

From critical entrepreneurship research to critical entrepreneurship in the classroom

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Introduction

Inspired by the Critical Management Studies (CMS) contributions that expose and challenge the taken-for-granted in social orders (e.g. Alvesson et al., 2009; Spicer & Alvesson, 2024) and, more specifically, the reported difficulties faced by CMS scholars in bringing CMS-oriented teaching content into the classroom (Dyck & Caza, 2022), we embark on our personal journeys to help our students become more processually attuned (de Vaujany & Introna, 2023). In doing so, we aim to make our entrepreneurship education practice more entrepreneurial (Hjorth, 2011: 49), moving away from instrumental teaching by exploring provocation as a crucial element for re-imagining entrepreneurship education. Similarly to other CMS scholars, we are concerned about the negative effects of specific forms of knowledge taught in business schools (Dyck & Caza, 2022). In promoting the assumption that ‘the world was there to be controlled and amenable to knowledgeable control, by placing humans at the centre of this ordering endeavor, and by placing the mind at the centre of the human’, (Holt, 2020: 589) we are guilty of corroding our students’ ability to think. Yet, highlighting the shortcomings of the mainstream management philosophy does not seem to inspire changes in students’ attitudes and beliefs. On the contrary, some remain resistant to ideals promoted by the CMS scholarship (Dyck & Caza, 2020; Monaghan & Cervero, 2006).

Aim and Approach

We propose engaging with glitch as an alternative and inventive approach to teaching and learning (Peña & James, 2016) to foster uprooting students from their habits of thinking about entrepreneurship and instead to re-imagine entrepreneurship into entrepreneuring (Hjorth & Johannisson, 2007). To achieve this, we build on Humboldt’s ideas on an intimate relation between research and teaching (Wickert et al., 2021) by translating our research on everyday practices in entrepreneurship, into an educational intervention. We join scholars who ‘tap into a growing critical engagement with entrepreneurship’ (Walmsley & Wraae, 2022: 2; Verduijn & Berglund, 2019) to challenge dominant myths rather than socialise learners into the status quo (Dehler, 2009). In doing so, we move away from treating entrepreneurial learners as those who need to be ‘sensitised, alerted and trained in specific cognitive skills’ for practical interventions (de Vaujany & Introna, 2023: 3), as following ‘caste-iron particular doctrines will spell ruin’ (Whitehead, 1967: 97). This is our call to action - ‘to question dominant images and

conceptualisations of entrepreneurship’ and ‘create room for alternative understandings and approaches’ (Verduijn & Berglund, 2019: 975).

Venturing further from the traditional enterprising orientation of entrepreneurship education, we challenge the tendencies towards a ‘McEducation’ (Hytti, 2018), where entrepreneurial learning is about teaching to effectively shape our enterprising selves (Verduijn & Berglund, 2019). Instead, we focus on its ‘higher-order’ (Kuckertz, 2021) consequences, conceptualising entrepreneurship as a process of threatening and opening up established orders (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2009). Findings from our previously conducted research reveal that the notion of powerful actors who can impose their will on the world through strategies, plans and interventions (de Vaujany & Introna, 2023) is a ‘broken image’. Rather, it is the everyday improvising practices, understood as actions ‘without the constant accompaniment of representational states that specify what the action is aimed at accomplishing’ (Dreyfus, 1991: 93) that nourish the emerging order (Bouty et al., 2019). In our research, we traced practitioners as they act ‘*in the world*’ (Hay, 2022: 5) with ‘no privileged ‘birds-eye’ view of their situation’ (Chia & Holt, 2008: 477) acknowledging the importance of improvising in generating ways of dealing with future situations (Chia, 2017; Chia & Holt, 2006; Hay, 2022; MacKay et al., 2021) through consequences that are ‘not intended by managers coping with a chaotic and messy reality’ (MacKay & Chia, 2013: 210). We showed how it is not the efforts of individuals with agentic abilities to bring about entrepreneurial change (Melin & Gaddefors, 2023), but of something ‘unfolding, in duration, irreversibly, directly and totally’ (Hjorth et al., 2015: 603). Whilst traditional attempts at theorising entrepreneurial processes have been dominated by intentionally planned activity towards a pre-defined goal, following a linear trajectory (Steyaert, 2007; Verduijn, 2015) our findings are entirely processual, the lived actuality - the ‘prosaics’ (Steyaert, 2004) of entrepreneurial life is complex, non-linear and inherently open (Johannisson, 2011; Sorenson, 2006; Steyaert, 2007). Subsequently, we diverge from the view that entrepreneurship is an achievement stemming from individual practitioners’ agency, and instead as ‘the result of engaging with and transforming social practices of doing and living’ (Steyaert, 2007: 468).

