robbed of their liberty and often their money (Singer 2003).

In research, cult is often replaced with the more neutral term New Religious Movement (Gallagher 2007). Robbins (1988: 5) argues that the growth of New Religious Movements is allied with a growth in the 'human potential movement' and therapeutic mystiques oriented towards growth and self-actualization. In capitalist, and utilitarian individualistic societies it is perhaps unsurprising that human potential should be closely

linked to economic potential and the generation of wealth, power, freedom and status for individuals.

Watson (2012) argues that it is hazardous to 'contaminate' scholarly study of entrepreneurial activity with assumptions or ambiguities from popular and political culture. This makes EE a specifically interesting research field, since the boundaries between policy driven research and scholarly research are not always obvious, even though there is a call for more theory driven and critical research on EE (Fayolle 2013). This does not mean that the conceptualisation of entrepreneurship in policy documents is directly translated into pedagogical practices (Robinson and Blenker 2014). However, there is a widespread understanding of the existence and necessary teaching of entrepreneurial mindsets, which transcends from research into policy or perhaps the other way around (Holmgren and From 2005). Berglund and Johansson (2007) argue that entrepreneurship is simply associated with goodness, which delimits the discursive domain in ways that make it difficult if not impossible to challenge. Yet, critical scholarship on entrepreneurship should be 'uncomfortable with complacency about or fixation on, any particular position idea, theory and method'(Tedmanson et al. 2012: 537). Consequently, in order to investigate how values and beliefs are institutionalised in education, we use the lens of the cult to establish an analysis of EE, which is not readily encapsulated within its own ideology.

Cult Elements of Entrepreneurship Education

As promoted in education, entrepreneurship offers a credible description of the true workings of the world while simultaneously prescribing meaningful and desirable actions and ways of being in this world. Thus, the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship in EE is described by social practices, routine-reproduced programmes or rules (Jepperson 1991). Through teaching practices, symbols and beliefs are produced and reproduced, institutionalising myth and taken-for-granted assumptions (Hallett 2010). In light of this, EE

– a societal institution where entrepreneurship is (re)constituted as a 'model of', as well as a 'model for' reality – potentially falls victim to being based on automated values and beliefs (Rehn et al. 2013).

By using the cult as a lens we are able to critically reflect on these taken-for-granted beliefs and values. We explore three elements identified in the literature on new religious movements: Deities, Ritual and the Promise of Salvation. Each subsection is introduced by auto-ethnographic vignettes that offer insights into concrete lecture episodes experienced by the authors. The vignettes are intertwined with a review of how each cult element has been used, discussed, employed, etc. in contemporary entrepreneurship research. This review is complemented by illustrations of how these theory developments have been institutionalised in EE.

We then discuss the consequences of this institutionalisation of entrepreneurship in EE and how it represents a totalising discourse that underpins a hidden curriculum. As the hidden curriculum cannot be uncovered directly, we examine what is learned as a result of the practices, procedures, rules, relationships, structures, and physical characteristics employed (Martin 1976) that constitute deities, rituals and the promise of salvation. In doing so, we offer opportunities for a critical and reflective approach to EE.

Deities

> *"*In the classroom I challenge the stereotypes of successful entrepreneurs. One exercise involves drawing an entrepreneur and typically students will draw people such as Steve Jobs, Richard Branson and Mark Zuckerberg to illustrate who they see as successful entrepreneur. Indeed, they are eager to learn about such people in class. This creates a tension for me as an educator when I try and highlight other less well-known entrepreneurs, some of whom may be women or involved in more socially focused entrepreneurship. This seems to have little effect on student understanding

and they continue to refer to Jobs, Branson, Zuckerberg, etc. as classes continue.*"*

(Educator in UK)

*"*During an introduction lecture in entrepreneurship at graduate level a student eyes down the lecturer*'s* CV and questions if the lecturer has ever started a new venture himself? The lecturer admits that the only venturing he has ever undertaken was some cleaning for old people during his many years of study. The student replies with ill-*concealed contempt: "how can you then lecture on the topic?" And continues to argue that what is really* needed is insight from for example [a well-known local entrepreneur]*"*

(Educator in Denmark)

