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## **From I to We**

*Collaboration in Entrepreneurship Education and Learning?*

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## From 'I' to 'We': Collaboration in Entrepreneurship Education and Learning?

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### Abstract

*Purpose* – The purpose of this paper is to ask: what effect does moving from individual to collective understandings of the entrepreneur in enterprising education have on the student's learning? And given this shift in understanding, is there a need for a new paradigm in entrepreneurship learning?

*Design/methodology/approach* – This paper draws on ethnographic data from entrepreneurship education (EEd) at a summer school in Denmark. The purpose of the summer school was to bring the students from an awareness of their own competences to a shared understanding of resources, relationships, and opportunities for becoming enterprising.

*Findings* – Drawing on the recent developments in understanding creativity, the authors' explore the potential for similarities between becoming an entrepreneur in collaboration with others and being creative in collaboration with others. The authors' found that a focus on the collaborative and distributed character of entrepreneurship, as within the We-paradigm from creativity, does not exclude the importance of perceptions of individuals' self-images as part of a course in entrepreneurship. Yet, a reformulation of these could be an entry point for richer group work and articulation of diverse group potential.

*Research limitations/implications* – This study suggests that it is possible to take at least one step further in what can be achieved during an EEd course. Rather than remain a focus on individual learning and treating group work a didactics instrument, team formation processes can be used as a pedagogy/andragogy experiential tool in the classroom with its own learning outcomes, as presented and discussed above. For educators, this means that they have an additional tool to aid the complicated task of bringing EEd to students across campus. For students, this new approach means that the often dreaded and frustrating process of classroom team formation can become a positive experience of purposeful team assembly and collaboration. Two possible limitations regarding the findings of this paper can be identified: for students with extensive experience in forming teams and working in groups, taking them through this process may not have the desired effect as they may rely on habits and known mechanism without much reflection; it may be difficult to achieve the desired effect with students that know each other well before the course starts, as they may have too strong hidden agendas about who they want to work with and who they do not want to work with that this will overpower the idea/opportunity/subject-matter driven approach (Aldrich and Kim, 2007). Educators should consider if they may be subject to these limitations as this may have an effect on the use of active, opportunity-driven team formation in practice. To counter the second limitation, educators may want to consider how far into a course they want to facilitate the team formation; especially for courses running over significantly longer periods than two weeks. Future research may be able to assess the significance of these limitations.

*Practical implications* – This paper explores how students experience and handle a shift from an individual to a collaborative understanding of entrepreneurship imposed on them by the novel and unique

design of a course that explicitly incorporates the team formation process into the curriculum. This is undertaken to gauge the extent to which students experience this shift as fitting the actual and perceived need for shared practices in developing enterprising behavior, and to shed light on what action/process-based EEd courses may benefit from actively including a team formation process in the course design.

*Social implications* – EEd may be offered for a number of reasons. New enterprises are seen as a potential source of economic wealth and for the student, this type of education offers the possibility of using their knowledge in new ways, becoming entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs. Also, from the perspective of both the higher education institution and the student, in the fast changing world in which we live, the digital mobility and multiplicity of work environments requires a workforce that possesses a range of individual competences. Such as being persistent, engaged, and having good ideas, competences that are difficult to teach and hard to learn. Adding to our knowledge of how to handle these concerns, the paper points at a number of social implications of EEd.

*Originality/value* – The research conducted in this research paper contributes to the field of EEd by exemplifying how conceptual understandings of entrepreneurship as a collective enterprise, rather than an individual one, impact students' understanding and experience of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, it provides a foundation for expanding research aimed at providing students with a learning experience more in line with the everyday life of an entrepreneur.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Learning, Higher education, Collaborative, Course design, Student's perception

### **Introduction**

The interest in entrepreneurship education (EEd) has risen notably since the turn of the century (Karlsson and Moberg, 2013; Lautenschläger and Haase, 2011). The fast growth of small business enterprises has resulted in an increased focus on the entrepreneur and developing people with a talent for enterprising thinking and behavior. Following this, a wide variety of educational practices have been developed; with teachers and researchers increasingly sharing outcomes of diverse educational designs and expectations regarding the possibilities for student learning (Mwasalwiba, 2010). Most EEd continues to be aimed at developing individual skill-sets or changing individual mind-sets, which corresponds with individually oriented understandings of both learning and entrepreneurship (Obschonka *et al.*, 2011). These individualist understandings either form heroic images of the entrepreneur or view the entrepreneur as a unique individual in interaction with unique opportunities (Gaglio and Katz, 2001; Nicolaou and Shane, 2009; Schoon and Duckworth, 2012; Sørensen, 2008). Yet, in reality, developing collaborative competences is more in line with the life of everyday entrepreneurs who have to form networks and learn to draw on the resources of others (Brüderl and Preisendörfer, 1998; Burt, 2002; Klyver and Schøtt, 2011).

