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Educational Entrepreneurs: The Professional Experiences of Five Edupreneurs

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EDUCATIONAL ENTREPRENEURS: THE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES OF FIVE EDUPRENEURS

by

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"EDUCATIONAL ENTREPRENEURS: THE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES OF FIVE EDUPRENEURS," a Doctoral research project prepared by **AUDREY NIESWANDT** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

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DEDICATION

For my children: Nathan, Roman, Avielle, and Sebastian.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is usually the section wherein the doctoral candidate thanks those who helped, supported, encouraged, and assisted her along the long and arduous path of academic accomplishment. My journey is a bit different, however, and thus my acknowledgments will reflect a respective departure from this norm.

I always knew I would pursue a doctorate. I drove to my first doctoral candidate interview when my youngest child was six weeks old; I was rejected on the grounds that I did not have a definite idea for my dissertation. In retrospect, this was a comedic interlude; in practicality, the rejection was discouraging, and it dissuaded me from further academic pursuits until my children were older. I thought things would get easier. Little did I know.

Thirteen years later, I look back and acknowledge that my journey was more tenuous, arduous, bittersweet, and impossible than I ever could have envisioned. During the rough course of this academic road, I separated from my former husband, parented four children ranging in age from three to 17, rejoined the full-time work force, quit a teaching job and began another, sent my struggling second son to live with his father, fought administrative harassment and resigned following a protracted legal battle, started and withdrew from my first doctoral program, went on unemployment, was readmitted to my doctoral studies, struggled to finance my tuition costs and household, fought foreclosure of our family home, divorced and ended a 17-year marriage, suffered the death of my second son, Roman, from a horrifically unexpected drug overdose, and found myself sitting in solitude wondering how and why I was still standing.

Despite the burdens and hardships, I find blessing and thanks. I thank God and my children for the strength to continue and complete this journey. I am ever so thankful for the busy entrepreneurs who so graciously acted as research participants. I humbly thank my wonderful dissertation committee for their direction and kindness. I gratefully acknowledge the myriad excellent and inspired teachers, instructors, and professors who prodded me forward, who pushed and provoked and corrected me, who transported me to places that my mere understanding alone would not have carried me. I am ever thankful for the joy of learning that my parents granted me, especially my mother. To this day, I can close my eyes and hear her tell me to practice my piano, urge me to sign up for that pre-college course, or order me to put the darn book down and go enjoy the beautiful weather outside. Learning was always a joy for me, and for this I am thankful. For other events in my life, I struggle to find gratitude. Instead, I settle for grace.

Three months after Roman died, I found myself at a dead end. Family and friends had resumed their activities, life for everyone irrevocably marched onward, but I and Roman's brothers and sister still grievously and greatly mourned. As mother and head of the family, I knew I must continue onward despite the paradoxical impossibility of this task. I gathered my research about me, asked God for resolve, and resumed my work.

"You must be elated," a friend commented after news of my successful defense.

No, not elated. After the death of a child, I'm not sure elation ever resounds in a mournful mother's mind.

I am not elated, but resolute. I am not proud, but confident in the depth of my inner resources. I am shaken to the core, but sound in the foundations of love for my children and my God. I am pleased to point to the power of perseverance, and the potential of deep and voiceless prayer. This I acknowledge: we are but small actors and weak players on life's error-riddled stage, but the presence and power of our love will survive and even grow beyond our briefly uttered lines.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to understand and elucidate the journeys of educational entrepreneurs in the K-12 education space. This qualitative investigation was motivated by three research questions: (1) What are some of the instigating, contributing, and continuing factors that motivate a business or an educational professional toward educational entrepreneurship? (2) How do the studied individuals describe and analyze their journeys from professionals to edupreneurs, and what were key turning points along the way? (3) How can individual stories of educational entrepreneurs help illuminate the topics surrounding educational reform, student and community needs, and teacher professionalism? To date, the literature examining educational entrepreneurship remains sparse, and this dissertation attempts to provide greater understanding regarding this specialized nexus of the business and educational fields.

The research considered and described the phenomenological experience of educational entrepreneurship, presenting it in narrative form organized by significant themes derived from the semi-structured interviews of five experienced entrepreneurs. The resulting interview data was condensed into five significant themes: (1) The nature of the niche; (2) The world of business versus the world of education; (3) Challenges, epiphanies, and bumps in the road; (4) Educational entrepreneurship; (5) Lessons learned and hard-earned advice.

The major findings from the research indicate that edupreneurs tend to enter entrepreneurship through the realization of a specific need or niche, and often find both challenge and reward in the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students. The space of educational entrepreneurship is idiosyncratically viewed as a nexus between the business and education worlds wherein entrepreneurs must develop deep understandings of the

educational service or product, client(s), pacing, and growth/scaling potential. Edupreneurs offer unique perspectives to issues of school improvement and reform due to their unique entrepreneurial lens, a persistent focus on alternate approaches and niche solutions, the potential for universal solutions to problems, and the entrepreneurial tendency toward ongoing innovation and adaptation. This study provides support for the notion that educational entrepreneurs offer valuable experience and insight into both the practical and philosophical realms of education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Education looms large in the American landscape and imagination; at its best, public education buoys its children and citizens away from ignorance and class stasis and toward knowledge and an equitable society. In 2013, education expenditures reached $620 billion, approximately 9% of U.S. gross domestic product (GDP), and expenses continue to rise (National Center for Education Statistics). Big education is big business, and the dollar signs have attracted corporate and private interest (Faux, 2012). Alternatively, education-focused entrepreneurs often provide services, perspectives, and potential solutions to issues plaguing the public school system (Hess, 2012). The best of these educational entrepreneurs combine knowledge, experience, and innovation in order to improve education, increase equity, and support students. This study purports to better understand the journeys of five such individuals in their respective transitions from business and education professionals to educational entrepreneurs.

Background and Overview of Educational Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs make it happen. Ideologically and pragmatically, entrepreneurs initiate actions that begin a new or novel business based on an idea, a process, a paradigm, a prior experience, or an inspiration (Drucker 1986). Entrepreneurs are commonly viewed as the outliers of the business world, as those who take the leaps and who brave the chances of success—but also of failure (Berkun, 2010). They are portrayed as courageous and perhaps a bit crazy, and are holistically admired by the American media who retells their Horatio Alger-esque start-up stories with a type of insatiable enthusiasm that borders on veneration

(Drucker, 1986; Kiessling, 2004).

Successful entrepreneurs can achieve superstardom in the U.S. The public listens enthralled to the rags-to-riches tales of famous entrepreneurs: Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Walt Disney, Warren Buffett, Steve Jobs, Tom Patterson, Bill Gates, Kate Spade, and yes, even Donald Trump. Clearly, there is something about entrepreneurship that speaks to the American heart and soul. Perhaps the appeal is culturally and axiologically endemic: ingenuity, perseverance, and work ethic are traits exhibited by entrepreneurs that can be traced back to Puritan values (Audretsch, Kuratko, & Link, 2015; Drucker, 1986). Indeed, numerous studies and books outline the entrepreneurial mindset, or enumerate entrepreneurial traits. Baumol, Schilling, and Wolff (2009) defined entrepreneurs as individuals who "demonstrate initiative, imagination and willingness to expend effort in the pursuit of wealth, power and prestige" (p. 712). Perhaps part of the charm lies in the fantasy of entrepreneurial success. Lidow (2014) revealed that almost half of the working population in the United States will try to become an entrepreneur sometime during their working career. The American entrepreneurial dream will, for most, remain merely a dream, however. Fewer than one in four entrepreneurs will still be in business after five years (Lidow, 2014).

Entrepreneurship has been historically and inextricably tied to the profit-generating world of business (Bornstein & Davis, 2010; Kiessling, 2004). As Americans, we recognize the model: brazen pioneer in Industry X swims against the tide to bring his product to market. Naysayers abound, and yet he perseveres. Finally, on his last financial legs, the inventive product grabs consumer or media attention, and surges into the limelight accompanied by strobe lights and cacophonous applause. Monumental success follows, and the entrepreneur smiles in the certain confidence that this is how it would have ended all along. He swaggers into the economic sunset, *Forbes* documents his ascension with 25 magazine articles, and we all envy his monied footsteps.

Following the recession of 2008, that traditionally heroic entrepreneurial model began to falter (Agrawal, 2013). Business entrepreneurship was still admired and desired, but the glamorous glitter flaked off just a bit. The mistrust of banks, mega-corporations, and government trickled down to the common Everyman and Everywoman, and money no longer seemed the only goal worth attaining, especially when so many had lost so much, whether in portfolios, bank accounts, jobs, or home values. Unrest and dissatisfaction seeped into the mainstream, and images and shouts from Occupy Wall Street filtered into the American living room via the evening news. Increasingly, citizens felt the press of environmental concerns, burgeoning foreclosures, technology spread, economic disparity, health and medical concerns, and political vapidness. Ironically, the world became more intertwined, yet people felt more disconnected and dissatisfied (Bornstein & Davis, 2010).

From out of the economic and ideological morass, glimmers of hope sparkled at the edge of the horizon. Kickstarter emerged as one of the forces driving new and unprecedented entrepreneurship; other crowdsourcing models appeared, and this new method of achieving entrepreneurial dreams became a viable option for many closet idea-makers. Other forms of entrepreneurship began to emerge, including micro-loans which were designed to help new ideas and products blossom on a smaller, more practical level (Bornstein & Davis, 2010).

Social entrepreneurship developed into its own novel field, touting a process in which the moral intent and social effects of a business were as important as its bottom line. With Bornstein and Davis' publication of *How to Change the World* (2010), social entrepreneurs found their own place in the public eye. Bornstein & Davis (2010) defined social entrepreneurship as "the process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems, such as poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuses and corruption, in order to make life better for many" (p. 1). Social betterment and improvement caught national attention, and philanthropy and altruism moved from the realm of Things Rich People Do When Bored to Things Anyone Can Do and Feel Good About.

America has always been a nation of high ideals, whether its citizens manage to attain them or not. Relentlessly, we want to believe in the American Dream. We firmly believe in the tenets of freedom, equality, and democracy, and the notion of entrepreneurship melds solidly with these dominant American values (Drucker, 1986). As the 2008 recession lengthened, the models of entrepreneurship continued to morph and change. Social entrepreneurship and crowdsourcing prevailed, and the role of corporate entrepreneurs—or *Intrepreneurs*—were heralded as innovative and inventive in companies ranging from Google to Apple. At Zappos, an Amazon- owned company, "holocracy" took hold in 2014 and expanded to run the corporation in 2015, and each employee became independent via removal of traditional "bosses" (Reingold, 2016).

Since the 2008 recession, education also witnessed its own waves of change (Marx, 2014; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). As No Child Left Behind departed the state and federal scene, the vacuum left in its wake was quickly stop-gapped by Common Core. Historically, the American education system has undergone much pointed and public shaming, and this pressure only increased after federal waivers for NCLB began in 2011 (Ravitch, 2013). The publication of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (**OECD**) 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results only inflamed the ire and distress toward U.S. schools as the nation that spent the most on education overall (the U.S.) demonstrated middling to poor results in literacy, math, and science compared to other students internationally. The ensuing gaps caused by disruptions in education continued, and exacerbated the influx of public money being spent for private services. Pearson Testing, Holt-Rhinehart textbooks, Microsoft technology, Kaplan online school, Sylvan tutoring, SAT and College Board: these and numerous other for-profit companies owned contracts to produce, test, manage, or field various arenas of publicly funded education (Ravitch, 2013).

Seemingly every year, the need for educational services has only increased as schools feel the pressure to educate all, and to educate equitably. Unfortunately, in a nation built on notions of equality and justice, the greatest predicator of an American student's academic success is not her ambition, motivation, drive, grit, diligence, or intelligence, but her parent's income level (Ravitch, 2013). Across the nation, our students are not equally or equitably educated. Mostly, this is due to nature of public education funding, with the best schools and highest-achieving students almost always located in the highest-SES demographic areas.

From the tunnel of need, the spirit of entrepreneurship has risen to the call from education (Hess, 2008; Sandler, 2010). Teachers who work within the school to affect positive change and reform have been granted their own, unique moniker: *teacherpreneurs* (Berry, 2015). These individuals recognize the need for systemic, political, or cultural change, yet choose to stay and attempt innovative teaching and training techniques to affect change from within. Outside school walls, educational entrepreneurship has become its own entire category, and the term has even been portmanteau-ed into the new business vernacular as *edupreneur.* Such endeavors fall under the auspices of the newly-termed "democratized entrepreneurship," in which "incubators, startup mentor networks, funding platforms, and innovation summits," advance and proliferate (Saveri, 2013, p. 265). This allows inventors, initiators, and DIY'ers to "turn their ideas into practical, marketable solutions that remake classrooms, schools, and communities" (Saveri, p. 265). There remain, however, marked differences between entrepreneurial efforts in the classroom and in the boardroom. First and most importantly, a student is not a commodity, but an individual deserving of the respect, courtesy, and consideration afforded all human beings.

Additionally, educational services carry an ethical weight that supersedes financial motives (Bornstein & Davis, 2010; Hess, 2008; Wagner, 2010). Next, many teachers perceive their career not as a job or income-generator, but as a vocation. For many, their career is a calling. This differentiates educational entrepreneurship as a unique field, as such intrinsic investment colors choices as teachers decide on entrepreneurship or intrepreneurship. Further, the potential investment of public funds into either for-profit or non-profit edupreneurship recommends a high level of integrity, transparency, and honesty (Hess, 2008; Ravitch, 2013). Funds earmarked for the public good should be focused on that result, not squandered on mismanagement, overt profiteering, or private greed. Essentially, the product or service of edupreneurship should focus on bettering or improving the education of the student, school, or district. The end goal of educational entrepreneurship would ideally be progress and success for the student, and not solely the pursuit of financial gain.

Vaithesswaran, CEO of Manipal Global Education Services, succinctly phrased the practical and ethical considerations of educational entrepreneurship in his keynote speech at the National Summit on Quality in Education (Grace, 2012): "The motive for which one enters the field of education must be clarified at the outset, as education cannot be considered as a business in its purest sense. In this field, the individual exercises his skill to create and sustain a social value for education and pursue new opportunities through continuous innovation with accountability to bring about a sustainable change" (p. 1).

The best edupreneurs are those who deeply understand education and its appertaining systems and cultures (Hess, 2008; Wagner, 2010). Thus, some of the most effective entrepreneurs are, obviously, teachers. These individuals have deep experiences in pedagogy and classroom practices, understand the science and art of instruction, are apprised of the many competing needs within the school, possess long-standing understandings of the educational system itself, and, most importantly, feel deeply the need to improve and better student progress.

Other educational entrepreneurs bring with them a wealth of experience from outside the doors of public or private education (Hess, 2008; Sandler, 2012). Their varied and rich experiences in business, finance, technology, etc. allows these skilled individuals to offer outside perspectives to schools and districts, enabling the conversations surrounding learning, teaching, and best practices to be imbued with alternative expertise. The most effective entrepreneurs are often those best able to reconcile the universes of knowledge found both within and without school walls.

Problem Statement

Though influential in both business and educational worlds, educational entrepreneurs have received little academic consideration of study. This study attempts to better understand and describe the unique proclivities and particulars of experienced entrepreneurs working in the education field.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe, explore, and understand the journeys of five educational entrepreneurs. Narrative and phenomenological inquiry will be utilized to discern and investigate the unique experiences and universal significance surrounding entrepreneurs working in education.

Research Questions

Clandinin (2016) advocated the use of research puzzles rather than research questions within narrative inquiry. This notion aligns with the scope of a potential narrative that focuses on a phenomenon to be studied, providing a basis for continual thought, reflection, searching, and further and continual engagement with the topic (or puzzle) at hand. My puzzle was the nature and evolution of entrepreneurship within education, especially inside the U.S. public education system. In order to piece this puzzle together, I composed the following research questions:

1. What are some of the instigating, contributing, and continuing factors that motivate a business or an educational professional toward educational entrepreneurship?
2. How do the studied individuals describe and analyze their journeys from professionals to edupreneurs, and what were key turning points along the way?
3. How can individual stories of educational entrepreneurs help illuminate the topics surrounding educational reform, student and community needs, and teacher professionalism?

Key Terms

Edupreneur/educational entrepreneur—An education-focused entrepreneur who may work in the for-profit or non-profit arenas (or both); some, but not all, edupreneurs are former teachers or administrators. Edupreneurs are entrepreneurs who enter into the field of public or private education with intent to serve or improve educational endeavors or learning outcomes (Hess, 2008).

Intrepreneur/corporate entrepreneur—Individuals who use innovation, creativity, and invention to foment new ideas, products, or processes while remaining employed in the business or institution (Antoncic & Hirsich, 2001).

Social entrepreneur—A citizen whose main focus is the transformation of institutions to advance solutions to social problems, including income or gender disparity, poverty, corruption, education, human rights abuses, etc. (Bornstein & Davis, 2010).

Teacherpreneur—A teacher who functions as an intrapreneur, purposely choosing to remain in the public education system in order to affect change, innovation, or reform from the inside (Barry, 2015).