In line with formal definitions, we conceptualize a 'Deity' as a supreme being, one who is exalted as supremely good, or omnipotent and the embodiment of all that is desirable. Authors in the field have noted that societal stereotypical scripts have constrained the metaphor of 'the entrepreneur' (Down and Warren 2008). This metaphor sanctions an individual heroic figure that embodies a number of distinct characteristics (Nicholson and Anderson 2005) prescribing social norms for what is expected from the role 'entrepreneur'. This involves the deification of the individual entrepreneur (Kaufmann and Dant 1999). Consequently, and seemingly by default, this entrepreneur is closely linked to figures such as Richard Branson, Steve Jobs etc.; implicitly establishing both the psychological traits of the entrepreneur and also of entrepreneurs as wealth creators and saviours of the economy (Sørensen 2008) and illustrating their commonality with the charismatic leaders or gurus of new religious movements (Robbins 1988). This establishes a figure or a deity that the student should aspire to become. Entrepreneurship events, connected to curriculum activities, fuel this conception and usually include elaborate marketing materials that, to an extent, glamourise entrepreneurship by providing keynote speeches from successful local, alumni

and/or nationally recognized entrepreneurs (deities). The foundations of this deified character are inspired by, and evident in, the writings of for example Schumpeter (1934) and involve autonomy, uniqueness and super-human powers. In other words, the entrepreneur is constructed as a charismatic hero – the embodiment of superior agency (Giesen 2005: 276). The liturgical components (or public worship) are pushed to the forefront and, as programme managers include successful entrepreneurs as keynote speakers to tell great stories about their experiences, students are impelled towards re-enacting these stories. This deified entrepreneur fulfils a specific role in the EE classroom, with students being primed to put their own agency into action through imitation. In literature this path is often connected to the need for achievement or other psychological characteristics of the entrepreneur (McClelland 1961). This theoretical turn emphasises the individual actor, resulting in a 'cult of the individual' (Stevenson and Jarillo 1990: 20) linked to specially endowed individuals and implying that not all individuals hold these traits (Shane and Venkataraman 2000). In acting on these thoughts EE often focuses on developing such traits in students, in order for them to become more closely aligned with the template of the supreme entrepreneur (Jones 2014).

Other authors in the entrepreneurship field argue that this image of the heroic entrepreneur actually undermines any attempts to present entrepreneurship as inclusive (Gibb 2002). Indeed, the stereotype of the charismatic – and often lone – hero has been brought into question both in seminal writings (Gartner 1988; Ogbor 2000) and in more recent publications on the subject (Ramoglou 2013). Gartner (1989) argues that there is nothing that distinguishes entrepreneurs from other individuals except their entrepreneurial behaviour; what they do is more important than who they are (Gartner 1988). Hence, Gartner (1989) questions whether a focus on specific characteristics of specific individuals (deities) is a futile research agenda. Employing the same trait centred conceptual basis in EE could be equally problematic. Indeed, this actively undermines the idea that anyone can learn to become an

entrepreneur and that entrepreneurship can be taught. In line with Gartner's (1989) critique, more recent research questions this lone hero character by analysing how young Europeans understand entrepreneurship and the 'Entrepreneur' (Dodd, Jack, and Anderson 2013). This research suggests that 'Entrepreneurs' are value laden social constructs, which carry substantial differences across Europe. In spite of evidence of a core, cross-national discourse that holds strong linkage to the economic contribution of enterprise (Dodd, Jack, and Anderson 2013) students may come to struggle to position themselves in relation to such representations of the deities that inform EE curricula. This highlights a fundamental tension in EE, which educators and students have to grapple with and yet this is rarely acknowledged in the classroom (Jones 2014).

Ritual

> *"In*-class evaluations are held as part of a first semester course in entrepreneurship. Evaluating an embedded start-up camp, a young male student argues that the business start-up camp and the simple *'Osterwalder'*-tools which were provided in a specific sequence during this, along with the final pitch competition has been very useful to him. He goes *on to state that: "Now I know exactly how to start my own business""*
> (Educator in Denmark)

> *"In each student cohort, some students challenge the value of writing a final dissertation to graduate with a Master's degree from a science* university. During the discussion about the dissertation requirements, a *student stands up arguing fiercely: "Ha*nds up who thinks that writing a thesis is useless, and instead Business Plans are more important and should *be accepted for graduating.""*
> (Educator in Finland)

A ritual is a formalistic type of behaviour (Goody 1977) and in entrepreneurship this relates to the activities, actions or behaviours regularly and invariably followed by successful entrepreneurs (the deities). In line with commonly held values and beliefs about entrepreneurship, these rituals also suggest societal templates for the accepted and acceptable process of starting up and developing a successful business (Gibb 2000). Such beliefs are further emphasised in popular culture with popularised television programmes such as Dragons' Den and The Apprentice emphasising the path to successful entrepreneurship as being linked to presenting a successful business plan to be judged as worthy of investment (Swail, Down, and Kautonen 2013).