Entrepreneurship educators are just beginning to acknowledge this reality (Blenker *et al.*, 2011) and some have begun to explicitly incorporate the team formation process into the curriculum. This presents a challenge for EEd research, because the field does not offer a framework or lens through which this shift from an individual to a collective focus in the learning process can be examined and understood. Typically the team formation process has been completed prior to, or at the very beginning of, a process/action-based course; or the course simply focuses on each individual student. The authors experienced this lack of a framework in an effort to empirically examine a summer school entrepreneurship course held in Denmark, explicitly aimed at moving students from individual to collaborative learning. In this paper, we understand collaborative learning as the work that students achieve together in an entrepreneurial team process. In scanning for a suitable framework to explain this, the authors were inspired by creativity theory and specifically Glăveanu (2010), who describes a shift from an individualized focus on being creative (an I-paradigm) to a focus on collaborative relationships (a We-paradigm). Strong ties exist between the concepts of creativity and entrepreneurship in both a historical/cultural (Sørensen, 2008), theoretical (Lumpkin and Lichtenstein, 2005; Shalley and Perry-Smith, 2008; Sørensen, 2008), and educational (Seelig, 2015) sense, which makes it pertinent to lean on creativity theory for this study.

The aim of this paper is to empirically explore how students experience and handle a shift from an individual to a collaborative understanding of entrepreneurship imposed on them by the novel and unique design of a course that explicitly incorporates the team formation process into the curriculum. This is undertaken to gauge the extent to which students experience this shift as fitting the actual and perceived need for shared practices in developing enterprising behavior, and to shed light on what action/process-based EEd courses may benefit from actively including a team formation process in the course design.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: First, the role of EEd in a 21st-century work environment is described. Second, the basic theoretical premises behind the move from 'I' to 'We' are presented. Next, the methodology of the research is presented, and then the empirical material from the course is analyzed and findings are presented. Finally, the paper discusses the findings with regard to the implications for research and practice.

### *The 21st century work environment and entrepreneurship education*

The 21st century presents a different set of challenges to educational institutions as new work environments develop and job markets change. The traditional career path of working yourself up the ladder in a large organization belongs to the past (Keogh and Galloway, 2006; Matlay, 2011). Today, new jobs are created by small organizations and new businesses that expect their employees to be adaptable, flexible, and to form self-directed relational working teams (Duval-Couetil, 2013; Ouimet and Zarutskie, 2014). The rapid changes have emphasized the ability to learn, to adapt, to interact, and to create new opportunities (Zhou and Hoever, 2014). Consequently, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have responded by offering a range of courses that equip students to start businesses or become enterprising individuals (European Commission, 2008).

In this environment, EEd may be offered for a number of reasons. First, politically, governments are promoting EEd because they regard new enterprises as a potential source of economic wealth and HEIs have become an important provider of these courses (European Commission, 2008; Fayolle, 2013; Katz, 2003; Kirby, 2004). Second, for the student, EEd offers the possibility of using their knowledge in new ways, becoming entrepreneurs or intra-preneurs in existing organizations (Antoncic and Hisrich, 2003). Third, from the perspective of both the HEI and the student, in the fast changing world in which we live, the digital mobility and multiplicity of work environments requires a workforce that possesses a range of individual competences. It is difficult to teach competences such as being persistent, engaged, and developing good ideas, and they are hard to learn (Neck and Greene, 2011; Ollila and Williams Middleton, 2013; Pittaway and Edwards, 2012). Another important competence concerns the ability to collaborate, which, in addition to the individual competences, is deemed vital for innovation to happen in real life (Hill *et al.*, 2014; Zhou and Hoever, 2014).

This paper focuses on the intention of the educators to have the students move from individual 'disharmonies' (unconfirmed problems or annoyances that students experience on an individual level), to team 'anomalies' (shared or qualified and commonly experienced problems or annoyances) (Spinosa *et al.*, 1997; Thrane *et al.*, 2016). This paper analyses how students move from a concept of working alone (with a range of competences and skills) to a concept of team collaboration (with a complexity of competences and skills) and explores how the students experience this shift. In exploring this phenomenon, we leverage previous work by Glăveanu (2010) who provides a fresh and strong theoretical foundation that illuminates our taken-for-granted and preconceived notions and expectations (Fayolle, 2013), making it applicable to entrepreneurship and EEd. Thus, it allows us to gain an understanding of the potential value of combining a focus on individual capacity with team formation as an active learning tool and of how this might be done in practice.

### **Entrepreneurship education – where are we going?**

As the body of offerings in EEd has increased, research interest has followed. It is generally acknowledged that EEd can be divided into three main types: i) 'about' (learning about the phenomenon as an academic discipline); ii) 'for' (learning skills used to start and grow a business); and iii) 'through' (learning through doing, mimicking and practice) (Hannon, 2005). In a review of entrepreneurship courses, Pittaway and Edwards (2012) note that 'about' and 'for' courses are easy to offer and therefore relatively popular in HEI. Moreover, research shows that, although the third type has most potential for evoking enterprising behavior, 'through-type' courses may be the ones that are hardest to design, deliver and evaluate (Neck and Greene, 2011; Ollila and Williams Middleton, 2013).