Limitations

Several criticisms have been leveled against narrative research as methodology. One is that narrative inquiry "unduly stresses the individual over the social context" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 7). Ideally, the context and background are taken into consideration, but indeed the focal point remains on the individual story. Another shortcoming noted by the same authors involved the illusion of causality. When a narrative is being restored, it can seem, in hindsight, that prior events led to others, or that connections are observed that did not transpire. Retrofitting the facts is a flaw that narrative writers must try to avoid, or at least be mindful of. Another limitation is the temporality of any narrative. Stories unfold in the manner of fiction, and are usually restoried in chronological order. While this technique clarifies events, such tidiness is not necessarily reflective of actual life, when events may slide, wobble, overlap, or even circumvent other occurrences. Brinkman & Kvale (2015) cited Frosh (2007) in exploring this limitation, arguing that "'not all aspects of human experience fit neatly into more or less coherent narratives, for human subjects are not just integrated through less coherent narratives, for human subjects are not just integrated through narratives but also fragmented" (p. 256). Pepper and Wildy (2009) would agree, claiming, "Constructing narratives involves grappling with issues of certainty. Events as they are described can always be interpreted in a variety of ways" (p. 20).

I chose narrative inquiry influenced by phenomenology to describe and present the journeys of five educational entrepreneurs. The interview process, restorying, and seeking significant statements were essential tools in my inquiry. Nevertheless, limitations were clear. Though insights were gained through the course of the interviews, the research cannot provide universal generalizations as the number of participants and resulting data in the study were limited. Though the stories of the individuals were vital in the understanding of the edupreneurial journey, the in-depth interviews and small research population may limit for transferability of data, themes, or specific recommendations.

Delimitations

It would be wonderful to interview and record the career trajectories of one hundred entrepreneurs! However, time and geographic constraints combined with the desire for a thorough, elaborated narrative limit my participant count to five. A more geographically diverse study incorporating edupreneurs from all regions of the U.S.—and even the world—would prove to be fascinating, but was beyond the scope of this current study. Additionally, a more comprehensive look at the various venues and levels at which the entrepreneurs operate (public, private, charter, online, university, etc.) could prove a valuable investigation.

Importance of the Study

This narrative inquiry into the lived journeys of educational professionals allows specialists both inside and outside the field of education a closer look into educational entrepreneurship. The experience of the individual is especially important in this study due to the dearth of narrative and research in educational entrepreneurship. For those individuals and groups interested in school improvement, looking outside the educational system itself may offer fresh perspectives and/or new insights. Further, practitioners and teachers who struggle within the large public school system might find new inspiration and encouragement in the potential of seeking new solutions as entrepreneurs. Vitally, this study allowed a look into a world of entrepreneurship that is not well known or widely documented, and offered a glimpse into future educational entrepreneurial possibilities to students, parents, teachers, researchers, administrators, and policy makers alike.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Entrepreneurship boasts a lengthy and complex history colored by the disciplines of drama, business, economics, science, and leadership. In more recent decades, interest in entrepreneurship within the field of education has grown and evolved. This literature review begins with the origins of entrepreneurship, and moves toward a working definition of "entrepreneur." The more recent category of social entrepreneurship (S.E.) is explored, including those individuals who bring the skills and practices of entrepreneurship into the school system. The educational arena itself is investigated as a backdrop to entrepreneurial activity, with special consideration granted to the notion of 21st century skills in teaching and learning. In many schools, teachers and administrators themselves undertake entrepreneurial actions, and these institutional Intrepreneurs are defined and included. Additionally, educational entrepreneurs enter schools from outside the public system, bringing innovative ideas and practices with them.

The Entrepreneur: Beginning Explorations

A juggler, a magician, a miracle maker. From its inception, the term *entrepreneur* has been ordained with magical and mystical qualities. *Entre* means "between," and *preneur* derives from *prendre* or "take on"; hence, the entrepreneur assumes many and varied tasks, and balances them with skill, passion, and more than the merest sleight-of-hand (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016). Initially, in France, an entrepreneur was a theater manager extraordinaire, a persona who glided between the public, the stage, and the actors, pacifying all players with a cohesive dramatic performance of his own. In Germany, a resourceful business owner was an *Unternehmer,* directly translated as an undertaker; fortunately for us, that translation did not enter the English dictionary (Audretsch, 2012). Only later in the 19th century did the term entrepreneur cross the ocean and begin to assume the qualities with which we associate it today: the facile businessperson with a trick or two perennially concealed beneath his velvet top hat (Drucker, 1986).

Today, interest in entrepreneurship has exploded. As American-bred capitalism has saturated the developing world, the concept and definition of entrepreneurship has journeyed with it (Drucker, 1986; Audretsch, 2012). The term entrepreneur is inextricably linked to both business and capitalism, but (ironically perhaps) generally promotes a positive connotation. Even in our own nation where citizens are increasingly disgruntled by insidious and unethical corporations led by money-hoarding CEOs, the term entrepreneur retains an air of mystery, heralding an appealing character brushed by the bracing wind of the wild, wild west (Drucker, 1986). The entrepreneur is a different breed. Like the feisty pioneers who tamed the perils and products of a mythically savage wilderness, the entrepreneur forges into new, unknown, and rocky terrain. She builds a road over muck-filled marshes, and charges even to the very edge of a chasm; undaunted, she sketches plans for a sturdy, enduring bridge to gain access to the other side. Our American entrepreneur is part magic and a dash mystique, and inherently immersed in the business world. When *Weltanschauung* is viewed in dollars and cents, when profits are king, and where development is defined in economic terms, the entrepreneur reigns as the crown prince (Audretsch, 2012; Berkun, 2010; Drucker, 1986).

Part of the allure of the entrepreneur may be explained by its “outlier” role (Berkun, 2010). While big government, big business, and big economics are defined as the inevitable trappings of a big society, the entrepreneur possesses the fluidity and footwork to sidestep some of the mud that adheres to feet in such an unwieldy morass. An entrepreneur must be nimble in action, and novel in approach (Berkun, 2010). He must dodge and dash, and spot the moment of opportunity when it flashes on the horizon. She must acknowledge the Known as backdrop, yet tread fearlessly into the Unknown. Pencil in hand, she draws the map while traveling along it.

The Austrian economist Schumpeter (1934) may have been the first in academia to distinguish between entrepreneur and businessman; while the latter tends to follow traditional modes of earning profit, veering toward the status quo in establishing business practices, the former fights against the flow of business-as-usual, searching instead for innovative practices and and untested solutions. The entrepreneur engages in “the joy of creating, of getting things done, or simple exercising…energy and ingenuity.” Additionally, an entrepreneur ventures down Robert Frost’s infamously less-traveled and trammeled road, thrilling in the less-trod path itself while she “seeks out difficulties, changes in order to change, and delights in ventures” (Schumpeter, p. 93).

Relying on Schumpeter’s definitions, Drucker (1986) pegged the entrepreneur as innovator. Drucker moved the conversation away from the notion of entrepreneurship as idyllic invention, and toward the idea of intrinsic innovation; as such, entrepreneurs alter the familiar landscape, creating “something new, something different; they change or transmute values” (Drucker, p. 22). Drucker delineated the process of “innovative opportunity,” revealing entrepreneurs as those unusual individuals who do not merely see the change that needs to happen (that others often acknowledge and ignore), but actually engage in the actions that lead to the required change (p. 69).

Innovation is linked to our innate human need to create. We are all, as humans, deeply, inherently, and intuitively creative by our very nature. We are built for creativity and wired for innovation (Amabile, 1998; Drucker; 1986; Berkun, 2010; Robinson, 2010; Wagner, 2013).

Innovation itself may arrive in myriad manners, including hard work focused in a specific direction; hard work with direction change (Post-it notes); curiosity (da Vinci); drive for wealth and money (a la Edison's light bulb); necessity (the founding of Craigslist); or a combination of the mentioned factors (Berkun, 2010). Within the business process, the entrepreneurial innovator must face the fact of his final judges: the clientele.

Drucker (1986) explored the notion of innovative opportunity, honing in on seven sources. First, the unexpected, driven by success, failure, or an outside event. Second, the incongruity: a disconnect between reality as is and should be. Third, process need, wherein the need is acknowledged but ignored by all or most). Fourth, industry or market structure changes that catch everyone unaware. Fifth, demographics, including the ability to pay attention to changes within their scope. Sixth, changes in perception, model and meaning. Seventh, new knowledge that become available, both scientific and otherwise.

Other definitions and interpretations of entrepreneurialism abound (Audretsch, Kuratko & Link, 2015; Baumol, Schilling & Wolff, 2009; Berkun, 2010; Drucker, 1986; Hess, 2009). In the popular imagination, the concept of the entrepreneur as the game-changer, the inventor, and the illusory Edison all persist, further inflamed by the heated expansion of tech giants and outliers such as Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, and Mark Zuckerman. The American public loves a good underdog story, and a narrative that combines the historical rags-to-riches underpinnings with the stunning acquisition of billions of silicon dollars has practically every schoolchild and undergrad wanna-geek fantasizing over discovering or inventing the next high-stepping, high-tech unicorn.

The topic of entrepreneurship itself has exploded into a very public and commercial industry, with hundreds and potentially thousands of best-selling books enveloping this topic (i.e. *The 4-Hour Work Week,* etc.). With the advent and ease of online courses, MOOCs, YouTube tutorials, and commercial adult-ucation, studying, dissecting, and diversifying, entrepreneurship is a booming business. Between commercial conferences, how-to tomes, online advice boards, and public entrepreneurial personas morphing into household names (Oprah, Dr. Oz, Donald Trump), entrepreneurship has attained a cult-like status (Drucker, 1986).

Even the heralded halls of academia have seized entrepreneurship's Carpe Diem moment. Any self-respecting modern university currently boasts a business school offering courses and often degrees in entrepreneurship. Drucker (1986) pointed out an interesting irony: modern universities themselves may qualify as the first product of entrepreneurial innovation. The notion of the contemporary university was borrowed by Humboldt from the University of Berlin in Germany, and its wide and successful growth has been attributed to its successful and entrepreneurial adaptation to American sense and sensibilities.

As attention to entrepreneurship has grown, its very parameters have expanded in similar, even parallel, growth (Baumol, Schilling & Wolff, 2009). Whereas entrepreneurship originated as a successful juggling of diverse activities, its identity subsequently became integrated into the concept of business as practiced in a capitalistic economy (Drucker, 1986). Its reach was further expanded by research in creativity and innovation; now, as entrepreneurship is increasingly associated with both academic and commercial endeavors, its definition continues to alter and adapt to the changing needs of society, business, and its crescendo-ing clientele: the public itself (Berkun, 2010). Entrepreneurship has evolved. It ain't what it used to be.

Entrepreneurship: Attempting A Definition

Entrepreneurship is a bedeviled and belabored term. The concept has moved from the foundational realms of economics and capitalism into fields as multifarious as innovation studies, institutional management, and pop psychology (Drucker, 1986). Accordingly, entrepreneurship "means different things to different people" (Audretsch et al., 2015), including scholars, managers, and thought leaders. This multifaceted dimension of entrepreneurship has imbued it with a "multitude of definitions" (Audretsch et al., 2015). In his book, *An Entrepreneur's Manifesto,* Mariotti (2015) admitted that the entrepreneur has "fascinated and frustrated theorists and researchers almost from the dawn of the study of economics" (p. 6).

Audretsch et al. (2015) cited an apt analogy. Fifty years ago, business management theory was a dense and humid jungle of ideas, principles, proclamations, and suppositions, yet the field has only continued to grow and flourish as research and interest fertilize the soil underfoot. Similarly, entrepreneurship has experienced its jumble and jungle of definition and delineation, and the vines and foliage still spring forth in size and lushness. Merely a generation ago, "scholarly research on entrepreneurship was sparse and virtually non-existent;" now, however, the field is emerging, developing, growing, and "has emerged as on of the most dynamic fields" (Audretsch, 2012, p. 755).

For a no-nonsense and general definition, entrepreneurship is "the capacity and willingness to develop, organize and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make a profit…. [as in] the starting of a new business" (Business Dictionary.com). Historically, it was Richard Cantillon who in 1755 first endowed entrepreneurship with its economic scope; in his *Essai sur la Nature du Commerce en Générel,* he outlined the basic principles of an early market economy including rights to individual property and the notion of economic interdependence. Adam Smith's 1776 work, *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, detailed the workings of a market economy, but seldom was the classic entrepreneur mentioned until much later in the early 20th century, when Joseph Schumpeter offered some interesting and astonishing propositions on the tendencies and techniques of this peculiar businessperson (Landstom, Harichi, & Astrom, 2012).

Schumpeter is a seminal thinker in the German tradition of entrepreneurship theory; also noted are the intellectual traditions of the Chicago tradition, based on Knight and Schultz, and the Austrian tradition based on von Mises, Kirzner, and Schackle (Audretsch, 2012). Schumpeter departed from the more conservative view of the entrepreneur as a generator of new products, instead positing him/her as a force of "creative destruction" in business. According to Audretsch, Schumpeter believed that capitalism would not progress due to increased economic investment, but rather as a result of people—and institutions—functioning as agents of change within the system itself. Thus was born a noted idea that has remained with modern entrepreneurial theory to this very day: the power of innovation (Drucker, 1986; Berkun, 2010). Innovation, change, transformation, disruption: these words are discovered in most modern tomes written in business, entrepreneurship, and management or leadership theory. Definitely, Schumpeter was on to something. His own innovative ideas continue to resonate in our contemporary society, remarkably almost one hundred years later (Audretsch).

Creative destruction blows a hole in the status quo (Audretsch, 2012; Drucker, 1986). The entrepreneur, in ways both small and large, operates as a revolutionary shouldering new ideas as rifle and ammunition (Berkun, 2010). In this sense, Schumpeter rose against the archetype of the entrepreneur as Inventor. Innovation supposes doing or making something with a novel twist or change: it is not necessarily inventing the wheel, but improving it. The entrepreneur thus transforms himself into a necessary guerilla warring against the overwrought, cumbersome machinery of heavy business, for "Without the entrepreneur, new ideas would not be implemented and pursued. The status quo would tend to be preserved at an opportunity cost of forgone innovative activity, growth and economic development (Audretsch, 2012, p. 759).

Naturally, Schumpeter scholars abound. Goss (2005) cited the division of Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship into three major typologies. The first defined entrepreneurial behavior, including the modes and methods accenting the production and introduction of new products; the second, entrepreneurial motivation, focused on the social, cultural, economic and psychological payload and benefits of founding a new innovation; and lastly, entrepreneurial action examined the difficulties and hindrances that counter or oppose the innovation.

Though some subsequent scholars have used these typologies as rationale to support the portrait of a feisty and risk-assimilating entrepreneurial personality, Schumpeter himself warned about the innate "inertia" that "lies in the psyche of the businessman himself" (Schumpeter, 1934, p. 86). Current research would support this prescient understanding of the human mind. In his book *No Nonsense: The Power of Not Knowing*, Jamie Holmes (2015) investigated the current research upholding the idea that the human brain tends to discount and dismiss ambiguity. Ambiguous ideas and actions de-center us as human beings, and our brains like to pull us back to the norm of the status quo (Holmes, 2016). Individuals who continually charge against established systems and social establishments run the risk of being labeled outliers, garnering "the condemnation and disapproval that is heaped upon iconoclasts and deviants" (Goss, 2005, p. 206). Our behavioral and social tendencies, like Newton's physical matter, run toward inertia; one universality that many entrepreneurs seem to share is the willingness and strength to struggle against that innate trait. Entrepreneurs thus find the inner resources to overcome resistance—institutional, economic, social, and personal—in order to affect change (Audretsch, 2012; Berkun, 2010).

Much discussion has highlighted an idealized—almost romanticized—picture of the swashbuckling entrepreneur (Drucker, 1986). Entrepreneurial traits and tendencies have been painted with a brush both wide and superficial, proclaiming the noble characteristics of this self-made Prometheus. Doubtless, the public is famously familiar with his many charming qualities, including but not limited to (yes, *his* qualities, as he is, in literature, invariably a man): failure-averse, risk-taking, independent, intelligent, intrinsically motivated, creative, curious, steadfast, consistent, diligent, persistent, achievement-oriented, original, outside-the-box, masterful, logical, decisive, etc. (Audretsch, 2012; Audretsch, Karatko, & Link, 2015; Hytti and Heinonen, 2013). In essence, the entrepreneur is part explorer and part map-maker. He is adventurous yet disciplined, rule-free and idea-oriented. He is disruptive and divergent, and casually holds the keys to our collective imagination.

Since the 1950s, scholars have attempted to research the elusive entrepreneurial personality, and have been encouraged and stymied by the vast divisions within the field of diverse opinions (Landstrom, Harirchi & Astrom, 2012). Academics have taken interest in the idea of characteristics as much as to define the field as to determine—and even pre-determine—the type of individual who may aspire to the echelons of entrepreneurial endeavors. The question of "Who becomes an entrepreneur?" however, remains largely expansive, and frustratingly inconsistent.

In the early 1960s, David McClelland attempted to inventory entrepreneurial tendencies, and many audiences were surprised by his resulting conclusions: while many entrepreneurs have a higher need for achievement than non-entrepreneurs, they were, contrary to accepted and popular opinion, only moderate—and not high—risk-takers. Still cataloguing traits, McClelland (1987) compared characteristics of 12 average and 12 superior small business people in developing nations, finding commonality in "proactive traits" such as initiative and assertiveness, achievement orientation (as discovered earlier), and commitment to others. Other expected qualities, including self-confidence, persistence, persuasion, and expertise, did *not* demonstrate statistical significance in his study. The 1980s and 1990s saw continued research into behavioral and personal traits, with mixed results. This scholarly inquiry was at least partially charged by David Birch's *The Job Generation Process* (1979), wherein Birch shockingly revealed that most U.S. jobs were created by small business and new firms, not the old and staid behemoths of established business (Landstrom et al., 2012). The research during this era was described as "fragmented and individualistic," partially due to the fragmented and individualistic nature of the emergent field itself. Funding and direction were haphazard and sporadic, while universities established schools of entrepreneurial studies, and journals rushed to catch up (Landstrom et al.).