The accompanying liturgy creates and supports the belief that business planning is a necessary ritual, which the would-be entrepreneur needs to perform to become successful, with a viable and attractive business plan suggested as a necessity for attracting external investment (Kaplan, Sensoy, and Strömberg 2009). A further strengthening of this tendency to draw on broader business trends is found when educators are pressured to incorporate the latest popularised literature into their teaching. However, these canons such as the Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder and Pigneur 2010), The Lean Startup (Ries 2011) and The Startup Manual (Blank and Dorf 2012) are often conveyed as the (divine) solutions to success by back office managers in the start-up support system. Accordingly, at the managerial and political level, entrepreneurship educators are expected to adopt them and promote their rites to meet the responsibility of delivering results. This legitimises submitting students to rituals such as business plan competitions, leaving room for the Dragons' Den thumbs up or down notions.

One of the most prominent elements in the cult concept is the ritual that manifests and re-enforces the values and beliefs embedded in that cult (Geertz 1973). Critical researchers have long documented the role of education generally as a cultural system involving ritual

performances and rites of passage, constructing frameworks that extend specific situational

meanings further than the context of the classroom (Bernstein, Elvin, and Peters 1966).

Ritual is also strongly linked to the act of teaching itself and to classroom activities

and pedagogies (McLaren 1999: 27) and EE is based upon commonly accepted and

legitimatised approaches in this respect. In reviewing 108 articles, Mwasalwiba (2012) found

that the most common subjects embedded in entrepreneurship courses were resource

management and finance, marketing and sales, idea generation and opportunity discovery, as

well as business planning. These practices are indeed recognised as core elements in venture

creation.

Gibb (2000) points to these as mythical concepts and rituals that are perpetuated

through entrepreneurship research, which arguably underpin and provide rationales for EE.

These concepts become ritualised through their embodiment in: '[…] ways of doing things;

ways of seeing things; ways of communicating things and ways of learning things' (Gibb

2000). This in turn, drives the teaching and learning practices (rituals) – enacted and

reproduced in the EE curriculum and classroom.

EE does indeed attempt to change the way that students do things, how they view the

world, how they learn to do this, with an emphasis on experiential and action learning (Rae

2012). These outcomes ultimately crystallise around the present consensus on the goals of

EE: 'to make changes in society via changes in individual behaviour' (Pittaway and Cope

2007: 479). In this way EE can be conceptualised as an 'Identity Transformation

Organisation', something that Robbins (1988: 83) argues is also true of cults, which '[…]

endeavour to create "social cocoons" through patterns of physical and/or social and/or

ideological encapsulation'. In this way, EE is positioned as, not only student-transforming,

but also world-transforming. EE can therefore be seen as having a purpose that reaches

beyond itself – ultimately seeking to have a broader, measureable societal impact through the

resulting actions of EE students, which are based upon their acceptance and adherence to the rituals of EE.

Bernstein, Elvin, and Peters (1966) make a distinction between consensual and differentiating rituals in education, with consensual rituals seeking to bind together all individuals within a particular educational institution and differentiating rituals seeking to mark groups from each other within an educational setting. In this context we can argue that EE employs differentiating rituals. This is evident in the ways that entrepreneurship educators are encouraged to use 'novel', 'new', or 'creative' approaches to teaching such as live case studies (Hynes 2007), computer simulations (Bellotti et al. 2012) and business plan pitches and competitions (Honig and Karlsson 2004). EE arguably also seeks to move students away from traditional academic or career models towards activities that will help them to think differently and behave differently from those who do not pursue EE (Krueger Jr. 2003). Educators further emphasise this different way of thinking and being by bringing in 'real' entrepreneurs (deities) into the classroom to tell their stories and invoke the 'myths […] of the community and its gods' (Friedlander 2010: 125).