In EEd, we typically meet students who have pre-conceived notions about who the entrepreneur is, what the entrepreneur does, how they get ideas, how they build their business, and how they form networks. Often these notions are founded in myths about creativity, knowledge, resources, networking and the 'entrepreneur'. Today, we see these myths retold in reality shows with the unique entrepreneur personified, mystified and stereotyped (such as "Dragons' Den" (Swail *et al.*, 2013). These are further impounded by similar stories in popular media, equating entrepreneurship with people like Michael Dell, Richard Branson, Bill Gates and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, and in research that inquiries into a possible specific genetic makeup of entrepreneurs (Nicolaou and Shane, 2009). These notions, stories, and agendas continue to predominate, despite the fact that research shows that most successful businesses are founded by teams (Brüderl and Preisendörfer, 1998; Neergaard, 2005) and collaborative efforts appear to be more aligned with entrepreneurial activities (Burt, 2002; Klyver and Schøtt, 2011). In our case study, instead of forming teams as a way to 'divide and concur' and get the work done within the timeframe of the course, the team formation process is regarded as a learning opportunity for important entrepreneurial competences, including social skills and negotiation, and mechanisms such as 'affordable loss' (Sarasvathy, 2001).

#### *Moving towards the 'We-paradigm'*

To examine and understand the trend towards collaborative learning in EEd, there is a need to address a shift of learning paradigms to be able move 'from 'I' to 'We' ' (Glăveanu, 2010). This paper therefore examines a move towards a We-paradigm of EEd. This move is inspired by Glăveanu (2010) and furthermore empirically validated through an in-depth analysis of an entrepreneurship course explicitly aimed at moving students from individual to collaborative learning. By collaborative learning, as implied earlier, we refer to the work that students achieve together in an entrepreneurial team process.

Glăveanu (2010) proposes that a demarcation is applied between three different paradigmatic stages featured in the study of creativity, which he labels i) the 'solitary genius' stage; ii) the 'creative person' stage and iii) the 'social' stage or the He-, I- and We-paradigms (Glăveanu, 2010, p. 148). The He-paradigm refers to the rare genius with unparalleled capabilities; and the I- paradigm refers to the self-contained individual, inferring that the competences to be creative can be developed by every individual and are not reserved for the few. The We-paradigm of creativity research illuminates the interdependence of individual lives and social situations in social practices, which suggest a system-oriented, distributed model of creativity, focused on the interdependence of mind and culture. This means that creativity is extended out into an inter-personal space, resulting in a conceptual bridge between the inside and the outside, and therefore creativity can never be seen as a solely individual achievement (as it was in the 'I' and 'He' paradigm of creativity research before this shift occurred). As demonstrated in Table 1, the whole idea of entrepreneurship, creativity, and enterprising behavior as something, which can be learned, is underlined by this shift. The table illustrates our understanding of how Glăveanu's (2010) creativity principles align with the development in understandings of entrepreneurship.

Table I: An account for aligning the Glăveanu’s creativity principles with the development of entrepreneurship.

Para- digm	Creativity	Entrepreneurship	Implications
‘He’	Achievement and success in life is dependent on individual genius, heredity, and luck. Creativity results in historically, societal, and culturally recognized products/result. The He-paradigm draws on the iconic image of “the solitary genius”. Several specific features describe such persons: they are extremely rare and they are conceived as a symbol of divine inspiration or (later on) exceptional hereditary traits that allow them to revolutionize art, philosophy or science (see Simonton, 2000 for an overview of creativity research).	Historically (1730-1910) the entrepreneur was perceived as the risk taker—born into the wealth and with the willingness and foresight to invest in other projects and means of production than land. With the advent of other actors in the economy (than landowners and entrepreneurs), such as managers and capitalists, the role of the entrepreneur was further refined as either the risk- taker or the business man who introduced discontinuous changes to the economy—an agent of change acting ‘more by will than intellect’ and based on intuition (Schumpeter, 1934). The notion of the unique/divine individual fueled psychological studies on distinguishing entrepreneurs based on personality traits in the 1960-1970 (McClelland, 1961), has been taken forward to modern times (Drucker, 1985) and still exist in the general public (Dodd and Hynes, 2012).	Creativity and enterprising behavior cannot be developed, it is either something you have or do not have.
‘I’	Creativity is for everyone and it part of everyday life for most of us. Every person has a creative potential; this potential can be developed and is not purely innate; also creativity is specific to everyday life and not ‘reserved’ exclusively for artists or scientists (see Guilford (1950) for a paradigmatic approach to I-creativity).	Today, this I-focus is very noticeable in entrepreneurship literature where, for example Kirby (2004) reviewed the literature and found entrepreneurship to be anchored in thirteen behaviors, which he claim can be taught. Others have argued that entrepreneurship can be learned but perhaps not taught, suggesting that a typical higher education social science classroom is not adequate and that entrepreneurship is a practiced- based subject, which requires at least lab-type sessions or some elements of apprentice-based didactics.	Creativity and enterprising behavior can be learned and studied systematically. It democratizes the access to being creative, but is does little to socialize it. It is still seen as basically an individual achievement.
‘We’	Creativity is a relational and distributed phenomenon. It is culturally situated, meaning different things in diverse	In the 1980’s, the taking issue with the strong He- paradigm did not only have an I- component but also a We-	Creativity and enterprising behavior is a relational phenomenon and success with this in real-life requires