The early 1990s and beyond witnessed continued growth, including attempts to build an infrastructure that could ostensibly contain the rifts, divisions, and diversions within the field itself. In some areas, fragmentation continued as scholars changed position, and entered and exited the arena of discourse (Landstrom et al., 2012). At the same time, the field continued to seek foundational roots, as universities expanded their studies, role models and spokespersons emerged, and empirical studies were initiated. Shane and Venkataraman's (2000) call to action in "The Promise of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Research" provided form and fodder as the experts began to take positions, and also began to consider the parameters and limitations of entrepreneurship as a valid and recognized academic area of study. This seemingly innocuous article has since become the most-cited reference in all of entrepreneurship scholarship (imagine that: academics arguing amongst themselves over scholarly nuance). In *The Academy of Management Review*, the authors (2000) argued for an integrated framework for entrepreneurship, mentioning that, "perhaps the largest obstacle in creating a conceptual framework for the entrepreneurship field has been its definition" (p. 218). Shane and Venkataraman (2000) recommended moving away from the sole investigation surrounding the identity and activity of the entrepreneur, and pushed for inclusion of a Schumpeterian acknowledgement of the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities, thus widening the field to include the notions of disequilibrium, disruption, and innovation, opening the field for exploration outside the field of business, a move that allows for the further expansion of entrepreneurial behavior in non-business settings such as culture, social institutions, non-profits, schools, etc.

The jungle of entrepreneurship study is complicated by its scope (Audretsch et al., 2015). By any expert's account, the field is wide and deep, a veritable Grand Canyon of research growing from an initial small fissure in the established bedrock. The field itself incorporates diverse elements, including analysis of the individual, traits, behaviors, functions, actions, new business, and ownership, among other emerging topics (Audretsch et al.). In their exploration of the existing literature, Landstrom et al. (2012) revealed that entrepreneurship qualifies as a "fairly young research field" (p. 1155). Of the 135 published works that establish the core of the field, 113 in total or 84% have appeared since 1980. Perhaps ironically, the most cited core text is Schumpeter's 1934 *Theory of Economic Development,* cementing the German tradition as fundamental. Central to Schumpeter's (1934) placement is his theory that "innovation [is] an endogenous process," and his belief in the entrepreneur as the individual force that is able to move capitalism away from inert equilibrium and potential stagnation and toward change and regeneration. Clearly, this view places primary importance on the existence, recognition, and continuation of entrepreneurial actions. More recently, Kirzner (1973, 1997) and the Austrian tradition have received emphatic support due to the embracing of "entrepreneurial alertness" and its importance in the task of the entrepreneur to be aware of profit-making opportunities, and in seeking out the imbalances within the market in order to exploit profit and change from recognized inconsistencies (Landstrom, et al., 2012). The Chicago tradition follows Frank Knight's 1921 *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit,* investigating the distinctions of risk-taking, and revealing that "if change is predictable, there is no opportunity for profit" (Landstrom et al., p. 1165). In retrospect, Landstrom et al. found that entrepreneurship was a "changeable field of research" dominated by integrative research and led by topics deemed "interesting" within a relatively new field. The authors defined the development of its academic field as itself an entrepreneurial endeavor that continues to alter and integrate many disciplines, though the primacy of business and management as contributing fields are noted. Thus, the tenets and principles of entrepreneurship do not just inform its study, but are indeed helping shape the very outline of the field itself!

In a recent development, Audretsch et al. (2015) recommended the division of the "multifaceted" field of entrepreneurship into the following segments:

1. Theories based on organizational status, including studies on person, firm and team.

2. Theories based on behavior, incorporating such concepts as motivation, individual actions, and organizational leeway.

3. Theories based on performance, including growth, innovation, and social/other forms focused on public gain.

4. An eclectic paradigm of entrepreneurship, the authors' new category that combines multiples lenses, and multi-level investigations and synthesized studies (p. 708).

In this proposal, the authors (2015) desired to focus on an expanding view of entrepreneurship, moving against attempts to constrain or narrow the field despite its noted ambiguities and inconsistencies (including rejecting the parameters proposed by Shane and Venkataraman in 2000). These categories would allow the field to continue to define itself as a dynamic field, and not to restrict it as a static one.

Social Entrepreneurs: Expanding the Edges of Entrepreneurial Actions

Dynamically, entrepreneurship has expanded into worlds far afield from its traditional business base (Bornstein & Davis, 2010; Landstrom et al., 2012). As the tendrils of entrepreneurial definition have branched outward, the outshoots have taken root in many non-traditional institutions and realms. Initially and traditionally, entrepreneurs were closely tied to the economy of business, and were globally defined as those individuals who "demonstrate initiative, imagination, and willingness to expend effort in the pursuit of wealth, power, and prestige… [especially as] …founders of new business firms" (Baumol et al., 2009, p. 712). As research on the entrepreneur has progressed, further parallel development has found scholars, policy makers, and individuals using the language, behaviors, and habits of entrepreneurs to discern and determine innovation within other social, economic, and institutional structures. In some cases, the definitions are similar and reminiscent of the old-school business entrepreneur. In other examples, the term entrepreneur takes on an entirely new life and meaning as the original definition alters and expands to create new divisions in the field (Landstrom et al., 2012).

One such example is the area of social entrepreneurship (SE) (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Social entrepreneurs are citizens intent on using the tactics and techniques of entrepreneurship to alter politics, transform institutions, address inequities, solve pressing problems, or advance change in problematic areas in their own nations, and around the world. Citing Greg Dees, potential originator of the SE term, Bornstein and Davis (2010) defined social entrepreneurs as people who “create public value, pursue new opportunities, innovate and adapt, act boldly, leverage resources they don’t control, and exhibit a strong sense of accountability” (p. 1). Dees identified two schools of enterprise thought in the U.S., the former focusing on organizations, finances, and revenue as part of “high-impact enterprises,” the latter focusing on “breakthrough insights” (Bornstein & Davis, p. 2). Dees thus seemed to apply very Schumpeterian principles of innovation to the world of social and organizational change. Essentially, social entrepreneurs are interested in the application of entrepreneurial principles to address and potentially solve targeted social, political, humane, equity, and economic issues.

Social entrepreneurs are in it for more than the money (Bornstein and Davis, 2010). This detail distinguishes their actions from those of strictly business-level entrepreneurs, and this fact also complicates their endeavors. Often, the mission of a social entrepreneur is to affect change in a manner that challenges the status quo, disrupts a traditional mindset, alters an institution, or counters an entrenched viewpoint (Bornstein & Davis). Thus, the work of the social entrepreneur proclaims at the very least an axiomatic valuation, and contains, at the highest, an ethical expectation.

Grameen (“Village”) Bank is one example of social entrepreneurship in action (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). As Bangladesh reeled first from independence and then a horrific cyclone in the early 1970s, foreign aid rushed into the nation but was quickly subsumed by misdirection, greed, corruption, and other infrastructure issues. Mohammad Yunus, an expat Bangladeshi economics professor living in the U.S., founded Grameen Bank with the innovative idea of micro-loans, a concept which has now become wide-spread and emulated in many developing nations. Through understanding specific national needs, desiring and affecting real-time structural and societal change, leveraging influence and employing fair policies while insisting on high ethical and business standards, Grameen reached national scale by circumventing the existing systems and focusing on its core missions: improving life, reducing poverty, and increasing capacity for Bangladeshi citizens.

Mission and purpose are keys to understanding and implementing social entrepreneurship (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). As society continues to evolve and as globalization presses into daily consciousness, numerous national and global inequities have received public attention (consider open/social media coverage ranging from the Syrian refuges to income inequality). The evolving idea of a responsible citizen carries with it the notion that the individual is more than a privileged receiver of goods; in a democracy, a citizen must also actively participate in society, policy, and the betterment of the government (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Democracy is an adaptive form of government, one that may be influenced, for better or for worse. Currently, the U.S. citizenry has noticed several state and national policies and procedures have gone awry; one manner to address the shortfalls of underlying social, political and economic inequities is to rise to meet them with actions of social entrepreneurship (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Additionally, as the demographic of the socially concerned Fourth Generation of Millennials rises to strength, the focus of finding purposeful work has becoming a growing question for millions of young people: "What kind of enterprise is worth devoting your life to build?" (Bornstein & Davis, 2010; Marx, 2014).

Social entrepreneurship offers opportunity to those individuals, especially young adults in the emerging Millennial and E Generations, who are motivated to find a career that is integrated with purpose (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). "Millennials will insist on solutions to accumulated problems and injustices and will profoundly impact leadership and lifestyles" (Marx, 2014, p. 22). Drucker (1986) pointed to such demographic awareness as a key to entrepreneurial development. Understanding the tendencies of the emerging leading generations may predict increased and enhanced activity in social entrepreneurship endeavors (Marx, 2014).

Another intriguing and potentially attractive feature of SE is its designation as a humanitarian effort (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). This feature alone may be successful in capturing the imagination and energies of another emerging demographic force: women entrepreneurs. Currently, the entrepreneurial gender gap looms large; as of 2015, approximately 30% of businesses in the United States were owned by women, while globally there existed a "significant growth gap" between male and female entrepreneurs (Zimmerman, 2015). Though such growth indicates an increase over the last 10 years, the percentage will not be equitable until it reflects numbers that equal women's representation in the population: slightly over 50%. Most nations have far to go to attain these percentages (Terjesen & Lloyd, 2015).

Part of the lack of attraction may be the male-oriented domain and male-focused perceptions of the business entrepreneur. In their economics study, Hytti & Heionen (2013) posited that the masculine identity of the entrepreneur, including traits such as "risk-taking, courage, success, and masculinity" may hinder the identity construction of females entering the business world as potential entrepreneurs. Women perceived this male-driven persona to be lacking in compassion and empathy, and that a broader, more accessible entrepreneurial identity would help the entry of greater numbers of women into the field. One solution the authors proposed was alternate entrepreneurial identities for women that incorporated the humane; potentially, "the [female] participants might also benefit from and relate to other concepts such as social entrepreneurs" (Hytti & Heionen, 2013, p. 895).

Social entrepreneurship adds further dimensions to the expanding arenas of entrepreneurship (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). It offers purpose and mission, and moves beyond the measurements and rewards of money and financial incentives. The social entrepreneur goes beyond personal wealth, business recognition, and economic success: "He is not satisfied with monetary solutions but tries to change his environment, local community, the society, and the entire world" (Cingula & Calopa, 2006, p. 200). SE portends a humanitarian viewpoint that may attract an increasing number of underrepresented women as well as minorities. Its mission-driven inner concept may further appeal to the youthful Millennial and E Generations increasingly searching for novel and innovative solutions for society's ills (Bornstein & Davis, 2010).

Edupreneurs: Entrepreneurs in the World of Schools

Edupreneur is a phrase coined to describe an entrepreneur who operates in and around the framework of schools (Hess, 2008). This portmanteau, though a clever combination of the two embedded concepts of education and entrepreneurialism, masks the large and often unwieldy scope of the world of entrepreneurship focused on the school system.

In the U.S., the public education system incorporates a world so vast it could be considered its own socio-economic universe. During the 2015/16 academic year, slightly over 50 million American students attended K-12 public school, with an additional 5 million opting for private school attendance (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). In sum, 13,500 school districts operate 98,500 public schools while employing 3.1 million full-time teachers. The most current data reveals projected at $634 billion, with a per student cost placed at $12,600 (National Center for Education Statistics). In any sense of the word, school business is big business.

In Schumpeter's (1934) economic world, the entrepreneur is the "central innovator" whose function is "to reform or revolutionize the pattern of production by exploiting an invention or, more generally, an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way, opening a new source of supply of materials or a new outlet for product, by reorganizing a new industry." Clearly, schools are not businesses, though the monetary amounts they spend represent big economics.

Schools have purpose, and this purpose knits deep into the fabric that binds our nation to its founding principles (Hess, 2008; Ravitch, 2013). The purpose of schools is laden with cultural and political values, embedded in the history of mandatory public education, driven by the equality directives of democracy, and implicit in the idea that each American citizen deserves life, liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness (Hess, 2008; Ravitch, 2013). In the United States, education is viewed as a basic human right—one that has been reinforced worldwide in theory if not practice by the U.N.'s Declaration of Human Rights. Education reflects the belief in an American ethic defined by equality, freedom, diligence, development, and generalized public good (Ravitch, 2008). Further, education is viewed as a positive correlate to personal, communal, and national growth (Sandler, 2010). On an economic level, education is a societal decision for building and maintaining commercial growth. Good students make good citizens, who spur the economy toward continued growth and who contribute in positive ways to the town, state, and nation in which they live. As Kolstad, Wiig, and Moazzem (2014) posited, public education makes sense at both micro and macro levels. On the micro plane, "education is an investment choice, partly determined by payoffs across occupational choices" (p. 64). At the macro level, "education is a prerequisite for economic development" (Kolstad etal., 2014, p. 64).

Though values, principles, philosophy, politics, and economics all seemingly combine in a fluid formula in defense of a public education entity that could potentially be opened to entrepreneurs, some caveats exist. First, as aforementioned, schools are not businesses, and their people are neither products nor profit (Hess, 2008). In this sense, "The motive for which one enters the field of education must be clarified at the outset as education cannot be considered a business" (Grace, 2012, p. 152). In the world of schools, profit necessarily becomes secondary to other hard-to-measure aspects: quality and depth of education, student growth and understanding, development cycles, content and context decisions, and the essential value of education (Hess 2008). In addition, the billions that circulate in education are public money, accrued by taxes and fees assigned to citizens. Thus, the onus to carefully track and expend such public funds carries a higher moral imperative: this money is not coming out of the pockets of private business, ample investors, or individual entrepreneurs (Hess, 2008). The need to safeguard against fraud, waste, and abuse is magnified when dealing with public funds, raising questions about how entrepreneurial profit may fit into such a fiscal scenario (Ravitch, 2013). Third, children make up the population of schools, and "society is obligated to safeguard their welfare" (Hess, 2008, loc. 3025). Fourth, the school system is a public entity, and an institutionalized one whose processes and procedures are often shrouded in confusing language, lingo, and licenses understood mostly by insiders. This system is challenging to access from the outside, without even considering the mingling of for-profit and non-profit considerations. Lastly, while there are bright spots and moments of true brilliance present in many individual schools, replication of such light bulb moments has proven difficult to transfer, replicate, and develop between schools, districts, and states (Hess, 2008). Thus, "K-12 schooling is no place for wild-eyed schemes, quick-buck artists, or romantics willing to excuse dismal results" (Hess, 2008, loc. 4285).

Despite such obstacles, educational entrepreneurs have entered the school zone, bringing services, products, technology, personnel, and ideas. Hess (2008) claimed that educational entrepreneurialism comprises five categories:

1. Providers of specific goods and services.
2. Providers of curricular, instructional materials, assessments, etc.
3. Providers of people in teaching and leadership roles.
4. Firms that provide advisement, design, consulting, and other specialized services.
5. Entities that run whole schools.

Other experts cite further entrepreneurial opportunities due to increasing technology and accelerating globalization (Hess, 2008; Marx, 2014; Pinto, 2012).

Within the schools, business activities are deeply, systemically embedded and will continue to provide services and products to districts (Hess, 2008). Areas such as food and transportation services, maintenance and facility care, architecture and design, textbooks and school supplies, and assessment and testing services have long been embedded in schools at both the local and state levels, though their purpose of this review, these operational business ventures will not be considered as examples of entrepreneurship. Arguably, though many if not all of these areas possess the potential to employ and engage entrepreneurial activity, the focus remains on those entrepreneurs who are seeking to improve, change, or fundamentally transform the nature of contemporary schooling for the sake of the universal betterment of education (Hess, 2008; Sandler, 2010; Wagner, 2010).

Who then is this edupreneur? In some sense, she is a social entrepreneur, as the realm of education is deeply immersed in both mission and purpose. Individuals are often drawn to teaching due to its purposeful portrait; indeed, many teachers speak of of their chosen career more as vocation than career (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Whereas Drucker (1986) contended that entrepreneurs “create something new, something different; they change or transmute values," an edupreneur innovates in order to positively affect the outcome for a child, or potentially for many children (p. 22). Such underlying potential to transform lives allows for a job definition that incorporates not just personal and financial gain, but even nods to Maslow's self-actualization as well as acknowledging fundamental societal ideals of public good. To twist the popular aphorism a bit, those who can do *and* desire to make a difference, teach.

According to Michael Sandler (2010), educational entrepreneurs possess traits that distinguish them from their business counterparts, including creativity and innovation. Additionally, they are curious, and "have a compelling vision and possess a driving passion" that allows them to display a true belief in education, propelling them to overcome any hurdles or obstacles. Further, these individuals must exhibit a "tough discipline" in order to succeed in a unique, demanding, and often proprietary market (Sandler, 2010, p. 127-128). Sandler (2010) distinguished educational entrepreneurs by chronology and type, beginning with the trailblazers such as Wendy Kopp, founder of Teach for America, Kim Smith, founder of the NewSchools Venture Fund, and Chris Whittle, infamous leader of Channel One and the now defunct Edison School. Sandler (2010) next included individuals who attained scale through building educational enterprises (a category he named Doing Well by Doing Good), including Doug Becker of Sylvan Learning, and Johnathan Greyer of Kaplan Education, etc. Following this group are Serial Entrepreneurs who moved from one successful project to the next, including John Katzman of the Princeton Review and Ron Waldron of JumpStart and Curriculum Associates. Sandler also acknowledged a New Breed of Leadership, including universities and companies who hire lead talent to take their organizations to a new level. Sandler's (2010) main interest seemed to lie in assisting entrepreneurs affect real and permanent change in the K-12 sector, an area that remains stubbornly resistant to many levels of change.