Indeed, entrepreneurship training has previously been defined as a 'ritual context' (Hägg 2012) in which students transition from one status (student) to another (nascent entrepreneur). In this way EE has been likened to a 'rite of passage' (Turner 1996; Van Gennep 1960). EE thus works instrumentally in overturning the status quo to create new identities and relations. In doing so it supports the enculturation of students into an enterprise culture through displays of, and engagement with, ritual and (sacred) symbols and signifiers.

Although there is a value in offering inspiring educational programmes that give insights into a given field – in this case entrepreneurship – there seems to be a distinction to be made between this and liturgical 'entre-tainment'. Thus, educators (cultists), prepare students to enter the cult through grooming them via rituals in recognised ways of 'behaving'

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(Anderson and Warren 2011) or playing the role (Cornelissen 2004) of an entrepreneur. Such practices bear the scarlet letter of entrepreneurship, branding anyone who successfully performs these rituals and puts these methods into practice as closer to what HEIs and policy makers want students to become – the successful (deified) entrepreneur.

A Promise of Salvation

> *"*In the UK students pay £9000 per year for their degree and over the past decade many more people attend university (up from 10% of the population in the 1980s to nearly 50% today). This means that many more graduates are chasing fewer graduate level jobs. Entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as a way of addressing the gap in graduate, entry-level jobs by encouraging students to create their own jobs. Indeed, in 2013 self-employment/entrepreneurship was recognized as a valid form of graduate level employment. Graduate entrepreneurship is therefore seen as addressing the potential lack of graduate employment opportunities, ensuring that universities are still seen as providing successful and rewarding graduate careers.*"*
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> (Educator in UK)

In general religions address themselves to the problems of individuals and the path to salvation (Campbell 1977: 380). Therefore, the beliefs and practices of a cult involve the hope of redemption and provide moral sanction and insurance of achieving it (Rey 2004). Employing the cult as a lens demonstrates EE's connection to notions of transformation and liberation at both an individual and societal level. It has been argued that entrepreneurship is important to humanity, not only as an important source of economic growth – itself a highly contested notion (Johanisova, Crabtree, and Fraňková 2013) – but also as a wellspring of personal development (Hindle 2007). As a consequence, high hopes are invested in EE as an instrument that delivers outcomes that transcend the teaching and learning situation. It is

positioned as a pathway to ensure survival and success in an uncertain world. In order to face the challenges of accelerated globalisation, it is considered imperative to improve economies by encouraging the start-up of new businesses as a source of innovation and new job creation (EC 2004). A high level of entrepreneurship is the suggested cure for economic stagnation (Acs and Armington 2006).

Following this established consensus, the goal of EE is to raise awareness of entrepreneurship and self-employment as a career option as well as providing skills and knowledge of how to start and run a company successfully (EC 2012). Still, the benefits of EE are not limited to boosting start-ups, innovative ventures and new jobs. Beyond their application to business activity, entrepreneurial skills and attitudes such as 'creativity and a spirit of initiative' are regarded as useful to all in their working activity and daily lives (EC 2012). In fact, European policy recognises 'initiative' and 'entrepreneurship' as one of eight 'key competences' that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion, and employment (EU 2006). Entrepreneurship thus becomes a non-negotiable, basic skill and competence for every citizen (Komulainen, Räty, and Korhonen 2009).

Consequently, EE not only supports the macro-level strive for economic growth and world-transformation; at a micro-level, it supports individual self-fulfilment and the possibility of breaking down barriers of class, race or gender (Henry, Hill, and Leitch 2003). A recent policy report argues that '[e]ntrepreneurship education seeks to prepare people to be responsible, enterprising individuals who have the attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary to achieve the goals they set for themselves to live a fulfilled life' (EC 2012). In this way, it is clear that the 'key competence' that EE cultivates is vital to a range of human endeavours.