<p>situations and social practices, and it is collectively achieved even when individuals get ideas all alone. The empirical focus addresses team creativity and analyses the coming into being or the trajectory of creativity across time and space (see Glăveanu, 2010).</p>	<p>component. For example, research on social networks in entrepreneurship emphasizing that ‘it is not just what you know but who you know’—very much in line with the behavioral patterns that later has been labelled ‘effectual’ (Sarasvathy, 2001)—and findings that it is the ‘weak ties to people who are in positions to provide timely and accurate information, to people with the resources to act as customers, and/or to people with resources to invest’ (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986, p. 20) that are of outmost importance.</p>	<p>collaborative skills.</p>
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### Research Setting

The research setting is a master’s level course which draws on theoretical sources such as effectuation theory (Sarasvathy, 2001), entrepreneurship as an everyday practice stimulated by individual disharmonies (Blenker *et al.*, 2012; Spinosa *et al.*, 1997) and the individual/opportunity nexus (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). The course is offered as an intensive two-week (80 hours) summer course open to students across and beyond campus. The participants numbered 12, of which nine were male and three were female. The data collected from this course is part of a larger multi-year project, which aims at exploring what works and what does not work in higher education EEd. The course is deliberately designed to move the students from a focus on self to an innovative/enterprising team project. This is done by first focusing on personal skills and competences, personal networks, and an identification of an individual disharmony and then, through a team-formation process, shift to identification of collective skills and competences and a shared concern for an anomaly.

The summer course combines each of the elements of ‘about’, ‘for’ and ‘through’ with lectures, exercises in and outside the classroom, assignments, group work and plenum discussion. The first week of the course has a clear focus on individual competences, resources, and networks, and moves towards collaborative work through sharing of interests. The second week focuses on establishing team identity and collaboratively exploring potential for value creation. The end of week one was therefore crucial in the course work. The students were expected to move from working individually, focusing on self, and on awareness of identity to a focus on collaborating with others. For some this would mean ‘giving up’ on their individual project and ‘buying-in’ to one which resonated with them. The final day of week one was therefore significant and one on which the post-course interviews specifically focused.

In order to pass the course, the students are required to complete daily assignments and individual reflections logs where a series of questions are posed about learning in class. Both the assignments and reflection logs are used as data to inform this research.

The teachers, five in all, come from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, entrepreneurship research, EEd, economics, philosophy and psychology and share a passion for experimental teaching and for process-type courses that actively

engage the students. Two of the teachers are women, of which one is also a co-author of the present paper, and three of the teachers are male. Two other co-authors of the present paper were present as researchers in the summer school setting.

## **Method**

The overall research design uses mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative. Prior to- and post the course, the students complete i) a self-efficacy survey in order to measure what changes (if any) have occurred; ii) think-aloud-protocols, which requires them to talk through their approach to problem solving. Here differences in behavior, intention, and attitudes can be mapped; iii) ethnographic data are gathered through pre and post semi-structured interviews with each of the students lasting between 30 and 45 minutes. In addition, two anthropologists observed all the teaching and interaction inside the classroom. In the present context, we base our analysis on the ethnographic data, as these data point to students' experiences of the shift from working individually to working in teams. The pre-course interview guide contained questions regarding the way in which the students learned, their awareness of their competences and their preferred role when working in teams. The post-course interview guide contained questions that explored if students' attitude to learning had changed and to what extent their awareness of preferred role in teams had changed, as well as their attitude to others and to entrepreneurship. Significant time was given to examining the shift from individual work to teamwork and the last day of week one. The interviews, 24 in all, were digitally recorded and transcribed intelligent verbatim. The transcriptions were later coded thematically in the software program 'Nvivo'. All students are given pseudonyms to anonymize them in this paper.