Teske and Williamson (2006) found that educational entrepreneurs were those individuals willing to disrupt, transform, or radically alter how education is provided. Edupreneurs are the “innovative thinkers” who “are helping schools and school districts transform into high achieving and results-driven organizations” (The Education Innovator, 2008). These entities partner with schools, connecting their work with the public school system. They engage in initiative thinking, creative resourcing, and an acceptance of the potential for failure (Hirisch, Peters & Shephard, 2012). They are dynamic in their abilities to respond and react (Wansavatkul, 2013). These specialists are able to apply entrepreneurship to decision making and viable action within the public sector (Audretsch et al., 2015). Borasi and Finnigan (2010) mentioned several alternative definitions of entrepreneurship that fit the education model, including transforming ideas into intellectual value, pursuing innovation, perceiving opportunity, bypassing traditional funding, managing scarce resources, and evaluating and minimizing risk. Cumulatively, the education entrepreneur is driven by a certain and specific vision or philosophy, and determined to carry it out into practice in the school (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010).

The Educational Arena: Backdrop to Entrepreneurial Action

Three decades ago, the publication of A *Nation at Risk* (1983) prefaced a growing interest in the improvement of education with a resulting increase in the “growing class” of education entrepreneurs (Sandler, 2010). *A Nation at Risk* detailed the significant and numerous systemic problems in the U.S. education machine, citing the infamous “rising tide of mediocrity” (as cited in Sandler, 2010). This report and its resulting conversations surrounding the state of American education brought a simultaneous, dichotomous sense of hope and hopelessness to the general public that has endured ever since (Sandler, 2010). In 2010, as international benchmarking and PISA results attained widespread media coverage, the U.S.’s middling place in the low-center of the OECD pack indicated that this “old” mediocrity had become the new status quo (Sandler, 2010). Increasingly, Americans are worried that their school system is “profoundly inadequate,” and, while few disagree with the necessity for significant reform, “many insiders battle to defend the status quo” (Bornstein & Davis, 2010, p. 22). In schools, new ideas and novel approaches abound, but wider implementation often brings innovation to a standstill (Bornstein & Davis, 2010; Sandler, 2010).

The U.S. school system is, inarguably, a behemoth. It is a “prominent example” of a “domesticated and protected organization” (Nir & Hameiri, 2015, p. 4). Drucker (1986) termed such agencies “service institutions,” noting that in developed nations they have become too important as well as too big. “The public school system in the U.S. exemplifies both the opportunity and the dangers. Unless it takes the lead in innovation it is unlikely to survive this century, except as a school for the minorities in the slums” (Drucker, 1986, p. 186). Drucker further warned that revolution has historically fomented out of inertia and decay, not from novel ideas and a new dawn. Despite such dire warnings, optimism is possible. Society’s rapid and technological change offer great hope, and greater opportunity (Drucker, 1986; Sandler, 2010; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015).

Education faces monumental challenges regarding potential change (Drucker, 1986; Sandler, 2010; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). Change from the outside has proven stubbornly ineffective, while change from the inside has produced only incremental results (Hess, 2008; Katzman, 2012; Sandler, 2010). Innovators rarely locate support within established organizations, and actors focused on real change often find themselves stymied by peers, leaders, and a stagnant, unsupportive culture (Berkun, 2014). Schools, furthermore, are often viewed as being resistant to significant change, relying as they do on standard procedures and entrenched, unchanging norms (Yemini & Sagie, 2015). As entities ruled by government and public funds, schools are "slow-changing organizations" (Eyal & Kark, 2004, p. 218). Frequently, attempts at reform or improvement are slapdash or punitive, and schools and teachers may feel set up to fail. "Educrats love to tie our system up in knots by adding new requirements, imposing new regulations, and dangling carrots for compliance. But they have completely failed to create the conditions for real innovation or to make it possible to eliminate obsolete content" (Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015, p. 140).

Overall, schools suffer from a high-wire tension resulting from their unique position as social institutions (Drucker, 1986). On the one hand, schools are viewed as the keepers of societal norms, virtues, and values; on the other hand, outside forces and new innovations pressure schools to transform (Hess, 2008; Sandler, 2010). These dueling forces create a stasis that may encourage a continuation of the status quo visible in small steps and low-level change, versus complete and holistic systemic overhaul (Hameiri, Adam, & Inbar, 2014). Innovation starts small and rarely goes big (Berkun, 2010). Change begins and ends, over and over, in a cyclical tune that all tenured teachers begin to recognize as a failed refrain from years past. Our nation seems to "stumble from education reform to education reform like a drunken sailor" (Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015, p. 59). What begins as a monumental goal in the fall may end as a ghostly whisper by Spring. Thus a series of reforms begins and ends, begins and ends, ceaselessly beating against the shores of shrinking motivation. Exhaustedly, teachers and schools chip away at the next big thing. Increments do not move mountains; in this case, earth-movers are more useful than a thousand tiny shovels.

Outside and inner regulation further complicate the picture for schools. Since 1983—and before—schools have been the victim and beneficiary of public and political attention (Sandler, 2010). The plea of 'Something must be done!' is often met with discussion, debate, hand-wringing and policy making, not necessarily that order. Though schools maintain local control, they are technically part of a larger system (Drucker, 1986). Just as states fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government, so do schools answer to districts, districts to states, and states ultimately to the federal Department of Education, Congress, the Supreme Court, and the President. Unfortunately, what comes from above never seems to work in the trenches. "In a country of 300 million people, a top-down approach makes substantive change virtually impossible" (Katzman, 2012, p. 38). Complicating the "turbulent reality" of public education reform is the constant scrutiny to which schools are micro- and macroscopically subjected: schools and districts are continuously and omnipresently assessed, measured, and evaluated—often using the mandate *du jour*—with results exposed to the public (Katzman, 2012, p. 38). These measurements are intended to hold teachers and districts "accountable" for student learning, but such external, ever-changing, and ambiguous examination often produces nebulous and even negative effects (Nir & Hameiri, 2015, p. 4).

Institutionally, education is a tough sell for entrepreneurs bent on creating meaningful change (Sandler, 2010). Historically, reform has settled around two camps of reform: Capacity Builders, who are intent on improving the processes of schools from within using tools such as professional development, curriculum and assessments, and Choice-Based Reform, a technique that focuses on vouchers and charter schools as arbiters of change (Hess, 2008; Ravitch, 2013). Both efforts ignore other options, including continuing to promote entrepreneurial activity and innovation both from within and without the school doors (Wagner, 2010). Enmired in policies and politics, school districts are lethargic and cumbersome (Hess 2008). Embattled by public perception problems, they are prone to attack. Ensnared in systemic inertia, they are slow to change (Hess, 2008; Sandler, 2010; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). Small change takes precedence over big, sustained innovation. "There is…a lot of innovation and change—but it is shallow, prone to faddism, and constrained by rules and norms that prevent it from upending incentives, arrangements, delivery models, or staffing in any fundamental way" (Hess, 2009, loc. 188).

Despite the setbacks and continued stasis of school reform, hope exists (Hess, 2008; Ravitch, 2019; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). Despite the hiccups, setbacks, and outright failures of educational reform, the spirit to fundamentally change the nature of public education still hangs in the air (Hess, 2009; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). Despite decades of trial and travail, the public perceives the number one societal problem as the task to fix the public education system (Public Agenda Fund). Additionally, the world surrounding public schools is changing, and schools are feeling the pressure to accommodate that new world (Marx, 2014).

The Future: 21st Century Skills

The 21st century has dawned, yet our schools are largely stuck in the past. Structurally, theoretically, and philosophically, schools have witnessed little in the way of deep change (Katzman, 2012). The American high school has proven perhaps the most change-resistant entity despite impending impetus to radically restructure (Wagner, 2010). By freshman year of school, 44% of students are disengaged; by the junior year, that percentage becomes combustible, with both genders attaining levels nearing 90% (Cook-Deegan, 2016). Experts cited both lack of relevance and connectivity between school and future careers as a deep and unsolved issue. Further, traditional high schools are focused on academic versus vocational or pre-professional development, a one-curriculum-fits-all approach that has long caused divisions and classification of students into ability groups (Hess, 2008; Kahn, 2012). Additionally, the system is entrenched in mechanisms of timing, teaching, and testing. As Salman Kahn (2012) indicated, "Entire industries and some of our very largest professions depend on the persistence of our current system," including universities, textbook and curriculum companies, testing and test-prep industries, among others (p. 63).

Many educators, experts, entrepreneurs, and visionaries believe this quagmire could be changed if schools trudged out of the past and subsequently strolled into the future of 21st century skills (Kahn, 2012; Marx, 2014; Wagner, 2010). The focus of such skills would energize learning, leading to a "workforce of creative, curious, and self-directed lifelong learners who are capable of conceiving and implementing novel ideas" (Kahn, 2012, p. 80). Individuals both inside and outside the schools sense the opportunity to attain real, deep, and lasting change through these improvements. "We are in a period of profound transformation," and time is of the essence (Hess, 2008, loc. 898). Futurists and practitioners alike cite the need to move from standardized to individualized learning (Kahn, 2012; Katzman, 2012; Marx, 2014; Wagner, 2010; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015).

New skills focus on competency tasks in lieu of division by grade or age (Kahn, 2012; Wagner, 2010). Self-direction and assumption of responsibility (Kahn, 2012) are vital in creating mature learners, and meaningful communication and social interaction are vital even in the presence of a hyper-digitized world (Marx, 2014). The essential skills of critical thinking and analysis, communication, collaboration and creative-problem solving are central to shaping informed citizens and skilled, engaged employees—and entrepreneurs (Berry, 2015; Lehigh, 2008; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). Some thinkers (Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015; Bornstein, 2010) advocated teaching the skills and practices of entrepreneurship, allowing students alternative career pathways. Hands-on learning and real-time/real-life projects received frequent mention (Pinto, 2009; Saveri, 2013). The necessity for creativity training is oft-cited, both in and outside the fine and performing arts (Amabile, 1987; Robinson, 2010; Wagner, 2012). Marx (2014) mentioned that content and context must not be neglected, and recommends increased instruction in ethical behavior.

Saveri (2013) outlined five trends that offer the power to impact future learning. *Democratized entrepreneurship* disseminates an entrepreneurial mindset among students, educators, and communities, potentially creating a newly energized interest in innovation. *Personalization* will allow students to blend online, in-person, and hybrid learning to create highly individualized learning vistas. *The diversification of school formats* will cause an explosion in specialized schools that may encourage flexible and fluid enrollment. *Talent clouds* and certification methods may showcase learner's skills, activities, and tasks that employers may browse. Urban areas can be transformed into "learning landscapes," offering partnerships with companies, community events, pop-up businesses, and micro-economies. Lehigh (2008) cited interest in extended learning time schools, including those that incorporate analytical and workplace skills. Marx (2015) nodded to relationship building, leadership, and planning and management skills as society transitions into a global knowledge/information age and beyond to an age of knowledge creation and breakthrough thinking.

While employability skills remain an integral part of education, they do not exist outside a solid base of content and context based on cultural, practical, and philosophical knowledge (Kahn, 2012). Creating interested and invested learners leads to self-directed and intrinsically motivated lifelong learners (Kahn, 2012; Marx, 2014). Educators and education entrepreneurs who are able to deeply move, model, and transform current stagnant school policies and practices will be those who pave the path to future student success in centuries beyond our imagining

(Marx, 2015).

Institutional Intrepreneurs: Teachers and Leaders as Education Entrepreneurs

Within K-12 education, one constant is dissatisfaction with a school-as-usual perspective (Hess, 2009; Kahn, 2010; Wagner, 2010; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). Education's status quo has not provided the desired results for students, teachers, parents, or the public, yet its scholastic nature has budged remarkably little in the last fifty years (Hess, 2008). Somewhere along the line, education lost its competitive edge (Sandler, 2010). Optimism exists in idea that entrepreneurial thinkers and do-ers may sharpen that once-dull blade (Hess, 2008).

In service institutions such as schools, stagnant culture may contribute to lack of propensity for change (Drucker, 1986). In *Make It Stick*, the Heath Brothers (2007) arrived at the realization that "culture isn't just one aspect of the game—it is the game" (p. 242). In any organization, peer perception becomes reality; individuals tend to act as their peers do. According to Urbano and Alvarez (2014), the "cultural-cognitive" dimension of a group affects individuals as they shape the schemas, frames and inferential sets that people use when considering and selecting information (p. 706). The standard thus becomes the norm that is endlessly reinforced within the institution (Heath, 2007). In a public organization, innovation tends to be the anomaly rather than the norm (Drucker, 1986). As schools struggle with federal and state mandates, teacher unions, contracted leadership, school boards, outside assessment, problematic budgets, and public perception, the tensions of interlocking interests can exhaust innovation before it begins. Such contradictory forces can stifle change (Yemini, Addi-Raccah & Katarvis, 2014; Yemini & Sagie, 2015.

Corporate entrepreneurship offers potential for large entities such as businesses and institutions to proctor and promote the tenets of change (Eyal & Kark, 2013). Corporate entrepreneurship has been labeled intrepreneurship, reflecting the internal context of an employee working from the inside of a structure to affect change (Hirisch, Peters, & Shepherd, 2012). Within public service institutions such as schools, corporate entrepreneurship becomes institutional entrepreneurship (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Institutional entrepreneurs are "actors who have interest in particularly new institutional arrangements or in transforming existing ones" (Yemini, et al., 2014, p. 528). In schools, principals and education leaders may function as intrepreneurs, using the complexity of policy, politics, and pedagogy to create an environment that encourages innovation, as well as engaging in innovative acts themselves (Ayub & Othman, 2013; Sandler, 2012; Yemini et. al, 2014). This vision of entrepreneurial leadership melds well with Drucker's (1986) interpretation of Schumpeter's entrepreneurs, who "create something new, something different; they change or transmute values" (1986, p. 22).

As intrepreneurs, school leaders may leverage the tension between internal and external demands as a springboard for new and successful change measures (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Thus, while complying with outside federal, state, and district demands to improve student achievement, leaders proactively introduce ideas, innovations, and initiatives that advance their own focused ideas as well as promote customized solutions for their specific school(s) (Yemini, et al., 2014). The benefit that leader intrepreneurs may offer is multi-fold: they customize change for their school locale, engage their own drive for school improvement, encourage and stimulate a cultural climate for innovation, and allow for the spread and scaling of successful change practices (Andrekopoulos, 2006; Sandler, 2012; Yemini et al., 2014). As a school leader, creation and promotion of culture is a practical and ethical responsibility. Drucker (1986) recommended that public service institutions "build into their policies and practices the constant search for innovation opportunity" (p. 183). Principals may thus "transcend their traditional roles to incorporate innovative activities that mediate and alter educational policy and establish new arrangements" (Yemini et al., 2014, p. 528). In the case of schools, entrepreneurship is transformed into intrepreneurship so that innovations and solutions bring about benefits to students, staff, and culture, versus focusing on profit and monetary return (Yemini et al., 2014; Sandler, 2012). Unfortunately, empirical studies in educational entrepreneurship remain scarce, and increasingly specialized studies in the topic of institutional entrepreneurship in the schools even scarcer (Borasi & Finnagan, 2010; Yemini et al., 2014,).

In their case study of ten entrepreneurial principals, Yemini et al. (2014) discovered a commonality: these leaders were driven by mission or purpose. Sandler (2012) asserted that the most important driver of an education entrepreneur is passion. Ayub and Othman (2013) found that successful schools possessed entrepreneurial leaders who owned a strong desire for excellence, were highly dedicated, exhibited self-control, and practiced innovation. Yemini and Sagie (2015) determined that entrepreneurship on the part of school principals involved proactivity, striving for innovation, risk-taking behavior, and fund-raising activities. School leaders are "driven by their determination to simply do the right thing"; two things they have in common are "a desire to improve the delivery of education for students and the willingness to try every means imaginable to make it happen" (Andrekopoulos, 2008, p. 48). Entrepreneurial principals have a keen eye for sensing opportunity, including disrupting the status quo, and may take advantage of external regulations (such as NCLB) to become "secret entrepreneurs," using a negative or punitive mandate as an opportunity for innovation (Andrekopoulos, 2008, p. 46). Ayub and Othman (2013) recommended that administrators borrow from the book of business entrepreneurs to adopt innovative practices, strategize to overcome problems, and boost morale and planning throughout the organization.

In addition to principals, teachers have also received attention from scholars interested in school entrepreneurship (Hess, 2008). As the infantry officers working in the trenches, teachers are vital in practicing and promoting innovative practice. As Heath (2007) revealed, teacher behavior can be construed as absolutely vital due to the power to influence fellow teachers, and thus to sway the entire culture of the school. The herd factor of cultural-cognitive dimensions can firmly grasp the reins of innovation, or run the cart into the ditch: “If you want to change things, you have to pay close attention to social signals, because they can either guarantee a change effort or doom it” (Heath, 2007, p. 228). Change is difficult due to many factors, including exhaustible self-control, lack of clear direction, decision paralysis, ambiguity, long-term hurdles, overly ambitious goals, and unspoken environmental norms (Heath, 2007). Teachers, as part of a larger school staff, can help overcome these hurdles by continuing to innovate, thereby contributing to a culture of innovation acceptance—ideally, encouraged by the school’s leadership. “While the ‘system’ says it respects and wants creativity, more often than not, it does nothing to encourage or support it” (Lavaroni, as cited in Andrekopoulos, 2006, p. 45). Administrators can promote the inclusion, practice, and support of innovation, creativity, and change efforts by its teachers, creating vital “teacher partnerships” in high-performing schools (Andrekopoulos, 2006, p. 48).