In response EE has broadened its scope, with the understanding that an entrepreneurial mindset and its related attitudes and behaviours are life skills and thus

beneficial for all students in a variety of situations, including but not limited to business start-ups (Blenker et al. 2011; Hynes and Richardson 2007). It is considered essential for all to develop an entrepreneurial mindset, because of the reality of portfolio careers, demanded flexibility in jobs, more responsibilities at work, fast advancements in technologies, and a globalised market (Henry, Hill, and Leitch 2003; Gibb 2002). EE is therefore closely linked to issues of employability (Berglund 2013) and career self-management (Bengtsson 2014). It prepares individuals for a world where they increasingly will need to manage their own careers and lives in an entrepreneurial way (Hytti and O'Gorman 2004). It enables students to settle with, or possibly even enjoy, living in a world of increased uncertainty and complexity (Gibb 2002). Consequently, entrepreneurship becomes a vision of empowerment and emancipation, transcending the conformity of waged labour, leading to a way of life where you are in control of your own destiny, reminiscent of the general 'human potential movement' identified in the literature as a generative milieu for cults (Robbins 1988). EE does not only offer descriptions of a world in which entrepreneurial skills and mindsets are important. It also offers prescriptions for action within this world and may deliver the means to acquire the ability to act. Hence, EE is constituted as a model of as well as a model for reality and behaviour, which Geertz (1973) emphasised as the basic structures of religion as a cultural system. This can also be seen as a totalising discourse, as being entrepreneurial and enterprising is not confined to the action of setting up a business but encapsulates a way of being in the world for both organisations and individuals to which there is no alternative, given the demands of globalisation.

In entrepreneurship research, scholars highlight how entrepreneurship is an ideological construct concerned with salient attitudes, values, and forms of self-understandings (Peters 2001; Keat 1991; Styhre 2005) and discuss how enterprise as a belief system ascribes positive value and provides a moral imperative to being enterprising

(Tedmanson et al. 2012; Du Gay 1996). Individuals must reform themselves and become entrepreneurs of 'the self' (Rose 1999). Consequently, EE has become an instrument of transformation and emancipation that facilitates and prepares pathways to satisfaction and self-fulfilment. Following the deification of the entrepreneur, the enterprising self is cast as a character in opposition to modes of self-understandings where the self is assumed to be dependent on others and 'weak' (Heelas 1991). Hence, entrepreneurship and EE closely relate to moral virtues, imperatives and qualities of (self) responsible and respectable citizens (Berglund 2013). An important idea in Western culture is that everybody lives at his or her best when we realise and actualise what each of us are (Brinkmann 2005). In this way, EE is strongly related to a discourse and demand of self-realisation. Through learning entrepreneurship and attaining an enterprising self, EE offers a road towards becoming who we 'really' are. Therefore, when the entrepreneur is portrayed as a 'saviour with no less God-like qualities than earlier saviours' (Sørensen 2008: 86), EE provides first of all the possibility for everybody to become saviours, but also the promise that everyone can save themselves.

Entrepreneurship Education and the Totalising Discourse of the Enterprise Culture

In this paper we use the cult as a lens to explore how the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship in EE involves the conveyance and reproduction of supposedly uncontested values, and beliefs. Such values and beliefs construct a monistic worldview, which prescribes not only who the entrepreneur is or can be, but also the world in which the entrepreneur operates, and what it requires to be an economically successful individual. Our consideration of the deities, rituals and salvation of entrepreneurship depicts this dominant institutionalisation in EE. First, EE involves the identification and reverence of certain personalities and role models (deities) that students should aspire to become. Second, in EE students are taught to replicate behaviour through the educator's application of distinct

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pedagogies and practices (rituals). Third, EE promotes a professional skillset for entrepreneurship, but is also considered a life skill, which is necessary for survival and self-fulfilment (salvation). In this way we argue that EE is a context where entrepreneurship is institutionalised as an uncontested and incontestable belief system or ideological worldview, equalling Geertz's (1973) model of and model for reality. At the same time, education presumes and simultaneously constructs the world in which the entrepreneur acts. Taken together, we suggest that this forms a monistic totalising discourse evident in a 'set of descriptions, explanations, principles, criteria of acceptability, directives or metatheories that delimit the discursive domain or systematically reduce the array of voices that can speak to any issue or state of affairs' (Gergen 2001: 52). In analysing the impact of belief systems (or ideologies) Cascardi (1999: 200) argues that the ideological is 'the will to 'totality' of any totalizing discourse'. We argue that this dominant and dominating discourse in turn creates a hidden curriculum of lessons learnt, although educators may not consciously intend this. In the following paragraphs, we discuss this hidden curriculum, and then critically reflect upon the possibilities to counteract it through pedagogical interventions.