As a supplement to the 'Research Settings' section above, we present first a vignette from the day where students transformed from working individually to working in teams. We then present the findings from our analysis of the pre- and post-interviews with students attending the course. The interviews are analyzed via a theoretical, thematic reading, comparing students' pre- and post-interviews. The purpose of the analysis is to examine the 'essences' of students' experiences. Here 'essence' refers to providing 'a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 93). The theoretical descriptions of a shift from 'I' to 'We' guided the analysis as well as a more data-driven search for these shifts in the students' perspective as recommended by for example Brinkmann (2012) and Tanggaard (2013). Each author analyzed three pairs of interviews in detail, and then shared and discussed the analyses in workshop-format meetings incorporating observation data from one of the two ethnographers. We choose to focus on this dataset to gauge the implications of applying the paradigmatic changes occurring in creativity theory as a tool in an EEd arena. This tool assists in producing a better understanding of how students not only articulate self and individual competences and skills but also how they move to a collaborative and relational understanding of relationships in entrepreneurial projects. Subsequently, it provides us with a way to examine and understand the impact of actively using team formation as a learning tool in a process-based course. The following is a short vignette that describes the process for the transformation day—going from acting as an individual to being part of an entrepreneurial team.

### *From the lone individual to the collaborative team*

The students have hung up their posters illustrating their project and 'individual disharmony'. There is much anticipation in the room. The day then starts with a lecture about the importance of social dynamics in entrepreneurship and early team formation by discussing different views on opportunity formation and development (Korsgaard, 2011). The lecture also emphasizes the importance of the day's team formation process—for the



rest of the course and in terms of learning through the process and with/from others—which is facilitated by the program for the day and the educators. The energy levels are high and students readily engage with the three exercises that follow the lecture. The first exercise is a ‘warm-up’ and consists of two activities. First, the students are placed in random groups of two and each pair is asked to come up with the worst imaginable entrepreneurial project—a project that runs counter to everything they have learned thus far about how to identify and develop entrepreneurial opportunities—second they are given each other’s projects and asked to reformulate and improve them. The purpose is to let them experience their ability to improve an inherited project significantly in a short period of time. The students discover that the perceived quality and ownership of the original idea is not of ultimate importance for entrepreneurial progress and action. There is much laughter and, for some, surprise about turning a bad idea into a feasible one.

In the second exercise, the students present their individual posters. Following the presentation, they are asked to visit each other’s posters and identify links and commonalities among the projects. When a student recognizes a connection, (s)he places a sticky note next to the poster with the linkage to the other project in question. The sticky note may link to their project or it can be between two projects unrelated to the student’s own project. This exercise is designed to be the beginning of the team formation process; as the students examine their own ideas more critically and help each other identify project overlaps, so that the final team projects can become a collective iteration of the individual projects rather than a brand new project.

For the third exercise, each student is asked to return to his or her own poster, evaluate the proposed linkages to their project and examine which dimension of the anomaly their project rests upon. They are now requested to negotiate and, if needed, give up parts of their project for the benefit of forming a team with more resources around a related and shared, combined project. For example, a student whose project is on food waste may not be ready to give up the focus but instead may find that they can negotiate the target audience/customer or the type of intervention/product. The exercise itself becomes a facilitated process of negotiating team constellations based on project overlaps and linkages and thus a qualification-of-anomalies iteration. The exercise is given a time frame. The goal is that all students are comfortably included in a team at the end of the allotted time. The day concludes with a short team assignment where the teams are asked to describe their new, combined team project and encouraged to do so by interviewing each other.

## **Findings**

This section presents the findings from analysis of the pre- and post-interviews with students attending the summer school course. As mentioned earlier, the interviews were analyzed via a theoretical, thematic reading comparing students’ pre- and post-interview statements. This analysis focuses primarily on the sections of the interviews about the interventions that took place on the day described above at the ‘turning point’ between ‘being an individual’ with a disharmony and ‘becoming a team’ with a possible joint project. The analysis leading to these findings also considered other comments made explicitly about preconceptions of the individual or teamwork.

### *Perceptions about ‘being an entrepreneur’*

The data clearly demonstrates that students came to the course with a range of experiences and expectations. Some students already had an understanding of entrepreneurship that was far ahead of our initial expectations. In particular, two students (here called Scott and Todd) were clear exponents of this group. For example, when asked in the pre-interview what entrepreneurship meant to them, Scott replied, *‘Well, building new value in the world.’* He continued, *‘for me it can be a lot of things. It can be starting a business or a business’*

*proposition within an organization. Or it can be hosting a free event or some kind of more social thing.’* And Todd replied, *‘Well, it is about realizing ideas, getting them out there, test them.’* He continued, *‘But it is also the social part of it, like being in a team and brainstorming and, yeah, all this coming together and try to get a solution out.’* Similarly, Mary articulated a deep understanding of innovation from previous experience in project work. She commented that to be entrepreneurial you have to be able to *‘recognize potential’*, and that there is a difference between entrepreneurs, who, *‘has their own company, but you can also have entrepreneurial thinking, you could see potential, but that could be carried out in many ways.’* These are clearly advanced understandings, encompassing both major theoretical definitions of entrepreneurship and many different types of entrepreneurial behavior and acts. In the pre-course interview, Scott also made the point that he has *‘A lot’* of role models of entrepreneurs but *‘None very specifically’* and, when prompted on their qualities, he elaborated and then summarized that, *‘It is difficult to place because I don’t (...) there is not so many qualities where you can say “I definitely find this in every entrepreneur.”’* However, other students clearly articulated more stereotypical perspectives on the entrepreneur as an I-driven person taking risks. From the pre-course interview with John, this image was quite evident when he made the following comment about role models, *‘Plenty. Mærsk McKinney (successful Danish businessman), Steve Jobs, of course, and then there’re some others, I have plenty. I read a lot of books about ... biographies. I think it is quite interesting to learn how they did it in the past and the chances they took.’*