Borasi and Finnigan (2010) defined entrepreneurial teachers as “agents of change,” and claimed that entrepreneurship is not a trait or tendency practiced by school leaders, but “a type of leadership that occurs in specific settings” (p. 6). The authors borrowed from Czariawska-Joerges and Wolff (1991): “Entrepreneurship is leadership in exceptional situations” (as cited in Borasi & Finnegan, 2010, p. 6). For Borasi and Finnagan (2010), entrepreneurial educators are “educators who consistently transform ideas into initiatives that generate value for their organization and the clients they serve" (p. 7). Using six individuals in a case study, the authors identified attitudes and behaviors that pinpointed successful change agents:

1. Driven by a vision, often with a sense of urgency.
2. Relentlessly engaging in innovation.
3. Being alert to seizing opportunities.
4. Not constrained by limited resources.
5. Masters at networking and connecting.
6. Making quick and timely decisions.
7. Creative problem-solving.
8. Confident risk-taking.
9. Being or finding a champion for each innovation.
10. Capitalizing on crisis and dysfunction in order to move the initiative forward.

Borasi and Finnagan's research discovered teachers firmly at the center of educational entrepreneurship, where they are well-positioned to function as agents of change. Purdy (2013), however, found that teachers needed more support and direction to consider themselves agents of change in their schools. An additional obstacle may refer back again to culture. While self-efficacy is positively correlated with innovative behavior in teachers, some studies have revealed that such educational innovation, when practiced by the teacher, may lead to pushback and negative pressure from colleagues (cited in Thurlings, Evers & Vermeulen, 2015). Strong ties to community and culture have been connected to the status quo; while communal ties are indeed necessary for the implementation of new ideas, weaker ties tend to free the innovator from her group (Thurlings et al., 2015).

Berry (2015) referred to "teacherpreneurs," finding current conceptions of teacher leaders too narrow. The U.S. should examine policies and practices encouraging teacherpreneurs, "classroom experts who teach students regularly but also have time, space, and reward to spread their ideas and practices to colleagues as well as administrators, policy makers, parents, and community leaders" (Berry, 2015, p. 146). These teacher-leaders are mobilizers interested in "promoting and spreading a new culture of collective innovation and creativity in a sector—education—that has been woefully lacking in one" (Berry, 2015, p. 147). Teacherpreneurs could be the "boundary spanners" needed to establish links between different and competing groups such as government, business, universities, etc. and public schools for their cohesive betterment and continual innovative improvement (Berry, 2015, p. 147).

True change in schools is ongoing, and must be woven into the fabric of the culture (Yemini et al., 2014). In order for school and district-wide innovation to take hold, it must be "institutionalized within the organization" (Yemini et al., 2014, p. 535). Successful institutional entrepreneurship is "associated with the shifting of institutional order and norms" Yemini et al., 2014, p. 536). Additionally, true change is replicable and scalable (Sandler, 2012), moving fluently and fluidly out the doors of the immediate building, and entering other schools, districts, and states.

Schools wherein teachers and principals join forces, effort, and practice in order to change education for the better are stronger schools overall. Phelan, Johnson and Semrau (2013) found that "organizations that exhibit an entrepreneurial orientation (EO) tend to perform better than their peers" (p. 19). EO is a construct that measures entrepreneurial behaviors and dispositions, including innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking. For schools, developing a culture of proactiveness was the most significant factor related to performance gains in schools, both charter and public (Phelan et. al, 2013). Proactivity was defined by Eyal and Kark (2004) as the “inclination to shape the environment, rather than merely react to it passively” (p. 213). However, despite the promising topic of institutional entrepreneurship as practiced by both teachers and principals, the research and rewards remain sparse. No federal incentives, including the recent Race to the Top, included initiatives for professionals to share their expertise with one another (Berry, 2015). Though talk is bandied about in terms of restructuring the principalship, instituting teacher leadership, and allowing room for staff innovation in schools, intrapreneurial innovation has received little serious or scholastic attention (Berry, 2015; Borasi & Finnagan, 2015).

Institutional innovation requires hands-on work (Drucker, 1986; Hess, 2008; Sandler, 2010). Teacher innovative behavior is influenced by multiple factors, including individual and organizational elements (Hess, 2008). Curiosity, self-efficacy, motivation, job satisfaction, and perception of a problem all influence teacher innovation on the individual level. Organizationally, culture, climate, leadership, communication, and feedback may help foster environments that foment creativity and innovation in schools (Thurlings, Evers, & Vermeulen, 2015). Educational innovation as an inside job requires more than a single, motivated, curious and hard-charging teacher; the institution must also orient itself toward creating a climate that culminates in creative, continual change (Sandler, 2010).

Education Entrepreneurs: Bringing Outside Entrepreneurship into Schools

The education system may benefit from enlisting, accepting, and encouraging entrepreneurial assistance from the outside (Hess, 2008; Sandler, 2010). Ready or not, change has already begun (Kahn, 2012; Marx, 2014). The world in and around schools is experiencing rapid change as diverse student populations increase, knowledge fields expand, technology advances, public perceptions alter, and social and professional expectations of schools burgeon

(Eyal & Kark, 2004; Thurlings et al., 2015; Toch, 2011). Schools would do well to address these and other changes. Drucker (1986) posited that, “A industry is ripe for basic structural change if the way in which it does business is changing rapidly” (p. 85). Outside entrepreneurs offer ideas, innovations, and solutions that schools may not easily enact themselves due to issues of time, development, budget, or self-perception (Hess, 2008; Wagner, 2010).

Education entrepreneurs are sometimes constrained within the auspices of social entrepreneurship (Bornstein & Davis, 2010), but the specialized and proprietary nature of schools renders them unique. To date, education entrepreneurs have created many “new operational modes to change the way schools do business” (Education Innovator, 2008). Focusing on the K-12 system, entrepreneurs have proposed and enacted changes in human capital, delivery of instruction, and leveraging of innovation (Education Innovator, 2008). School districts have witnessed an array of “excellent results” from partnerships with entrepreneurs (Hess, 2008). Further, “[entrepreneurs] have brought undeniable talent and drive to public education” (Toch, 2011, p. 69). According to Toch, however, the long-term impact of school-entrepreneur partnerships remains unclear.

NewSchools Venture Fund, established by serial investor John Doeer, has attempted to bring the principles of private venture finance to education reform, famously funding such projects as Teach for America, KIPP Schools, Academy for Urban School Leadership, etc. NewSchools is “committed to results-driven entrepreneurial education ideas” (Education Innovator, 2008). In order to qualify for investment, eligibility requirements include “the ability to produce measurable outcomes for K-12 public education in the U.S., be scalable and sustainable, and be led by a passionate entrepreneur” (Education Innovator, 2008). According to Toch (2011), the entrepreneurial reform effort is gathering momentum.

Who is the education entrepreneur, and why does she choose the challenging realm of schools and learning to practice her skill? Change and reform may reinforce the tendencies and proclivities of entrepreneurs, as, “Facilitating change is at the core of entrepreneurial action” (the Kaufman Foundation as cited in Brenkert, 2009). The entrepreneur in general must embody a “twofold creative dimension: … the project to be realized and the …organizational efforts that realize it” (Brenkert, 2009, p. 450). Eyal & Kark (2004) posited that “entrepreneurship is an action that can be related to generating new realities” (p. 215). A singular caveat that limits such entrepreneurship within the educational setting, however, is that “school entrepreneurship is still restricted by the government” (Eyal & Kark, p. 219). An entrepreneur must first possess the ability to recognize and opportunity, or demonstrate its correlate, the ability to create an opportunity (Audretsch, 2012,). Shane and Venkataraman (2000) asserted that a potential entrepreneur must decide to exploit the recognized opportunity. Wansavatkul (2013) proposed that “macro visions” that carried a universal big picture were vital for successful institutional entrepreneurship (p. 46).

Characteristics of education entrepreneurs vary, with notable overlap (Hess, 2008; Sandler, 2012). Entrepreneurs entering the school market must see the need for improvement, and be willing to overcome hindrances in order to realize innovation (Sandler, 2012). Functionally, they are rebels with a cause (Williams, 2007). Edupreneurs employ both educational and entrepreneurial practices, and demonstrate a strong desire to overcome problems (Ayub & Othman, 2013). Usually, they possess a higher purpose or vision, and take personal responsibility for their actions and innovations (Purdy, 2013). A sense of urgency and passion drives them (Yemini, Addi-Raccah, & Katarias, 2014; Wagner, 2010). They are risk-takers who are able to make creative use of resources in order to shift the status quo (Yemini et al., 2014).

Wanasavatkul (2013) determined that academic entrepreneurs exhibited the abilities of "dynamism, adaptability and the ability to respond to the current changes of society, economy, human behavior and experience" (p. 45).

Education entrepreneurs may benefit from originating within a school system, either as former teachers, professional staff, or insiders within the educational realm (Hess, 2008). Shane and Ventakaram's (2000) classification would support this insider status, as their universal entrepreneur would first possess the prior information and background necessary to spot the opportunity, and also exhibit the cognitive powers necessary to value it. Who better than a former educational specialist to discern, discover, and disseminate the details of educational reform and needed change? As "legitimacy still plays a major role in public education systems," such insider status could assist in the ethical concerns related to doing private business in public schools (Shane & Ventakaram, 2000). Former teachers may make ideal entrepreneurs, matching the concept of the "marginal man," an innovator who has participated in multiple intellectual domains but is not reliant or central to one particular field (Baumol, Schilling & Wolff, 2009). As educational generalists extraordinaire, teachers may just fit this bill. According to Hess (2008), two pools of ex-educators become entrepreneurs: those who leave schools early in their teaching careers, and seasoned school personnel who strike out later to form ventures and companies. An additional benefit lies in the proposition that "marginal men" tend to produce substantial breakthroughs rather than incremental inventions (Baumol et al., 2009, p. 714).

Reform efforts in the U.S. have generally fallen into two camps: first, capacity building, which focuses on school improvement through professional development, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Second, choice-based initiatives, with a heavy reliance on charter schools or vouchers as a currency for change (Hess, 2008; Toch, 2011). Neither of these approaches has produced deep, systemic change in the U.S. school system. Remarkably, charter and private schools perform no better than public schools when their results are adjusted for SES and student diversity; in some cases, their results are even worse (Hess, 2008). As Hess indicated, “School choice is no elixir” (loc. 142). Ironically, even so-called high-performing charter schools such as KIPP—among others--tend to be high on rigor but low on innovation. In fact, most charter schools are just slightly different versions of their public school counterparts, with few innovative or revolutionary structures, curriculum, or teaching methods employed (Ravitch, 2013).

The disappointment in conventional reform offers opportunity for education entrepreneurs, whose participation in school change has been “dismissed as peripheral and even distracting” (Hess, 2008, loc. 145). Due to the stickiness of status quo and the stasis of static culture, troubled organizations rarely change from within (Fullan, 2011; Heath, 2007; Hess, 2008). School reform may be ignited by partnerships with entrepreneurs, who may offer new approaches, fresh innovations, and creative disruptions that can be applied and scaled to larger levels (Drucker, 1986; Hess, 2008). Huge changes are in store for the education industry (Kahn, 2012; Sandler, 2010; Wagner, 2010). As pressure for change continues to mount and educational spending is forecast to grow (significantly, by all accounts), entrepreneurship is poised for further integration in school markets (Hess, 2008). A lack of action is dicey at best, and short-sighted at worst. “Not being able to act in adaptive and innovative ways may endanger school legitimacy” (Eyal & Kark, 2004, p. 219). Entrepreneurship partnerships may broaden organizational scope by exposing schools to new ideas and opportunities for much-needed renewal (Eyal & Kark, 2004).

Innovative ideas and practices predict opportunities for edupreneurs to enter the educational market (Hess, 2008; Kahn, 2012; Sandler, 2010). For the entrepreneur willing to take on the challenge, the world of education is filled with potential and fraught with risk. In lieu of return on investment (ROI), schools offer the additional axiological sum of social return (SROI), though ROI certainly remains a business goal (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). The attraction of purposeful work and social reward should be counted as a huge benefit, especially with meaning-seeking Millennials and Gen E's posed to enter the job market (Bornstein & Davis, 2010; Marx, 2014). The need for innovation is vital in schools and, even more so, the skills and ability to bring such innovation to successful, universal scale (Hess, 2010; Kahn, 2012; Sandler, 2010; Wagner, 2012). Additionally, edupreneurs may be able to offer increased efficiency to cumbersome school processes, and innovate new methods to supplant antiquated ones (Kahn, 2012). The need for accountability offers another entry into the school market, especially as public dissatisfaction with excessive standardized testing reaches saturation. Entrepreneurs may find novel approaches to learner assessment, talent acquisition, and student measurement that offer more authenticity with less stress and cost (Hess, 2008). However, defining educational success is a complex task, and further research and practice in assessment must be undertaken (Hess, 2008). Working symbiotically with a school, district, or state, an entrepreneur may involve himself in a partnership wherein both parties benefit (Yemini & Sagie, 2015).

The increasing globalization of both business and education offers further opportunity to entrepreneurs (Berry, 2015). As the world shrinks, our educational vistas expand (Kahn, 2012). Innovators who are able to harness this global accessibility to learning could portend major successes in educational entrepreneurship. The increasing diversity of the student population likewise harbors opportunities to those who can envision and innovate techniques, practices, and instruction that address concerns of learning and success for increasingly diverse and multilingual student populations (Marx, 2014). As both Robinson (2014) and Anabile (1997) discussed, the vitality of creativity in schools and business remains elemental to success and innovation; thus, entrepreneurs should continue to propose ideas, approaches, and solutions that expand and increase creativity training for students. Additionally, the growing reliance on schools as social institutions creates increased demand for districts and states to address concerns of learning, employability, and the economic future of their students (Sandler, 2010). High schools especially are suffering from identity crises related to increasing student choice outside of the college-prep track (Marx, 2014). Savvy entrepreneurs may investigate improved skill/career matching, and talent/certification clouds that allow students to move both laterally and horizontally toward their career dreams and choices. In addition to financing, school reform requires solid research to back new ventures and innovative practice (Katzman, 2012; Wolk, 2016). As such, increased research and development in education is highly recommended; entrepreneurs could help by funding and engaging in research and development efforts to improve schools. As research increases, new educational niches will ostensibly appear, which may offer new opportunities for existing and entry-level entrepreneurs.

In order to accommodate current and new educational entrepreneurship, the social, political and organizational climates must be altered (Hess, 2008; Sandler, 2010). Smith and Peterson (2008) recommended the following conditions to create positive access for entrepreneurs: more growth funding for innovation, patient capital (not requiring immediate or quick return), a strong innovative ecosystem, and a movement past old ideologies. Berger and Stevenson (2008) posited removing some of the barriers that face educational entrepreneurs, including viewing teachers as a sunk cost, lack of start-up capital, low-profit expectations, and brief tenures of school leadership. Instead, they proposed increasing new venture capital, removing barriers, achieving scale through consortia, commissioning R & D instead of finished projects, creating a welcoming climate for promising disruptions, offering alternate definitions of products and services, and allowing choice in school selection of products. Bryk and Gomez (2006) reinforced the notion of increased educational R & D, pointing out that field such as medicine and engineering spend between 5 to 20 percent of total expenditures for research. In education, although total education spending equates around 9% of U.S. GDP, research accounts for a mere .2% of funds expended (not 2%--.2%!). Katzman (2012) called for a “veritable education genome project” as a database of educational ideas and data: he bemoaned the absence of useful and shared data that could be accessed and researched by invested parties to improve education. In a commercial application of this idea, Hess (2008) imagined a Vendor Wall in which companies, products and services would be visible, allowing for transparency as well as idea generation and access to districts as potential markets for innovative ideas.

Conclusion

The literature surveyed indicates the potential for entrepreneurship to continue to infiltrate schools, and also for its potential to drive innovation and new approaches for school reform (Dintersmith & Wagner, 2015; Hess, 2006; Kahn, 2010; Marx, 2014). Entry into school systems, however, remains problematic (Hess, 2008). Entrepreneurs desiring to enter the educational market face unique and idiosyncratic barriers, especially within the K-12 arena. The literature addressing these obstacles and narrating the entrepreneurial journeys into education remains sparse. A better understanding of the various paths and partnerships between schools and entrepreneurs is needed, with attention paid to the entire entrepreneurial process for each edupreneur from idea generation to business integration within the school/district/educational organization,

Chapter THREE

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative Inquiry—A Beginning Definition

Narrative inquiry is a distinct mode of research within qualitative methodology. "Narratives permit life-like accounts that focus on experience, hence their alignment with qualitatively oriented research" (Pepper, 2000, p. 19). Also termed narratology, narrative inquiry uses oral and written narratives as the data with which to explore a research topic (Clandinin & Conelly, 2010). Narrative inquiry focuses on "studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experience, and chronologically ordering the meaning of those experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 70). Narratives are a natural fit for the social sciences and humanities wherein the subjects are human individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and cultures. Naturally and nascently, humans tell stories. From the very moment our ancestors could pick up an instrument and draw—then write, humans have been compelled to relate stories of humor, action, revelation, and everydayness. Stories are distinctly and ubiquitously human (Clandinin & Conelly, 2010). Further, stories are "a significant way individuals construct and express meaning" (Mishler, 2000, p 67). From Tolstoy to Tolkein, humans are tellers of tales.