As such, EE endorses and reproduces values and beliefs about entrepreneurship, where the deities, rituals and promise of salvation inherent in EE forming the symbolic dimensions of a hidden curriculum (Margolis et al. 2001). This hidden curriculum builds a framework of meaning that extends beyond the classroom or curriculum but is not explicitly articulated (Bernstein, Elvin, and Peters 1966). Thus, the hidden curriculum, underpinning mainstream EE, involves more than (just) lessons learnt in the classroom. It comprises lessons learnt from students' engagement with wider society or, in other words, off stage (Miller 1998). Following this, the hidden curriculum deals with the 'forces by which students are induced to comply with dominant ideologies and social practices related to authority,

behaviour and morality' (McLaren 2003: 86). Accordingly, the hidden curriculum reflects the 'deeply held beliefs' of a society (Bain 1990: 29).

Importantly there are different levels of 'hiddenness' and degrees of intentionality within the hidden curriculum (Paechter 1999; Margolis 2008). By applying the cult as a lens, we highlighted the more explicit elements of the hidden curriculum in EE. Indeed, one might argue that the emphasis on becoming entrepreneurial and how this might lead to career success in responding to the uncertainties of modern, market driven societies is a very explicit aspect of the EE curriculum. Thus we have illustrated that the hidden curriculum in EE is manifested through predefined deities, carefully orchestrated rituals, and promises of salvation that are reproduced in the classroom. This 'cultification' is supported by the curriculum and the encouragement of collaboration with off-stage actors such as business networks, business angels, and the individual entrepreneurs that educators bring into the classroom. Thus, this hidden curriculum stifles consideration of the unspoken values and beliefs that underpin contemporary rationales for entrepreneurship. Such values and beliefs also extend into the public sector, social enterprise and other new areas (Nicholls 2010) to become a totalising discourse.

Accordingly, little scope is provided for imagining how entrepreneurship can be enacted towards alternative futures or non-economic outcomes. Therefore, at a deeper level of hiddenness, or simply less explicit, the hidden curriculum crystallises around a totalising discourse of entrepreneurship. As a totalising discourse, the hidden curriculum of EE instils taken-for-granted notions about entrepreneurship as a universal and intrinsic good, which will lead to salvation and the promised land of individual and national success, wealth and status for the chosen. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to question why entrepreneurship is to be promoted. Consequently, there is a risk that educators respond to the accepted and acceptable 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu 1977). Hanks (2005: 78) suggests that 'what is

valued is what fits the demands of the field, and the effective producer is the one best attuned to the field'. This increases the likelihood of success and reward for educators who perpetuate established notions and discourses linked to entrepreneurship, particularly when judged against changes in student aspirations for entrepreneurship and the effects on enterprising activities. However, we suggest that such aspirations are not built upon a balanced exposure to entrepreneurship. Instead they are the result of the cult-like pronouncements and framings as suggested above.

The monistic worldview inherent in such a totalising discourse undermines the importance and values of higher education, as it provides a form of moral education, transmitting a set of expectations and obligations of being in an ever-changing world. Indeed, one of the suggested roles of the hidden curriculum is to send 'a silent, but powerful message to students with regard to their intellectual ability, personal traits, and the appropriate occupational choice' (Margolis 2008: 440). Warnock (1984) suggests all moral education must be by means of the hidden curriculum, and it is further suggested that moral education can only be taught by example (Portelli 1993). This approach is highly prevalent in EE teaching, which uses case studies, draws upon entrepreneur biographies, characteristics and behaviours (for example those of Richard Branson and Steve Jobs) and brings entrepreneurs into the classroom, all the while encouraging students to learn from, and imitate, their example. Wilson (1985) argues that when we link learning by example with certain disciplines we risk losing the cognitive or intellectual element in more practically orientated disciplines, such as EE, suggesting that critical intellectual engagement is not necessary for entrepreneurial success. This suggests students in EE are studying a discipline that values the practical and experiential over the critical and intellectual, undermining the importance and value of a higher education.

Thus, EE should have an interest in addressing and challenging the hidden curriculum, instilling reflexive practices that increase educators' and students' ability and readiness to critically reflect on the very same frameworks of meaning, and the totalising discourse, they are constrained by. Through this, students could become more active and critical agents, engaging with the underpinning beliefs and values of entrepreneurship. This could also develop future entrepreneurs who are in the position to locally challenge a belief system that they themselves have become a part of (Martin 1976).