#### *Perceptions of self*

When asked about their expectation for the course, both Scott and Todd emphasized the importance of meeting people, teamwork, discussions, and doing things together. John gave a more simplified account of entrepreneurship, which he described as, *‘being your own boss. Having your own company and turning creativity into commercial value. And well, also make money, good money, hopefully.’* This view was not unique among the students. Several stated that making money and being independent was an integral part of how they view entrepreneurship as something that involved improving their own self. A number of students talked about wanting to improve something inside them. Rick wondered whether he had a bit of an entrepreneur in him, further explaining how he hoped that the course work could help him develop his *‘inner entrepreneur’*. Marvin and Felicity saw in the course work a possibility to increase their learning potential and develop personal skills. On the other hand, Mary and Andrew were both looking for tools, like the business model canvas, to help them be more constructive in the development of their ideas. Andrew had a strong agenda, which he clearly articulated in the interview and in the classroom from the very first day. His critique of a traditional higher education was that it is detached from the real world and he clearly expected something tangible from this course—a good business plan with information about the financial pitfalls and risks. He intended to start a business when he got his degree—for him real-world work starts after graduation, beyond the walls of the HEI. His idea of the *‘sole entrepreneur’* was a strong and largely static image that he retained throughout the course.

#### *Perceptions about the entrepreneurial team*

As shown, some of the students already understood enterprising behavior as a collective project, while others were more locked in on their own individual potentials. Yet, from their post- interviews, it is noticeable that both groups have developed new insights into their own abilities and skills. In the post interviews, a number of students, including Scott and Todd, testified to being taken by surprise by the first four days of the course where they worked individually on identifying and developing their entrepreneurial opportunity. In their replies they clearly identified how working intensely on the opportunity formation phase added

new dimensions to their understanding of what entrepreneurship is and the personal competences involved, *'This working with yourself and finding a disharmony and going and seeing if it is an anomaly and work this way around are beneficial.'* (Todd); and they become aware of their own abilities, as Rick points out, *'I am going to use the thing that I am capable of being a creative, entrepreneurial individual and actually that I am a creative individual. The way I thought of being creative obviously were wrong. You can be creative in many ways.'* In addition, these students' broadened understanding of entrepreneurship facilitated a more nuanced view of how to work with others in entrepreneurial teams. For example, Todd said, *'What I mean by saying that I'm more open-minded is that I think that I will allow people to do stuff more their way'* and Scott comments on the issue of working in teams, *'I wouldn't say I really learned it but I learned it again.'* Yet, in regards to the future he added, *'...I am more confident that I am going to start up something on my own, or if not on my own, together with people, but start up something at some point.'*

Felicity, also acknowledged the value in working as a team, saying, *'And also, because I think you can't really see the problems by sitting and thinking on your own. You have to get some input from others.'* She experienced learning new inquiry techniques, which gave her a positive feeling of becoming a better listener, both personally and professionally. Mary, in contrast, found that it was outside the framework of the assignments and exercises in the class that she was able to achieve a more heightened awareness of entrepreneurial processes. The classroom was too static a physical environment for her, and she complained that people tended to sit with the same people for the first week when she expected more fluidity. She found that the breaks for coffee and lunch allowed her to move from teams to individuals and establish relationships in those informal learning contexts. During the team formation, she made a point of joining a team around the idea rather than around the personalities. However, as the others in the team were from the same discipline they had already perceived ways of working together and she felt as if she was an outsider unable to tap into their tacit ways of working. She felt *'like it was more about chemistry'* than whether the team had a common goal.

The data indicates that the advanced-view students were clearly able to adopt a We- perspective on entrepreneurship and advanced their prior I-perspective on entrepreneurship, and reflect on how this adoption influenced their behavior. Likewise, it was found that Rick and Marvin developed similar insights. Rick reflected on the process by concluding, *'... I don't know how to explain it but the thing about starting as an individual and being a group, was very important. And to feel that this group was also like an individual in the end.'* And, Marvin commented, *'Input from other people is something I really like. And I think also, I could never, ever do entrepreneurship alone. I would never be able to do it. (...) But when I say alone, I mean I would never be the sole entrepreneur.'* Common among the four students is that when asked to reflect on their learning, they retain the I-perspective. It was the individual that learned from the team processes and the enjoyment from the teamwork focuses on social aspects of sharing a passion, group energy levels and the ability to use the group resource. Todd described the way he sees himself in the entrepreneurial process, *'... I see myself, more like a helper, like a tool for others to realize their ideas. I have no problem saying it is not my disharmony but I help others with finding their disharmonies and finding a solution together'*.