Narrative inquiry presupposes "an argument for a narrative view of experience" (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 575). Narrative begins with this focus on experience, and moves towards an ontological understanding of how people live, absorb, enact, and live life. Narrative researchers do not assume theoretical or ideological positions, but rather seek meaning and insight from within the inquiry itself (Caine et al., 2013). According to the narrative ontology, people and lives are in motion, and action as well as interaction are the means of observation and experience. Narrative researchers thus attempt to “enter the practice and artistry of lives lived” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 576).

Humans not only tell stories, they live storied lives: “We live in, through, and out of narratives” (Smith, 2000, p. 88). Lived narratives are not merely stories, but actual lives. This notion underscores both the ubiquity and grandness of narrative in an almost dialectical fashion; the story may simultaneously be the simplest and most complex entity, simultaneously, that researchers explore. Philosophically, narrative inquiry is fundamentally embedded in Dewey’s pragmatic criteria of experience which joins continuity and interaction (Pepper, 2000; Clandinin, 2016). Dewey’s experiential perspective also ties narrative inquiry closely to the field of education: this amalgamation of lived experience and continuity is the daily lived experience of both teachers and learners who spend their hours interacting, building, breaking, learning, and re-learning through the closely interwoven tapestry that is school. Learning is continuous and lifelong; thus, narratives investigating education can have lasting impact and powerful import. For what is to live but to learn?

A Touch of Phenomenology

Though I did not engage in pure phenomenological research, my narrative study was intrinsically touched by its notions. The phenomenon in phenomenology is a concept or idea to be explored, whether “school principalship,” “grief and mourning,” “addiction,” or “teaching refugee children.” Generally, subjects who share exposure to the same phenomenon are studied in search of the common nature of the experience. The researcher is careful to limit her preconceived ideas about the phenomenon under study, and thus engages in a specialized type of bracketing to consider the concept with new eyes.

Phenomenology pulls heavily from the world of philosophy to verify its unique approach.

Phenomenology's advocate and chief purveyor, the German mathematician, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), was followed by other scholars and thinkers such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, who passed the baton on to Giorgi, van Manen, and Vagle, among others (Creswell, 2013). Husserl rejected the dualism that the Western tradition of epistemology had thus far produced in the thinking world, arriving at a more ontological consideration of experience. Dualism is characterized by the [artificial] dichotomous split between entities such as: mind/body; human/divinity; life/death, etc. Husserl asserted that consciousness "is basically a medium between a person and the world" (Giorgi, 2012, p. 9). Additionally, for Husserl, the continual focus on Truth with a capital T was an erroneous turn in the philosophical path. The search for Universals and Laws and Rules (all with capitals here for Big Idea emphasis) entailed arriving at a place that may be unattainable—at least insofar as human knowledge and striving were concerned. "What is knowledge?" epistemology asked and, for a time in Western philosophy, many methods and procedures were thought to lead to a Nirvana of truth, but eventually all such epistemological theories frizzled to frayed ends. The current trends in philosophy have altered, and its thinkers and scholars have moved away from the imminent discovery of a universal law of being toward other smaller insights and experiences (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Creswell, 2013). Eastern philosophy, meanwhile, tended toward more holistic realizations/inquiries anyhow.

Next, ontology, a branch of metaphysics concerned with the ideas, definitions, and answers of Being. Ontology asks: What is Being? Why existence? What does life mean, and is God out there somewhere? Heidegger, a student of Husserl's who eventually broke from some of his teacher's ideas, deeply explored metaphysics and ontology in his *Being and Time* (originally published 1927). Like Husserl, his philosophical ideas resonated within the field of phenomenology.

Why are there beings at all? For Heidegger, this is the central and originary (*ursprünglich*) question of metaphysics. The work of philosophy is to question, especially about the extraordinary. For Heidegger, philosophy exists in its own right, and "never arises from or through science" (Heidegger, p. 20). The questions of ontology are self-defined in metaphysics, whose roots derive from the Greek "meta," above and beyond, and "phusis," or being/form/entity (Heidegger, p. 13). Ontology thus questions beyond beings, and investigates what, in fact, ***is*** (existence). Like Buzz Lightyear, Heidegger is interested in "infinity and beyond." He argued that "World is always spiritual world" (Heidegger, p. 34). From this premise arose his seminal notion of "Dasein." In German, the translation is simple: being there. Existence, simplified (though it is amusing to consider that the English term is simplified in the German language!). Dasein expresses the Being-in-the-World that all beings exhibit, but most especially humans. Heidegger takes Dasein and develops its nature further in a 3-step trinity of explanation (Gendlin, 1978).

1. *Befindlichkeit.* In German, *befinden* is a reflexive verb, and one must immerse the subject into the action. *Sich befinden* is to find oneself, with the self engaged in the action (how one finds oneself, reflexively). For Heidegger, this state of immersion is how one finds oneself in the moment and also in the world. *Befindlichkeit* (which is merely the verb turned into a noun with the addition of –keit on the end, a neat semantic trick the German language affords) implies placement. A being is always and necessarily situated in time and locale, and even in emotion and mentality. Thus, the term holistically engages the essence of ones "is-ness" in the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual world.

2. *Verstehen.* Literally, understanding or inherent comprehension. *Verstehen* is interwoven with *Befindlichkeit,* and both are braided into a deeper sense of self-interpretation. Heidegger in his opening chapter to *Being and Time* spends a [possibly] inordinate amount of time setting up the idea of possibility as contained within all beings. His *Verstehen* carries this idea farther in a grounding of the concept of the possibility of all possibilities essential to defining Being. If this seems circuitous, it rather is, in the manner of a bee circling a flower where it may—or may not! —intend to land. The human Dasein thus engages in this self-understanding of being in the world as it finds itself, and that itself is an act of interpretation.
3. *Verfallen*. Fallenness. A better translation may be "the falling" or "state of falling." This mode is the third part of Dasein, and implies the everyday experience of life as expressed in the world. This everyday world is where Befindlichkeit and Verstehen dance their daily duet. Together, these three express Heidegger's proposed mode of human existence.

These components of Dasein are helpful in understanding the basis of phenomenology, a research methodology that is first and foremost a philosophy. Phenomenology is interested in "the pursuit of possible understandings and interpretations, not THE understanding" (Vagle, 2014, p. 14). Phenomenology does not purport to build theory, but rather to understand how the world is experienced through the eyes of its participants in terms of "lifeworld."

Back to Phenomenology and its Application to Narrative Inquiry

If research is a search for knowledge, and philosophy is the hunt for wisdom, then combining these areas might strengthen the end result if the research study is thoroughly, comprehensively, and ethically undertaken. Scholars have acknowledged the ontological turn in qualitative research (Vagle, 2014; Smith, 2014; Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Some of the questions posited in ontologically-influenced studies might be: What is the nature of social or cultural reality? (Smith, 2000), or How do we understand this (specified) human experience? (Clandinin, 2016), or, What is the role of theory in field x? (Clandinin & Connelly, 2010).

Phenomenology aims to get at the essence of human experience. “The primary purpose of phenomenology as a research methodology stemming from its philosophical roots is to study what it is like as we *find-ourselves-being-in-relation-with-others-and-other things*” (Vagle, 2014, p. 20). Such research focuses on the very and descriptive nature of BEING in the world. According to Vagle (2014), phenomenology is plural in its intent, and may be more attuned to philosophy than methodology in classification.

Likewise, narrative inquiry is a Coat of Many Colors in the realm of research. Within the field of narratology, story listening and story telling leap between diverse worlds: fiction, nonfiction, oral history, experience, lived moments, memory, culture, environment, communication, and more. These methods cavort along lines that are more imagined than painted on concrete, dancing between science and art, combining and recombining both into a new story that reflects the past and present while incorporating the future of What May Be.

Clandinin (2016) observed how “interwoven ways of thinking about phenomena are with narrative inquiry as research methodology” (loc. 150-151). Intentionally and practically, narrative inquiry “is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience. It is nothing more and nothing less.” Story allows the researcher to enter to world of the participant, and to live and re-story that lived experience. It is, primarily, “a way of thinking about experience” (Clandinin, 2016, loc. 193-195). Narrative inquirers look to the studied and storied experience as the phenomenon that is under study. This experience is the key that unlocks the story for the researcher to begin to formulate an understanding of the *Befindlichkeit* of the story itself, the where-and-how-it-finds-itself based the author-interpreted *Verstehen* in the *Verfallenes* world.

Intentionality: Phenomenology's Secret Weapon

Intentionality is not what it seems. Forget the noun "intention" for the sake of this argument. In phenomenology, intentionality is the "act by which every human being is related to the world and is objects" (De Castro, 2003, p. 50). Intentionality is located in human consciousness, implying that consciousness is always reflexive: it is always consciousness of something. Without awareness of intertwined awareness, there would be no understanding of or basis for experience or understanding on any level.

Vagle (2014) preferred the term interconnectedness to describe this philosophical concept. Thus, intentionality (or interconnectedness) describes and defines "how we are meaningfully connected to the world" (p. 27). He posited: "When we study phenomenologically, we are not trying to get inside other people's minds. Rather, we are trying to contemplate and theorize the various way things manifest and appear in and through our being in the world" Vagle, 2014, p. 21).

For phenomenologists, an innate and inseparable bond connects the subjects and objects of the world. Vagle (2014) and Creswell (2013) have pointed out that Eastern philosophies often contain imbedded notions of interconnectedness, and treat this concept as a matter of course, distinguishing their perspectives from the more ego and independent orientations of Western philosophies. Regardless, this "in-ness" of phenomenology is intriguing in terms of research, for herein the researcher honors both the uniqueness and ubiquity of the studied phenomenon, conjoined. There is a sense of wonder and mystique that color this methodology that "resists finality and rigidity" (Vagle, 2014, p. 57).

Narrative and phenomenological research share a shared focus on the moment and experience held up for scrutiny and introspection. Like phenomenology, narrative also benefits from a tone of wonder and interest. Those inquirers who seek to enter a space that others have lived (and are living) enter a realm where flexibility and openness to the story may allow a more authentic transcription, and will encourage narratives that will reflect not just the past, but resonate into the future. Intentionality is valued in the way researchers enter the field, gather their data, engage in relationship with their subjects, and relay the resulting told and continuing stories. Like phenomenology narratives do not exist in a vacuum: they are enveloped and embedded in vibrant and living moments.

Words & Language: The Tools of the Trade

"Language is never neutral," Paolo Freire warned, and writers must recognize this fact. Words, in skillful hands, can be strong, powerful, and uplifting. Those words in malevolent mindsets can twist the truth, distort reality, and impale a victim through the heart. In some shape, intent, or form, our words are routinely rhetorical. Whether we instruct, describe, or entertain, our words are meant to communicate a version of the world that is led by the language we choose.

As writers and researchers, we are bound by the words we use. Language is inevitable: it is the mode we use to describe our work and ideas. It is the medium in which we speak and converse, joke and lecture, interview and write. Language is the currency of our human understanding, and the primary method for negotiating our relationships, both personal and professional, for, "In the word, in language, things first come to be and are" (Heidegger, p. 12).

In narrative research, words and language are the data utilized to arrive at a greater understanding of the topic; they are likewise the medium we select to reveal that new understanding to the world. Writing, speaking, publishing: all are derived from language facility. Language, then, is a precursor of narrative inquiry: “Ordinary language competence shared by investigators and responders is a critical but unrecognized precondition for effective research practice is intended as a preliminary outline of this perspective and its implications” (Mishler, 1986, p. 7).

Language is power, or at least the potential of power. As research is always rhetorical in intent, our research communication should remain mindful of its rhetorical imprint. We work, write, research, and think in the medium of language. As research practitioners, and especially as narrative retellers, we must engage in considered choices of the language we select, deselect, excise, embellish, and delete. We form our ideas and premises in language, and move toward our discussion and conclusions by cohesively chosen phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and pages. Our use of language is, effectively, inevitable. “Text is all I can offer,” Van Manen apologized. Language, for all of us, is always a compromise.

In narrative research, language is not only our own, but belongs to others as well. Narrative inquiry is a “second story,” retold in translation by the author. Researchers would do well to recall *traduire traittre;* translators are traitors (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Since I was raised speaking two languages (German and English), this warning was, for me, a lived event. Daily, I witnessed the difference and nuance inherent in translation, especially in idiom and intent. I knew words in German that English could not begin to adequately express (*Heimat, Gemütlichkeit, Bildung,* etc.), and also words in my teenage English that offered little hope of non-native comprehension (“What is this *prom*? my mother asked). Thus, as we listen to and transcribe stories from participants, our language should reflect a sensitivity to what is heard and noted in translation. As van Manen noted, our words become our offering, and getting these right is the unerring task of narrative writers.

Storylines and Telling Tales

"People are always tellers of tales." Sartre

The great tales of the world have flourished throughout eons. Oedipus gouged out his eyes as he realized his incestuous errors of murdering his father and marrying his mother. Odysseus's eyes filled with salty tears as he sighted the low hills of his island kingdom, Ithaca. The Good Samaritan stooped to carry the dirty, bleeding stranger from the roadside ditch. Juliet gazed out at the night from her balcony, pouring her infatuation into the moonlit darkness. Scout and Jem sprinted down a dirt road, chased by the apparition of a crazed Boo Radley. These scenes inhabit our minds, relived each time a book is read, a play rehearsed, a poem uttered.

Culturally, historically, socially: stories color our lives. Daily, we witness tales unfold in the drama that is news, in the entertainment of television and the internet, in the message of media and music, in the melody of song and worship. We are surrounded by story, immersed in plot and character and action. Our own lives are storied events, and we rehearse and rehash our most beloved—and traumatic—tales for children, neighbors, strangers, friends. Truly, we "live storied lives in storied landscapes" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 584).

Stories are "ubiquitous and ancient," and are themselves an archetype of human culture and understanding (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). Something about the framework of a story catches our attention, and holds us rapt to the telling as it unfolds. Perhaps our brains are even wired for story, and recognize its universals of character, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution. Stories serve differing purposes: they may be descriptive, didactic, instructive, referential, evaluative, transformative, persuasive, entertaining, frightening, or humorous. They are a "framework and context for making meaning of life situations" (Pepper, 2009, p. 19). However they are presented, stories are inherently rhetorical, offering a view, vision, perspective, or narration that uses language to color the story. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) defined stories as "Arguments in which we learn something." Gubrium and Holstein (2009) concurred, viewing stories as "tacitly persuasive" (p. 32).

Stories of fiction clearly differ from stories of fact, though they share notable commonalities. Whether fact or fiction, most stories contain character, action, conflict, and resolution (though post-modern tales often eschew one or more of these elements). Something about story is so compelling it leaps from lived life to imagination, and back again. We intuitively and integrally understand story, whether the tale is fact or fantasy.

Stories are the Lego blocks of narrative research. While narrative inquiry teases out and reports stories from a storied life, care must be taken not to conflate and confuse fact with fiction. Narrative inquiry is a "form of empirical narrative" that "does not make nonfiction into fiction" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 5). Story is a natural fit for inquiry, and can be highly appealing to teller and listener (or reader) alike. As the ear and mind attune to told tales, so the researcher must calibrate her brain toward an authentic and accurate recreation of the experiences thus relayed. People are consistent in their inconsistencies, and life does not tend to follow screenwriting strictures mandating a crisis every 22 pages, or an epiphany by chapter 8.

Why story? From an ontological perspective, life narratives offer a small window into the house of personal experience. Lived experiences may offer interest, perspective, viewpoint, rationale, description, and even lessons (though the latter is not necessarily to be forced upon a narrative, nor expected). Always, narrative offers a glimpse into the Dasein of a lived event or moment. People tell stories. Researchers listen.

In narrative inquiry, people tell stories, and researchers carefully record, rework, and represent these stories to a larger public. According to Goodson (2006), "The world needs our stories." Smith (2000) purported that humans lead storied lives, and that we even think in storied format. Nash (2004) found people to be "storied selves" who "live in stories about reality" (p. 8 and 38). Stories seem to be integral to identity formation and continuation, allowing people to shape their lives and beliefs: "Telling stories is one of the ways individuals construct and express meaning" (Mishler, 1986, p. 67). Further, Mishler revealed that "storytelling and story comprehension are natural and pervasive modes of communicating meaning" (p. 75). Viewed in this manner, living itself is story. It is such lived stories that interest narrative inquirers.

Research narratives align with the ideals of a good story. For Gubrium and Holstein (2009), this meant that a well-constructed narrative aligns with the stated facts, is compelling in its retelling, and is detailed enough to engage reader interest. Well-written narratives assume the idea of plot and its inherent action from the world of fiction, and most texts are re-storied in traditional (and linear) chronological order. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) mentioned the instance of telescoping the narrative, and "how to adjudicate between the whole and the detail at each moment of writing" (p. 101). These writerly concerns remain fundamental concerns of narrative inquiry. How much of narrative transcription and re-storying is true-to-story, and how much is interpretative or stylistic? All writers of any experience develop a writing style that may be as indelible and unique as a thumb or fingerprint. In the reconstruction of the research narrative, how much of the document is marred or marked by such stylized touches? If language is an expression, it is also impression and repression. Each word we choose, write, and touch is warmed by our hands as writers; this is a constant compromise of using language as a tool. Further, while considering the compression of factual and fiction writing and their shared techniques, the question also must be broached: how much is melding of the two disparate worlds, and how much is muddling? The answers lie in the hands—and pens—of the narrative inquirers who wield the power of words. Best to hold that power lightly and heavily, simultaneously.