Escaping a cult: encouraging critical and reflective approaches in EE

Some criticise the concept of a hidden curriculum as underplaying the agency of both educators and students (Margolis 2008). While the concept of the hidden curriculum can highlight and describe some of the unintended consequences of teaching and learning, scholars could do more to explore means of resistance and challenge that do not position people as passive recipients of such hidden learning. Despite being constrained by institutional expectations to reproduce unspoken values and beliefs, educators occupy a unique position to develop challenging, diverse, accessible, and critical approaches to entrepreneurship in both the classroom and through curricula. Through their practices in a local context, educators can (and sometimes already do) highlight and challenge the hidden curriculum and make way for alternative framings of entrepreneurship (Steyaert and Katz 2004). Considerations of how the student life-world might be supported, undermined or ignored by the current cult-like framings of entrepreneurship could support a critical and reflective approach to entrepreneurship and strengthen educators' agency in confronting the hidden curriculum. However, this requires an approach to teaching and learning as reflexive practice to 'examin[e] critically the assumptions underlying our actions, [and] the impact of those actions' (Cunliffe 2004: 407). Summarised in Table 1, reflexive practices could assist in counteracting the effects of the hidden curriculum. The columns describe the unfolding of

the hidden curriculum (column 1 and 2) and how it could be counteracted by educational interventions (column 3 and 4); the rows describe the cult elements previously outlined.

Table 1: The unfolding of the hidden curriculum and critically reflective responses

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Insert Table 1 about here

The dominant belief system that currently drives the institutionalisation process could be addressed by strengthening the agency of both educators and the students. At the moment the entrepreneur is privileged in the classroom, even above the teacher and the student. This hierarchy emphasises the god-like status of the entrepreneur and trumps both student and educator. By inverting this hierarchy and starting with the student, rather than the entrepreneur, we may subvert this tendency to privilege the entrepreneur in the classroom. In encouraging students to consider different types of entrepreneurship, especially those that challenge normative templates of the lone, heroic, profit-focused entrepreneur we also offer an environment where different approaches can be compared. To move beyond such profit-led and individualistic accounts we might introduce contexts and examples where entrepreneurship is positioned as consensus-based decision-making and the exploitation of opportunities for society. Such alternative constructions and contexts could include collective entrepreneurship, for instance location-based entrepreneurial activities initiated between community members (Somerville and McElwee 2011) or self-managed, politically-motivated workers' co-ops (Kokkinidis 2015), or contexts such as social entrepreneurship, where wealth creation is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Such approaches could support the development of 'more inclusive models of participation and the construction of rule-creating rather than rule-following individuals' (Kokkinidis 2015: 847). We therefore do not simply

exchange one cult for another but open up possibilities for our students to critically reflect, rather than closing down such opportunities. Students may well choose to pursue and aspire to follow the traditional belief system of entrepreneurship but at least this agency is informed by, and enacted from, a point of critical reflection.

We recognise that we cannot easily escape mainstream values and beliefs and the totalising discourse of entrepreneurship, as they so firmly underpin teaching in HE. However, we suggest that it is not a case of 'either/or' but 'both/and' and that educators could offer alternatives and challenges to this dominant belief system. In this way, EE would fulfil the aims of higher education to encourage critical thinking and intellectual agency, which subverts the students' taken-for-granted world and helps them to see that 'things could always be other than they are' (Barnett 1990: 155).

Such critical and reflective approaches demand critical and reflective teaching practices. Critical pedagogy provides a vehicle to instil reflective practices as it actively seeks to highlight and address the hidden curriculum (Giroux and Giroux 2006). Critical pedagogy therefore offers a useful point of departure for educators who wish to critically engage – and encourage their students to critically engage – with the political, social, and societal norms that underpin the current drive for EE. It offers the potential to move away from a pedagogy that emphasizes deities, rituals and the promise of salvation of entrepreneurship to one that acknowledges historical and socio-political developments and how these have combined to create a vision of the 'true entrepreneur' and the 'right' way of being. Critical pedagogy could, therefore, provide opportunities for students and educators to work together, to co-produce knowledge, which highlights and contextualises the diversity and possibilities of EE and takes account of the student life-world. However, as educators we must do this in a way that takes account of the power dynamics of the educator-student relationship and also the potential for us to merely exchange one cult for another.