For Andrew the course was frustrating and a disappointment *'they didn't tell us about the dangers ahead and what you should expect from working without pay for five years. So I was kind of disappointed that there weren't more steps that I can take and we didn't get an idea of where we should get our funding or something more concrete than just talking about an idea.'* His agenda remained fixed in his own identity, on pre-conceived notions about how to become an entrepreneur and reliance on self. Furthermore, he expressed difficulty communicating with others outside of his discipline and openly manipulated people into teams, after deciding whom he could and could not work with.

## Discussion

The focus on the paradigmatic changes occurring in creativity theory as described by Glăveanu (2010) is an important framework when brought into the EEd arena. This focus has assisted us in better understanding how students not only articulate self, individual competences and skills but how they move to a collective and collaborative understanding. This insight and the framework provided us with a way to examine and understand what happens when team formation is actively used as a learning tool in EEd. During the course, the focus on ‘I’ brings an awareness of self that was invisible to the students before the course. Moving to a focus on ‘We’ and collaborative teamwork in the second week of the course clearly shifted most students’ perspectives to understand themselves and their own resources as something, which could contribute to enriching collaborative work around their own ideas and those of others.

### *Acknowledging a range of experiences and expectations among students?*

It is evident that students come with a range of experiences and expectations. A minority of students are already beyond the ‘expected’ starting point for the course. These students already have an understanding of entrepreneurship as a collective project and through the initial focus on ‘I’. Interestingly, these students develop new insights into their personal competences and skills. The course work also provides them with a new perspective on their collective entrepreneurial abilities and reconfirms their initial collective-based views on what entrepreneurship entails. A majority of students hold a mainstream view of the entrepreneur as the exceptional individual. We use the term ‘exceptional’ to indicate that the students regard entrepreneurship as an ‘individual achievement’, while their pre-course interviews clearly indicate that they believe they can learn it, and that it does not require that one is a ‘solitary genius’—a ‘He’ perspective (see table above). For most of these students, this study demonstrates a development in their understanding during the two weeks, where thinking in terms of ‘We’ instead of ‘I’ becomes a way for them to view entrepreneurship. It is demonstrated that these students manage to make the shift to a collective understanding of their potential and opportunities, and how they match and re-shape their identities. The realization that you do not have to perform alone relieves some of the pressure previously associated with becoming an entrepreneur.

However, the course work did not bring about this realization in all students. In a few cases, the students appeared conflicted and unable to make such a shift when their images (imagining) were less fluid. For example, Andrew was very skeptical of the approach of the course all the way through. In the post interview, he expressed no changes in perception. Instead, we got the sense that he felt he had been wasting his time. For Andrew, participation in the course was a constant struggle to hold on to a fixed identity and a clear, preconceived image of who an entrepreneur is and what an entrepreneur does. Andrew, and the students like him, with strong beliefs about needing marketing, legal and financial start-up skills, indicated to us that action-based type courses may not be for everyone. These differences among students had a significant impact on what they learned and whom they learned from in the team formation process, and how this affected their individual reflections on the pre- and post-team formation working modes.

### *The self as a resource in the ‘We’*

The shift from self-exploration in the first four days to team formation and teamwork in the second week, which the teachers were concerned about, was not a concern for the students. Development of a We-understanding of entrepreneurship seen in the post-interview data emerges because the course is designed to encourage consideration of all the resources each individual offers in the quest for becoming entrepreneurial, not just limited to their own personal skills and dispositions. Implementing and experimenting with novel teaching

approaches and exercises achieved this. Therefore, the We-understanding came from a realization that the experience of a certain anomaly is not individual but is something that is shared. The course work is designed to allow space for the students to actively experiment with partnerships, relationships and interactions with others in order to assemble an assortment of actors (both human and non-human) to accomplish an entrepreneurial goal. For example, the classroom exercises and homework assignments create a constant flux between self and others. At one moment the students are asked to reflect upon their own learning, in the next they are asked to explore how others experience their disharmony, and then to relate their own project to those of their fellow students. This shows the student how they themselves become a resource when collaborating. Simply thinking about the collective understanding of entrepreneurship as teamwork would not truly embrace Glăveanu's (2010) idea about the creative We-paradigm. The We-paradigm is concerned with realizing that it is about assembling and mobilizing the individual alongside other actors in a network aimed towards a shared goal through various means (e.g. teaching the students to use appreciative inquiry as a way for them to forge alliances and explore new connections).