Narrative is based on story, but story is not everything. The ideas of story and language must now call forth the instances of silence. To begin, not all portions of lives become story. At least some part of life exists in the realm of the unseen, words and thoughts that remain unspoken, dreams and hopes, secrets and denials, gestures and touch, spirituality and soul. Such unvoiced moments may be translated by the respondent, but others remain silent and unuttered. Not all of experience is thus translated into story. Likewise, not all of narrative is experienced or explainable chronologically. Life is fluid and irregular. While time seems to move in one direction, our lives do not always mimic that trajectory (and certainly our memories do not). In narrative inquiry, the story becomes the discourse unit, but it is never a holistic representation of a moment or life. The unvoiced will always play in the background. Wordless moments and memories remain unearthed. Though our ongoing relationship with our participants may be based on the currencies of language and narrative, the unspoken may suffer in translation. In research narrative, how much room is there for transcription of inner voices, the recording of untold dreams, rationalizations and misperceptions, interpretations and meanderings, abstractions or perspectives? Such are the mysteries and ambiguities of life, and such are often missed. Perhaps retaining at least a notion of elasticity within the narrative would assist in accounting for the unaccountable. Leaving the edges of a story nebulous and unchalked may allow for more of life's natural fluidity to seep through.

Three-Dimensional Narrative Space

Narratives exist beyond the paper they are written on. Stories—and lives—move beyond the immediate, traveling to the past, present, and future. They also retain the ideas of Heidegger's Dasein, always moving toward the possibilities of possibilities inherent in all experience. Clandinin (2016) cited the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, composed out of the dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality. Stories are not lived in isolation, and researchers engaged in narrative inquiry never work alone. Functionally and philosophically, narrative inquirers engage in relational research (Caine et al., 2013; Clandinin, 2016). "Narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening observing, living alongside another, and writing, and interpreting texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42).

Once inquirers enter in the research space, they engage in relationship with the participant. Such entry allows for another story to unfold, one involving the researcher and the necessary people involved. As such, the research project itself becomes a story, and the endeavor likens a Shakespeare drama in which the dramatic convention of a story-within-a-story plays out. This space becomes part of the study, and meaning is derived from its content and context. In narrative inquiry, there is never just the clearly demarcated divisions of the present and the past, of the researcher and the participant; rather, there are all aspects of the lived experiences of the participant, and the lived experiences of the researcher, and the new aspect of the combination of the two in concert. "In the context of a narrative inquiry, the production of research texts follows the art of engagement in a storied research relationship that is never final, and could always be otherwise" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 582).

The Voices of Multiple-I's

Just as narrative inquiry places itself within a fluid and three-dimensional research space, so do its voices speak across a multi-dimensional plane. In personal narrative, the first-person point of view takes precedence. A story is told and crafted through the eyes of the single and singular narrator who lives the story told. All perspectives, views, descriptions, and opinions are filtered through this single "I." Narrative inquiry differs from this norm. With narrative research exist a multiplicity of I's. First, the I of the participant who relays the various stories around the topic of interest. Another I is the I of the researcher, who partakes of the story from a bracketed 2^{nd} place position. However, another I soon emerges as the interview transcripts are reviewed and the narrative is re-storied. This I is the new perspective looking into the life of the described narrative and retelling the tale(s), moving and structuring the narrative for best and truest effect. Other I's soon intervene: the others in the social aspect of the narrator's world, the I of researcher background, the I of story context, the I of the future selves involved, and the I of the new and conjoined relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Narrating others' lives necessitates becoming "plurivocal," assuming multiple voices as the narrative progresses (Clandinin, 2016). Narrative is thus constructed at several levels, either concurrently or simultaneously. It is necessary to understand the multitude of voices that sing out in the harmony that is narrative inquiry. It is equally important to understand which voice sings the melody:

> "The 'I' can speak as researcher, teacher, man or woman, commentator, research participant, narrative critic, and as theory builder. Yet in living the narrative inquiry process, we are one person. We are also one in the writing. However…it becomes important to sort out whose voice is the dominant one when we write 'I.' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p 9)

In essence, a multi-vocal voice pries open a world beyond the simple and traditional confines of personal narrative. In narrative research, such narrative moves beyond the personal and into the realm of phenomenological and ontological concerns. The challenge to address the multiple I's resides in discovering ways to address the complexities of a multilayered, multi-person, multi-perspective story that is told and retold.

Context is King: The School as Background

In a post-post-modern world, we have perhaps witnessed the demise of the big story in favor of the small. From government to globalization, the world of ideas has shrunk on a macro level as it has expanded on the micro. According to Goodson (2006), we have witnessed the collapse of the grand narrative. Those monster landscapes—Westward expansion, first-world domination, scientific worldview, etc.—carved out continents before sinking under the bombardment of a thousand little stories. Goodson limited this transformation to not just stories, but to small narratives that define and redefine the current era of individualization. Technology has compressed time into brief snippets, and easy accessibility allows people to pick, choose, write, and publish their own accounts of everything from presidential choices to eyeliner preferences. Governments collapse due to YouTube publicity, and icons rise and fall to the molten movement of mass media. The rise of the individual tale looms large, and sometimes frighteningly small. We watch as a rapist is raked over the coals of Facebook public opinion, while the following day this story is quickly subsumed by the next U.S. police shooting. Rapidly and repeatedly, the stories rise and fall, small waves endlessly crashing against an eternal shore. Goodson (2006) urged caution in the influence of small narratives, stating, 'the personal life story is an individualizing device if divorced from context" (p. 4). Both large and small vantage points must be considered, otherwise the individual instance runs the danger of becoming divorced from any meaning. Our understandings of smaller scripts must be balanced by comprehending the archetypes, history, background, and socialization of the larger world.

When narrative walks onto the stage, context must hang as velvet background and backdrop. Sans context, stories too easily descend into mayhem or meaninglessness. "In any situation, context counts" (Pepper & Wildy, 2009, p. 20). Placing a story within its context allows it comprehensibility that otherwise may evade it. In order to make sense of a narrative, context must be considered. Context affects understandability as well as transferability of research: "In writing narratives, the person in context is of prime interest and the purpose is to make meaning of their experiences, and to share understanding with readers" (Pepper & Wildy, p. 20). Context and, in a broader view, culture, directly color the stories we tell. We are shaped by our surroundings and immersed in our environments, and thus our experiences and stories are painted by these elements as well. Narrative is always narrative in context. No man or woman is an island, culturally or contextually. Narrative, thus, "is a culturally shaped and structured story through which our experiences are, at least in part, constructed" (Smith, 2010, p. 100). A narrative is never a narrative of a single person; instead, it is a mosaic of an individual's entire world: "Framed within this view of experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals' experience but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Clandinin, 2016, p. 42).

Education is its own culture. Its influence begins in pre-school and extends throughout the duration of college and grad school years. The German term, *Bildung*, perhaps better encompasses the universal idea of lifelong learning that incorporates training, discovery, development, transformation, perspective, and orientation. *Bildung* is a dynamic word, emphasizing the ongoing nature of coming to know; it is not just where one finds oneself, diploma-ed and degreed, but the terrain that is crossed and re-crossed as learning journeys onward. In the U.S., education summons the vision of the public school system. This entity serves as a public service institution, and is itself a culture. Schools in general are noteworthy cultures due to their educational mandate. Stories of school are vital, for "institutional stories of school profoundly shape us all" (Clandinin, 2016, loc. 324). Clandinin and Connelly (2010) described schools as a "professional knowledge landscape,", selecting this metaphor to describe "the complex historical, temporal, personal, professional, relational, intellectual, and moral qualities of schools" (Clandinin, 2016, loc. 1104). As institutions, schools stand apart from other organizations in their moral imperative to teach, care, and impart educational benefit to their charges. Narratives investigating educational systems and institutions offer the opportunity to effect transformation, influence policy, and create positive change. Effectually, narrative research set in schools is truly about improving practice, conditions, or approaches that can potentially be used to transform education.

School Narratives: Purpose

Narratives set within an educational context offer unique and compelling vantage points into how schools work. "Life's narratives are the context for making meaning of school situations" (Clandinin & Connely, 2000, p. 3). Telling tales from school delves deeper than any surface investigation into classroom size, teaching techniques, or school mission. Essentially, research narrative evokes philosophical queries such as: How are people educated? What does quality education look like? What does it mean to be educated? How does education happen? And even: What is education? Such questions emphasize "the educational importance of this line of work…that brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived" (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 3). Sound educational research allows participants to make meaning out of experiences lived within school contexts; such research should tend toward improvement, and always contributes toward people's well-being (Pepper & Wildy, 2009). Narrative research offers glimpses into the lived moments of schools, giving voices of empowerment to students, teachers, administrators, professors, and support staff. Utilizing narrative allows for immersion into the experiences themselves, orienting the reader into a contextualized view of schools and educational practices. It also offers the opportunity for researchers to return these stories to the participants, often providing new insight (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2010). Such insight often extends beyond the participant to reach beyond school walls, to academia, to the public, and to the researcher herself:

> How does a narrative research approach contribute to an understanding of teacher knowledge which reflects a complex and holistic understanding of content, purpose and pedagogy? Narratives offer not only vivid illustration of emergent themes, but illumination into intentional states and the reasons that underpin people's choices, actions and relationships (Bruner, 1996). These narratives of creative people who teach, speak of agency and power as they tell the stories of their learning and creative lives, drawing upon curiously old-fashioned concepts such as 'vocation,' 'discipline,' 'tradition,' 'amateur,' 'practice,' and 'drive.' The narratives offer not only the 'familiar' themes of creative fashioning and flow, but also the 'strangeness' of their particular biographies and niches. The depth, scope and reach of these educators are grounded and generative, substantial and shared. Their narratives give glimpses of embodiment and wholeheartedness in creative practice shared in their teaching. Such narratives contribute to my own narrative as a teacher educator seeking understanding by paying attention to the margins of my own context. (Loveless, 2012, p. 119)

The margins of our own contexts are continually in flux. As researchers, we orient ourselves toward our study in myriad ways: academically, professionally, personally, and privately. On a larger stage, our narratives can and must become part of a larger public discussion of education. Nash (2004) argued for a return to the "public intellectual," one whose powers incorporate not just academic prowess and reified research techniques, but also the ability to turn complex language and ideas into a platform for public conversation. This is not a dumbing down, but a smartening up to the notion that the public will read what it finds compelling, intriguing, and relevant. Narratives harbor the power to harness such widespread attention, and more narrative researchers must attune to this mission.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology

Introduction—Educational entrepreneurship

The journey into educational entrepreneurship deserves a closer look. As the U.S. continues to engage in education reform, solutions from both inside and outside the system must be considered. Additionally, as globalization influences culture and education, edupreneurs can increasingly play an international part in the effort to educate all children (as stipulated by the Education for All initiative and the U.N.). Though education and business are two overlapping but disparate fields, the process of moving from one sector into another can be illuminated and understood by closer investigation (Drucker, 1986; Hess, 2009; Sandler, 2010).

The objective of this qualitative study is to utilize personal interviews in order to gain clarification, understanding, and insight into the journey of five educational entrepreneurs and the respective trajectories of their careers. Narrative inquiry will allow investigation into the life and professional experiences of these individuals, as well as allowing for the complexity and changing nature of their respective journeys to be recorded and analyzed.

An Overview of Research Methodology

As researchers, we search for answers. Our quest is to query and question, to poke and prod, to investigate and infiltrate. Ethically, philosophically, and pragmatically, we are driven to seek results that will advance human knowledge in some minimal—or monumental—manner. We are diggers, miners, and explorers. We are lingerers and laughers, conversationalists and controversialists. Essentially and empirically, we search. Karen Armstrong positioned humans as "meaning-seeking creatures;" as researchers, we actively engage in this drive to uncover life's meanings, both great and small.

Researchers traffic in communication (Van Manen, 2012). Our words—written, spoken, reported--are the mode of expression we use to broach the gap between the known and unknown. As the voice of research, our words possess weight, direction, and velocity. From formulation of the research question to the final written results, our intent is explanatory, descriptive, emancipatory, empirical, and always rhetorical. Good research is persuasive and intriguing, and researchers are duty-bound to practice their craft with care.

Research defines our view of what we find meaningful. Our Weltanschauung is illuminated in our choice of topic, our researchly perspective lightly inked between the lines of our work. We choose a topic, and a world opens before us. We touch a question, and value is assigned. We open one door out of the multiple entryways arrayed in the marbled hallway of academia: our choice is not random nor superfluous. We choose with intent: "The act of deciding what issues or problems to research is in itself an act of exercising our power to choose and decide" (Gimenez, 2013, p. 213). Sometimes we choose the research, other times it chooses us. Invariably, our chosen topic echoes the context of our own education, history, and life.

I purposefully and purposively chose educational entrepreneurship as a topic to investigate under the auspices of qualitative narrative inquiry shaped by an inherently phenomenological and ontological mindfulness. Qualitative research "seeks to provide rich thorough descriptions and interpretations about the phenomena under study as they occur in their natural environment," often with an emphasis on inductive reasoning (Sousa, 2014, p. 211). Qualitative research is sometimes placed in opposition to quantitative research, and numerous and vociferous are the debates that have ensued. Huffman's (2015) simple definition from my advanced research methods course is one that sticks in my brain: "Quantitative research uses numbers as data; in qualitative research, words are your data."

Creswell (2013) partitioned qualitative research into five approaches: narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Of these, I selected a narrative approach due to the primacy of storytelling to my topic. My five participants contributed their experiences, impressions, and actions they undertook while forming their respective educational businesses; their experiences are imbedded in the narrative they told. As "research is about, among many things, one person's representation of another," I interviewed, recorded, analyzed, restoried, and scanned the narratives in order to best represent the nature of the lived experience (Smith, 2009, p. 101). The words of participants became the data that informed my study; their narratives wer the de facto map I used to explore the ideas, themes, and conversations surrounding the experience of educational entrepreneurship.

Participants

The participants of my narrative inquiry number five in total. I used a purposeful sample, acquiring experienced educational entrepreneurs who were leaders in their field from three sources: professional referral, personal referral, and LinkedIn professional connections My criteria for selection incorporated their professional careers in education and business. Relevant practical details regarding the participants appear in a demographic table in chapter five.

The group of five participants was intriguingly diverse. Claire emerged from a background in teaching and school administration before founding her private academy, Singular Schools, on a 1-to-1 education model, expanding to three local campuses before selling her business to a large education company, thereafter leading the expansion of her school into 11 campuses across five states. Adam began working in teacher professional development--sans teaching background--and used his interests in best PD practices and educational technology to found his educational consulting and software company that later pivoted to work with larger educational entities to influence a broader base of schools and students. Knute began his career in business start-ups before seizing the opportunity to lead a large educational firm, later heading another company that initiated online high schools while also forming another few education companies on his own before again switching gears to take a CEO position at a long-standing education business that required both innovation and stability. Caleb started in technology while also immersing himself in a charter school board, thereby developing his keen interest in standards-based education and process change, inspiring him to develop a software tool for content access, alignment, and implementation. Rachel's business background was mitigated by her high interest in education; after volunteering at CTI, an intermediary school-to-industry organization, she welcomed the opportunity to take over as CEO, moving the non-profit toward both innovation and fiscal stability.

Research Design and Analytical Procedures

Interview & Analysis

We live in an interview society (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Everywhere we look and listen, interview beckons, whether in the form of news, marketing, celebrity, or entertainment. The journalistic interview has surpassed ubiquity to verge on cliché. Talk shows thrive on interviewing the celebrity du jour, and YouTube seems conquered by talking heads. While research interviewing superficially mimics much of popular interviewing, its intent is both academic and meaningful. Narrative researchers carefully record and review their participant interviews, attempting to derive knowledge and meaning from and between the spoken words: "The quality of [an interview] is judged by the strength and value of the knowledge produced" (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 20).

Choosing interview as a research design and preselecting the research study topic(s) are, as previously mentioned, rhetorical and non-neutral events. No research approach is neutral, and all studies are tinged by some form of bias, perspective, viewpoint, interest, or similar rhetorical influence (Mishler, 1986; Brinkman & Kvale, 2012). "Field text is shaped by researchers' selective interest or disinterest, so the material gathered is interpretive" (Pepper & Wildy, 2009, p. 19).

Words are the currency of qualitative narrative inquiry. While conversation is an age-old way to obtain knowledge, research interviewing is more than simply talking to another person. Interviewing is both craft and art (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Mishler (1986) referred to research interviews as "speech events," purporting that such terminology, "marks the fundamental contrast between the standard antilinguistic, stimulus-response model and an alternative approach to interviewing as discourse between speakers" (p. 36).