Since our time in the field, we often found ourselves increasingly reluctant to instruct students on how to be infallible, to know everything and to be equipped to handle people, tensions, crises, uncertainty, and risk. We refuse to tell the heroic tale of ‘overcoming’ (Deschamps, 2024), a narrative starkly at odds with the lived actualities for entrepreneuring as we’ve observed them. In

this sense, we oppose the approach to entrepreneurship education focused on chasing the destination, rather than welcoming it as an ongoing perpetual journey (de Vaujany & Introna, 2023). Thus we believe that we must attune our students to their becoming, to challenge the view that they are already ‘powerful actors that can act upon the world of practice’ and instead see themselves inside the flow, ‘being continually transformed’ (de Vaujany & Introna, 2023: 12).

We now seek to translate these findings into an innovative learning experience inspired by the political potential of glitch art (Menkman, 2011) to foster uprooting students from their habits of thinking about entrepreneurship and instead to re-imagine entrepreneurship into entrepreneuring (Hjorth & Johannisson, 2007). We draw on the concept of glitch from art (Menkman, 2011a; 2011b), which shows us how beauty arises from error (Peña & James, 2016) and how glitch can be used to reveal and overcome regularities in systems, doctrines and normative thought patterns.

Not only do we find some parallels between glitch art and entrepreneurship, since both show that destruction can create something original (Schumpeter, 1975; Menkman, 2011a), but more importantly glitch art works to ‘stretch boundaries and generate novel modes; they break open previously sealed politics and force a catharsis of conventions, norms and beliefs’ (Menkman, 2011a: 341) something we are very keen to embrace in entrepreneurship education. We thus consider glitch as ‘a powerful interruption that shifts an object away from its flow and ordinary discourse, towards the ruins of destructed meaning’ (Menkman, 2011a: 29) and see it as a form of provocation opening the learning process. Following Hjorth (2011), we argue this is important in the process of learning entrepreneurship, yet practical applications of provocation in entrepreneurship education and studies on implementation of provocation for entrepreneurship education are scarce. Importantly, our positioning of glitch as provocation intentionally diverges from the existing notion of ‘glitch pedagogy’ (Peña & James, 2016), due to the problematic status of the term ‘pedagogy’ (Hjorth, 2011) that privileges and reinforces a kind of discourse that is self-referential and self-consuming, becoming the dominant force in defining what is considered real or true (de Certeau, 1997). Since our interests align with CMS, our goal is to challenge these dominant ideologies, therefore, we find provocation and provocative fabulations (Hjorth, 2011) helpful for responsible learning processes to open people to the political risk of searching for the new (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2003).

We look to create a learning experience that ‘flips the normative, by doing the unexpected and disrupting the status quo of ‘how things are understood and done around here’ (Mavin et al.,

2023: 2). We try to provide students ‘the intellectual resources to challenge established ways of doing things – however uncomfortable that may be for them and others’ (Parker & Jary, 1995: 333). By engaging with glitch as provocation, we embrace glitch to provoke students out of their habitual references and to make sense anew (Hjorth, 2011). Engaging with glitch ‘requires invention, imagination, and improvisation’ (Peña & James, 2016: 110), and so the way we envisage organising learning by embracing glitch is to embrace two kinds of activities; images and scenarios. Initially, we ask students to engage in a deliberate attempt to replace images with glitched or disfigured versions (Menkman, 2011b) as a playful introduction to glitch, and in the second activity, we engage in an attempt to subvert the usual course of conformity and signal perfection in a scenario-based classroom activity (Menkman, 2011b).