*Is there a group and 'We' bias in the dataset?*

The authors expected a pre-to-post difference in the level of sophistication in the student's reflections about entrepreneurship, but were surprised by the level of awareness articulated by some students in the pre-interview. The teamwork in the last week of the course might have caused them to talk more in terms of 'We' rather than 'I' in the post interview, as they refer back to the second- week team activities. To overcome this bias, more contextualized articulations from the student and observations from the two anthropologists were used in our analyses, in order to achieve a richer understanding of how their perspectives on entrepreneurship had changed. The limited number of cases does not allow for drawing general conclusions. Yet, the findings display cross-case contrasts between how the course affected students' thinking about entrepreneurship and demonstrate how some students readily adapted to new views—and even welcomed change in their understanding, while others remained much more rigidly locked in their prior views and images.

### **Implications and Limitations**

This study suggests that it is possible to expand what can be achieved in an EEd course. Rather than focusing on individual learning and treating group work merely as a didactical instrument, the team formation processes can be used actively as a pedagogical tool in the classroom to achieve particular learning outcomes. For educators this means the potential for an additional tool to aid the complicated task of bringing EEd to students across campus. The vignette above provides an account of how the process can be instructively designed: i) starting with the educator legitimizing and explaining the importance of teams and team formation in entrepreneurship; ii) supported by a set of exercises that prepares the students to move from individual to group competence building and facilitates and strengthens the actual formation process. We believe that these components are significant and that the majority of these master's-level students with diverse educational backgrounds appreciate them. However, the content of the lecture and exercises can probably be adapted to the background and level of maturity of the students, cultural setting, time constraints, educator's background and abilities, and the specific learning goals for the course. For students, this new approach means that the often dreaded and frustrating process of team formation may turn into a positive experience of purposeful team assembly and collaboration. Two possible limitations regarding the findings of this paper can be identified: i) for students with extensive experience in forming teams and working in groups, taking them through this process may not have the desired effect, as they may rely on habits and routine mechanisms without the required reflection; ii) it may be difficult to achieve

the desired effect with students that know each other well before the course starts, as they may have strong (or hidden) agendas about who they want to work with and who they do not want to work with, such that this will over-power the idea/opportunity/subject-matter driven approach (Aldrich and Kim, 2007). Educators should consider the extent to which their students may be subject to these limitations as this may have an effect on the use of active, opportunity- driven team formation in practice. To counter the second limitation, educators need to consider at what point in the course they want to facilitate a team formation process, especially for courses running over significantly periods longer than two weeks. Future research may be able to assess the significance of these limitations.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has explored the relevance of using team formation as a learning tool and adopting a paradigm shift perspective on EEd, moving from 'I' to 'We'. In many ways, this represents a new perspective on learning through entrepreneurship in which moving the students' images and articulations of self, of entrepreneurship, and the entrepreneurial team come to the foreground. These three themes (perceptions of self, entrepreneurship, and the entrepreneurial team) became evident when analyzing and exploring the pre- and post-interview data from the course. This analysis also made it evident that students come to the course with quite diverse and often conflicting images of the entrepreneur. Furthermore, their expectations towards what kinds of learning they may achieve are diverse and are often connected more closely to the I-paradigm of the entrepreneur than to the We-paradigm. The We-paradigm can be considered an essential component and competence in the future, changing world where there is a continual need for learning in networks and flexible organizational set-ups and is therefore an important competence to nurture.

Taking into account these diverse images when designing an entrepreneurship education course could potentially enhance the learning outcomes. Furthermore, it could guide team formations during a course. What is of particular interest here is that a focus on the collaborative and distributed character of entrepreneurship, as within the We-paradigm, does not exclude the importance of perceptions of individuals' self-images as part of a course in entrepreneurship. Yet, a re-formulation of these could be an entry point for richer teamwork and articulation of diverse group potential. In addition, exploring more deeply what the We-paradigm might offer EEd over and above the significance of team formation, with regards to both form and content of these courses and their implied understanding of learning, would be of potential interest for future entrepreneurship educators and researchers.

The authors hope that educators will be inspired to use team formation actively in their course design and if they already do so, that this paper provides insights about how to anchor this activity in theory and learning outcomes. In both cases, we hope that this paper will furthermore prompt others to investigate and report on these processes. In addition, now that we have gained some understanding of team formation as a learning tool in EEd, future research can compare cases of different team formation practices. We see at least two types of comparisons that can uncover further knowledge and answer research questions beyond the scope of this paper. First, in the course this paper investigates, the emphasis is on the commonalities in interests and ideas and interpersonal aspects of working together. Yet, as Aldrich and Kim point out, teams may also form based on a 'rational process model' (2007, p. 149); emphasizing complementary skills, work experiences and/or networks, and other resources. Courses designed to facilitate a rational team formation process may yield other effects than the course researched in this paper. Second, there are ways to form teams that have no learning goals related to the formation process; for example, where an educator composes the teams before the start of the course or on the first day of class. In these cases, less importance is placed on team formation and the students are not afforded the same opportunity to experience and compare how it is to work entrepreneurially as an individual

and as a team. Yet, post-formation learning about team development and teamwork can be achieved through working out the potential of collaboration. In comparison, these cases may yield insights regarding the possible advantages and disadvantages of different strategies not captured by the present research design.

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