Critical pedagogy can help educators and students to focus on the possibilities of education to challenge inequality and investigate dominant fictions (Keesing-Styles 2003) rather than encouraging students' oblivious acceptance of an extant hidden curriculum (Shor 1987). Critical pedagogy emphasises that values, beliefs and unspoken social norms are not ahistorical or politically neutral entities and through contesting these further insight may be reached. This can be achieved by bringing the student life-world into the classroom and by reflective educators engaging with modes of knowledge production that question whose knowledge is privileged in the classroom.

In calling for reflexive approaches we argue that the current educational environment in which we find ourselves, lends little scope for staff or students to reflect on their own attitudes and positioning. In the apparent rush to produce more entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurial citizens, the acknowledgement of how entrepreneurship is framed, who is suggested as being successful, how this success is manifested and encouraged – indeed worshipped – is rarely discussed. Consequently, there is an important gap in our knowledge, given the suggested imperative to embed entrepreneurship education in all education at all levels (Herrmann 2008). Using the cult as a lens ultimately helps us to articulate and respond reflexively to a fundamental discussion embedded in any given teaching setting: what kind of engagement do we, as teachers want to stimulate? (Kyrö 2006) This encompasses the spoken and unspoken values and beliefs of educators, students and wider society.

Concluding Thoughts

This study provides a critical perspective on the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship in EE as a belief system. We make the candid claim, that by using the cult as an analytical lens, we are able to position ourselves outside normativity and expose the unfolding of a hidden curriculum in EE. However, we recognise that this paper offers one approach to viewing EE through a different lens that could be used to support alternative

analyses. Hence, even though notions of enlightenment inform our critique, it should be noted that we neither position educators nor students as unthinking perpetrators or passive victims in this context. Having discussed unchallenged assumptions institutionalised as a belief system in and through education, we encourage future critical engagement with the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship within and beyond education. We hope that our paper animates educators, researchers and policy-makers to continued critical examination of the role of EE in perpetuating or challenging the taken-for-granted beliefs that underpin entrepreneurship as a societal phenomenon. The novel method employed in this paper also offers a point of resistance to a 'cultification' of entrepreneurship in EE.

Recognising the risk of being arbiters (and evangelists) and thereby complicit in the enculturation of our students into such uncontested values and beliefs of wider society (Giroux 2011), entrepreneurship educators could locally enact reflective practices to counteract a hidden curriculum. However, we do not intend to replace one approach to EE with another and develop our own cult. Instead we call for developing a number of alternative approaches to 'doing' entrepreneurship, through critical reflection on the underpinning system of values and beliefs. Future research could for instance investigate, beyond providing anecdotal evidence through vignettes, whether mainstream EE risks the creation of a conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980a, b), by promoting a belief system rather than a field of science. Quantitative metaphor analysis (Lachaud 2013) could further our understanding of what students understand by 'entrepreneurial' and 'entrepreneurship' as in (Dodd, Jack, and Anderson 2013). Likewise, researchers could highlight and explore the values underpinning, for example, social, sustainable, and community entrepreneurship, and in doing so emphasise the diversity of political, social and economic possibilities and their intertwined nature. 'In this sense, the act of escaping does

not refer to quietism and passivity or a retreat from the economic sphere, but to exploring workable alternatives within capitalism' (Kokkinidis 2015: 867).

We recognise the proposed approaches would be implemented locally through individual educators, and there are dangers that it could result in EE not being recognised as such by the larger audience of policy makers, education administrators, industry leaders and community collaborators. In turn this could lead to a crisis of legitimacy, as adopting this eclectic approach means that EE no longer provides a unified answer to the fundamental societal problems of unemployment and continuous economic growth. Entrepreneurship educators that adopt a critical reflective approach may even run the risk of being penalised, as the curriculum would not conform to the current institutionalisation of entrepreneurship. However, what is hidden can rarely be challenged. In exposing and questioning the hidden beliefs and values of EE we propose a starting point for a broader debate about what it is that we are actually teaching when we teach EE. This is an important consideration, not only for educators, but also for policy makers, researchers and related communities. To ignore this is to be complicit in the reproduction of a hidden curriculum that produces conflict and tension for more reflective and critical educators and could ultimately prove counter-productive in developing and promoting the diversity and accessibility of entrepreneurship.

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