Firstly, we ask students to perform glitch art by creating images through the corruption of their original versions. Our starting point is to provoke students to use glitches to amend the hero images of entrepreneurs to de-familiarise the familiar and to reveal the ‘productive power of images’ (Hjorth, 2011: 53). This is to challenge the norm and to use provocation to create affect since ‘provocation is sensed viscerally’ (Hjorth, 2011: 56). We aim for this part of the glitch as provocation to be playful yet generating awareness. There is no intention to impose demands upon the students (James & Peña, 2023) by leading students into reconstructing alternative versions of entrepreneurship, nor to underscore the need to embrace a critical perspective on entrepreneurship to avoid evoking student resistance and commitment to their prior, non-CMS inspired views (Dyck & Caza, 2022:103; Wettermark, 2020).

Secondly, we aim at using the scenarios built from our initial data set to facilitate transformative educational experience that deviates from the conventional classroom activity. While business simulations in entrepreneurship education have been used to expose students to pitching exercises and competitions (Hytti, 2018) providing students with real-world experiences, such activities resemble a capital reproduction mechanism (da Costa & Silva Saraiva, 2012), reinforcing the very McEducation version of entrepreneurship education that we challenge (Hytti, 2018). We create glitch-scenarios, scenarios generated from our research findings imbued with glitch, not as signs of improper production, but to provoke ‘accidental potential’ (Lotringer & Virilio, 2005). From incomplete instructions where printer ink has run out, to a distorted slide deck on an overhead screen, our glitch-scenarios allow students to draw connections and engage in relational thinking based on their experience of glitching in action. Each activity is made up of

‘non-conforming material or information’ (James & Peña, 2023: 8), opening up space for students to apply their ‘regular processes in a manner that results in an irregular output’ (James & Peña, 2023: 8), of which, the output might surprise us all. It is this surprise, the creativity, the newness that demonstrates glitch as provocation as an important critical tool for developing entrepreneurial education.

We hope that in stepping outside our taken-for-granted assumptions (Ogbor, 2000) we can ‘stop perpetuating myths surrounding entrepreneurship (and by implication the teaching of entrepreneurship)’ (Walmsley & Wraae, 2022: 2) and challenge the prevailing orders to consider ‘what could become’ (Farias et al., 2019: 555) through glitch, a catalyst for ‘opening up new pathways’ and ‘allowing us to seize on new directions’ (Russell, 2020: 26). Our aspiration to remedy the resistance often encountered by students towards critical perspectives on entrepreneurship (Heath et al., 2019) acknowledges the inherent unpredictability of outcomes. Whilst we do not know whether students will affirm or resist these openings, our hope is that by engaging in provocational learning experiences we may nurture the cracks of possibility for students to reevaluate their preconceived notions, thereby fostering openings for new potentialities to surface. When we put students in this space where their habitual thoughts are suspended (Hjorth, 2011) and we open them up to a more processual thinking about entrepreneurship, we hope to see how, and indeed, if, provocation can uproot students from convention and how students learn their ‘way out of the suspense’ (Hjorth, 2011). We do so by looking for intensities in the way that students self-reflect on the glitch provocations. The reflections show us how students felt / sensed / responded to the provocational learning process and for us to detect what that means for their learning. We are not looking for evidence that they embrace critical entrepreneurship perspectives, but instead, by not imposing any views or ‘right answers’, we might open a crack to ‘uproot students from existing systems of thinking’ (Hjorth, 2011: 60).

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