Interviewing highlights relationship. Moreover, interviews are relational, and provide an experience for both researcher and interviewer (Pepper & Wildy, 2009). For this reason, all research interviewing can be described as collaboration. Researcher and participant are "co-constructors of knowledge" as "the process of knowing through conversations is intersubjective and social, involving interviewer and interviewee as co-constructors of knowledge (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 22). For narrative researchers, interviewing is more than a method; it is a way of being and becoming within the study itself (Smith, 2013). Mishler (1986) referred to the interview's "joint construction of meaning," as "through repeated reformulations of questions and responses, [interviewer and respondent] strive to arrive together at meanings that both can understand" (p. 65). Clandinin (2016) emphasized the relational ontology that is narrative inquiry. As the researcher enters the study, conducts interviews, observes context, re-stories and codes transcripts, she is joining a life already underway, and committing to a relationship based on openness, honesty, and communication. As such, the interview is only part of the process, and meanings are moved and shaped by both parties:

> Narrative inquirers see their research as relational research... We are in the phenomenon under study. In narrative inquiry, we are, as narrative inquirers, also under study, over time. As a narrative inquiry progresses, we, as narrative inquirers, are also making and remaking our lives. We, too, are in the midst. What this means is that as we tell our stories and listen to participants tell their stories in the inquiry, we, as inquirers need to pay close attention to who we are in the inquiry and to understand that we, ourselves, are part of the storied landscapes we are studying. Thus, as narrative inquirers we are part of present landscapes and past landscapes, and we acknowledge that we helped make the world in which we find ourselves. (Clandinin, 2016, loc. 1437)

Brinkman & Kvale (2015) suggested seven stages of an interview inquiry: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting. Analyzing involves preparing the interview transcripts, reading and reviewing, identifying potential initial categories, writing codes alongside the interview text, reviewing the codes, and identifying and checking themes. Clandinin and Connelly (2010) suggested retaining a sense of the purpose for the interview even while compiling and collating the interview data. They asked, “How will a narrative inquiry fit with, enlarge, or shift the social and theoretical conversations around our phenomenon of interest?” (p. 123). Accordingly, part of the legwork (and brainwork) of the researcher is deciding which conversation she is joining, including being mindful of bordered discourse such as school reform and inclusive education, and considering how she positions her work in relation to other studies, programs, topics, and research conversations.

Weaknesses appear in every research approach: interviews are not immune from this fact (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Clandinin & Connelly, 2010; Clandinin, 2016; Mishler, 1986). The noted co-construction of meaning through a narrative inquiry can be construed as too jointly constructed and malleable, influencing the resultant findings. Further, the types of questions created may influence the responses received throughout the interview process. Question construction itself is a blend of art and science, and misdirected queries can result in undirected answers. A respondent can also be problematic, and the interview can go awry due to a number of factors, including respondent mood, unease, miscomprehension, reticence, tardiness, or absence. While a semi-structured interview may be the most commonly used approach in narrative research, the more open-ended structure can potentially affect narrative content. How to incorporate short responses, written material, and other field texts can likewise prove problematic. The use of language can be limiting or distracting, and conversations can all too easily go awry or traverse unintended directions, for "ambiguity and complexity are omnipresent in all situations and types of discourse" (Mishler, p, 45). Identity and reality may come under question, as these can be embellished, altered, and transformed during the course of the interview (Johnson, 2000). Also notable are the power imbalances and inequities within the research interview: "The pattern of interviewer dominance and respondent acquiescence is well documented…where asymmetry in power is especially clear" (Mishler, p. 54). Another limiting aspect concerns human behavior and human nature: people express and present themselves differently in differing situations, and thus the quality of "realness" and authenticity may be an issue during a formal research interview. Despite the potential difficulties, I worked at overcoming these interviewing challenges.

Interviewing Educational Entrepreneurs

I engaged the five participants in semi-structured interviews ranging in length from 57 minutes to over two hours. Four interviews took place at the participants' offices or places of business; one interview took place over the phone due to geographic distance (over 1,000 miles away). The interviews were recorded via a digital voice recorder, and the resultant recordings were downloaded as MP3s onto my personal laptop, and moved to an external hard drive for storage until files are deleted. I transcribed the interviews, listening several times to each interview to check accuracy and veracity of the transcriptions.

I revisited the transcripts several times to consider the weight and meaning of the content, words, and overall experiences. One at a time, the transcripts were scanned and coded; each transcript was viewed and scanned twice for initial codes. After further reading and reflection and absorption of the data, I read each transcript for statements of significance, which were written using either in vivo statements or a combination of phrases to arrive at significant statements. These significant statements were then condensed to significant themes, and transferred to another document, along with relevant direct portions of the transcript that corresponded to the significant themes. After the five transcripts were scanned, coded, reviewed for significant statements, and condensed to significant themes, the resultant documents were viewed as a group to determine common or universal themes of significance. These themes were highlighted, and the transcripts reviewed for additional direct quotes that could explain, enrich, or illuminate the significant themes further.

Keeping in mind (a la Clandinin & Connelly, 1990) that all narrative inquirers bring at least two identities to the interview site: the researcher and the individual, I strove to position myself as person, mother, student, and educator by creating an autobiography of my own educational experiences and perspectives, both as student and as teacher. "It is important that the narrative inquirer carefully consider who they are, and who they are becoming, in the research puzzle" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 577). Further, I kept a field diary in which I composed my thoughts, opinions, notes, and observations surrounding the locales, preparations, and post-interview happenings. Additionally, relevant written material concerning the background and mission of the educational businesses was reviewed.

Data Collection

Tasks:

1. Composed autobiographical field diary; set up field notes.
2. Reviewed business websites and professional profiles of participants.
3. Scheduled and completed the onsite interview (4) and phone interview (1).
4. Transcribed interviews, looking for repetitions and/or patterns; scanned for initial codes.
5. Reflected and reviewed; scanned for significant statements.
6. Reflected and reviewed; condensed statements into significant themes.
7. Reviewed all transcripts for master themes; identified ten; later reduced to five to avoid overlap or repetition.
8. Restoried relevant segments surrounding the significant themes; searched transcripts for anecdote and direct quotes reflecting significant themes.
9. Emailed significant themes and appertaining direct quotes to participants for member checking. Revised the direct quotes based on participant feedback.
10. Reviewed condensed significant themes and data; collapsed themes to five.

Narrative Research Ethics

Narrative inquiry is described as a relational form of ethics (Caine et al., 2013). The close interrelationship between the researcher and the participant thus requires careful consideration. According to Clandinin (2016), the researcher's first responsibility is to the participant, specifically as this relationship is built on mutual trust. This relational ethic is not just upheld during the study's duration, but continues after the results have been published. In this sense, the ownership of the story—and thus the research—is not exclusive to the researcher or university: "The theme and content of a story cannot be divorced from its interactional development and the ongoing construction of meaningful contexts" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 107). The story itself, embedded in the social institution of a school setting, speaks beyond mere narrative. The primary ethical concern may be the bordered discourse of the story, and how the researcher engages in its creation as teacher, educator, researcher, and individual. Clandinin (2016) referred to "negotiating a curriculum of lives," and emphasized the requirement that researchers continually question their ethical responsibilities to those with whom they have created collaboration and relationship:

> Narrative inquiry is a deeply ethical project. Narrative inquiry understood as ethical work means we cannot separate the ethical from the living of the inquiry. Relational ethics live at the very heart, perhaps are the very heart, of our work as narrative inquirers. Relational ethics are founded in ethics of care (Noddings, 1984) and are the starting point and stance that narrative inquirers take throughout a narrative inquiry; a commitment to relationships, that is, to live in collaborative ways, allows us to re-compose and negotiate stories. Relational ethics call us to social responsibilities regarding how we live in relation with others and with our worlds. (loc. 494-499)

Keeping in mind that school narratives maintain an end goal of improvement of practice (or advancement of educational knowledge, or consideration of theory, etc.), these ethical concerns are necessarily compelling. At issue are both micro and macro ethics; the former indicates the ethical controls within the study itself, including informed consent, thick description, triangulation, etc., while the latter considers “how that knowledge produced will circulate in the wider culture and affect humans and society” (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005, p. 167).

Interviewing for narrative inquiry is itself an ethical act, for “Researching, writing about and re-presenting lives carries a heavy ethical burden” (Sikes, 2014, p. 142). Always, the primary responsibility of narrative researchers is to their participants: “The negotiations of entry, and exit, as well as the representation of experience, are central ethical concerns” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 580). Interviewing as skill and art must be practiced and refined, and the correct methodological procedures scrupulously followed. While interviewing itself is fundamental to narratology, “Ethics becomes as important as methodology in interview research” (Kavale, p. 497). Ambiguity, uncertainty, and entropy may intervene, but the primary ethical consideration remains the relational connection that is central to narrative inquiry.

Beyond the basics of micro-ethics within the study, Brinkman and Kvale (2015) referenced four ways to “thicken” events to help research interviewers act ethically. Included are contextualizing content; narrativizing texts; focusing on the particular over the general; and consulting the community of practice. Humorously and wisely, Goodall (2000) warned that researchers hold the simultaneous capacity for good and evil, and this warning is apropos to narrative inquiry. Acquiring and constructing the stories of others is a relational event that requires attention to a strong relational ethic, for creating those stories is a collaborative and relational act. As Caine et al. (2013) reminded, “In a narrative inquiry, stories are not just a medium of learning, development, or transformation, but also a life” (p. 578).

Micro-ethics of the Study

1. Informed consent: Each participant was presented with a letter of informed consent regarding the divulging of personal and professional information for purposes of this narrative inquiry. These letters will be stored for 3 years in a secure location, whereupon they will be destroyed after the third year by shredding.
2. Anonymity and confidentiality: Due to the personal nature of the narrative research I wished to pursue, the identities of the actual individuals have been protected by pseudonyms. Further, their companies received alternate names, and their exact geographical location remained undisclosed.
3. Storage and disposal of data: The audio transcripts and written transcripts were stored in a secure and locked location; after three years, the audio storage will be erased from the recording drive. The transcripts will be retained in perpetuity in a safe and secure location.
4. During the review of the data and restorying of anecdotes, participant checking and revision allowed for greater accuracy of the meaning and intent of the original interview transcripts. The context will be featured in the specific context of the schools and organizations wherein the participants work.
5. The researcher continued to read on the methodology and practice of narrative inquiry and phenomenology, and verified her revisions of her work with her chair, Patrick Allen, and with the methodologist on the dissertation team, Terry Huffman.

Role of the Researcher

As a narrative inquirer, I conceded to the relational responsibilities that I assumed to my participants, and to their institutions. As a narrator of others' lives, I join the ranks of those who "are held accountable for [our] position and authority in relation to those we study" (Goodall, 2000, p. 260). I agreed to negotiate careful entry into the field of research, and to build honest and professional relationships with my participants, that will ideally contribute to the knowledge base in the field of educational entrepreneurship.

During my study, I made concerted efforts to engage in researcher's reflextivity, becoming conscious of the background, biases, experiences, values, and expectations that I carried in my own contextual history (Creswell, 2013). I engaged in bracketing by constructing a reflective autobiographical research diary, carefully and conscientiously considering my positions as student, teacher, and researcher regarding education, alternative education, diverse student populations, educational entrepreneurship, and other educational programs.

In the undertaking and eventual completion of this research, I acknowledged that I was a graduate student at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon completing my doctoral degree in educational leadership. As an interested and involved party, I strove to maintain objectivity during my data collection, and refrained from judgment or overt optimism regarding the outcome and results. I attempted to fairly and factually interview, transcribe, and review the assimilated data, and carefully bracketed my progress and findings.

Trustworthiness and Validity

Narrative inquiry is called a negotiated research practice that is neither strict research methodology nor straight philosophy (Caine et al., 2013). Rather, narrative inquiry purports to lie midway between phenomenon and methodology, often scooting along the spectrum in either direction. Narrative research involves entering the lived and occurring lives of people while engaging in their stories to simultaneously create a new story, one that is dynamic and not static, living and not past history, current and future-oriented.

Validity as a term derives from quantitative research, and its use in the field of qualitative areas remains hotly contested. Validity is vital, as it confirms the quality of a research study (Creswell, 2013; Pepper & Wildy, 2009). Clandinin and Connelly (1990) proposed that narrative research must rely on quality indicators outside of the quantitatively oriented validity, reliability, and generalizability. They proposed apparency, verisimilitude, and transferability in lieu of the former terms, based on the propositions of van Manen and others. Clandinin and Connelly (2010) also emphasized the inclusion of authenticity, also termed adequacy or plausibility. Good narratives have an "explanatory, invitational quality," that rings of rightness—hence "authenticity" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2010, p. 185). Another notable addition to the lexicon of narrative validity is what Connelly and Clandinin termed "wakefulness," a state of ongoing reflection that is necessary when engaging in narrative research: "Narrative inquiry, positioned as it is at the boundaries of reductionist and formalistic modes of inquiry is in a state of development, a state that asks us as inquirers to be wakeful, and thoughtful, about all of our inquiry decisions" (p. 184).

Brinkman and Kvale (2015) defined validity as the mark of craftsmanship in a qualitative research endeavor. Accordingly, verification is built into each step of the research process (thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, validating, and reporting), with ongoing checks during each step. This idea merges well with Vagle's (2014) admonition to resist a "single hegemonic definition of validity in qualitative research" (p 66).

I intended to engage in continual validity checks during all stages of my narrative inquiry, with an especial focus on wakefulness. Wakefulness assumes a lived-in and living-through quality that is highlighted in the narrative process. My continual thinking and refocusing on the ideas, realities, and potential of narrative thinking will be tracked within my field notes and diary.

Potential Contributions of the Research

After an initial survey of the literature, I observed that the scholarly work surrounding educational entrepreneurship is relatively sparse. In comparison, the field of business entrepreneurship is burgeoning with books, articles, websites, and a plethora of materials ranging from how-to manuals to popular nonfiction. While I understand the economic incentives that surround such sensationalism, the underrepresentation of educational entrepreneurship merits a closer look. While such work may not be as lucrative or renowned as for-profit entrepreneurship, I feel that edupreneurship holds untold potential in terms of intrinsic, social, and financial rewards.

Additionally, the thorough description of the journey into educational entrepreneurship may allow me to gain enough data to continue investigating this topic, leading to other and further research. The role of teacher in the U.S. must continue to professionalize itself if it is to attract the top university graduates and future teachers/edupreneurs, and the growth in adjoining fields such as educational entrepreneurship may inform and motivate such individuals to delve into education as a profession.

CHAPTER FIVE

Research Findings

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, describe, and understand the journeys and experiences of professionals who respectively entered the arena of educational entrepreneurship. Narrative and phenomenological methods were used to discern and relay the unique stories, as well as to discern the underlying universal significant moments and themes. This chapter includes an overview of the participants with relevant demographic details, followed by a review of the emergent themes along with corresponding sub-themes from the analysis of data derived from five in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

Participants

A total of five participants were chosen via purposeful sampling through mutual professional acquaintanceship, LinkedIn, and personal referral. Of the eight initial entrepreneurs contacted via email or InMail (LinkedIn), five agreed to be interviewed for the purposes of this research. The interviews ranged from 47 minutes to two hours. Interviews were digitally recorded, and later transcribed. Four of the five interviews were face-to-face encounters at the subjects' business locations; one interview was taped via phone due to geographic distance (over one thousand miles). The participants included three males and two females, and ranged in age from 42 to 52. The average (mean) years in the field of educational entrepreneurship was 19.6. Four of the five participants had earned a Master's degree, and one a Bachelor's. All subjects were current or past CEO's of educational businesses. One out of the five began her career as an educational professional (teacher, then principal); the remaining four had no background in teaching. Pseudonyms were used for both individual and business names to protect confidentiality.

Demographic table

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Teaching Background	Highest Degree	Total Entrepreneur Experience	Type of Educational Business	Years at Current Business	Number Of Employees	Annual Revenue in dollars	Role At Business
Caleb	M	46	No	Master's	18 years	Ed Tech	8	4	<$1 million	Founder; CEO
Claire	F	50	Yes	Master's	20 years	7-12 private school	20	100+	Unknown	Founder; CEO
Knute	M	53	No	MBA	17 years	K-12 Online Learning	10	80	$20 million	CEO
Adam	M	42	No	Bachelor's	20 years	K-12 Consulting; Software development	20	23	Unknown	Founder; CEO
Rachel	F	52	No	MBA	23 years	School to career intermediary	10	19	$1.8 million	CEO

Results

After interview transcription, the data was coded to comprehend the content and emerging ideas. Following first-pass coding, the transcripts were reprinted, carefully read, and marked for significant statements that spoke to the shared understanding of educational entrepreneurship. If three out of five (60%) respondents mentioned a specific attitude, approach, or perspective, the concept was considered significant. In many cases, four out of five (80%) of subjects iterated the concept, but due to a few exceptions to this measurement, the researcher decided on a 60% response as worthy of significance.

Following researcher reflection and consideration of the data, significant statements and concepts were compiled from all participant interviews. From this action, an amalgamation of ten significant topics arose. These ten were:

1. Locating the niche or need
2. Creating access for students, teacher, or other entities

3. The business versus the education world
4. Reach and impact, including vision and success
5. Purpose, perspectives, and value statements
6. Challenges and obstacles
7. The nature of educational entrepreneurship
8. Advice and lessons learned along the way
9. Expansion, replicate-ability, and scalability
10. Improving education systems, delivery, or opportunities

After dwelling in the words and passages of the participants, the ten themes were collapsed into five to avoid content overlap or parallel themes. The five universally significant resultant themes were:

1. The nature of the niche
2. The world of business vs. the world of education
3. Challenges and epiphanies and bumps in the road
4. Educational entrepreneurship: Practice, perspective, impact, and reach
5. Lessons learned and hard-earned advice

Significant themes one through four will be addressed in the findings. Due to the evaluative content of the fifth theme, it will be discussed in the results chapter.

Five significant themes

Though participants varied in types of educational ventures and experiences, the commonalities expressed regarding entrepreneurship in education echoed resoundingly through the data. All participants revealed universal observations about the shared experiences of working as innovators, business owners, and/or leaders in the idiosyncratic realm of education.

Theme one: The nature of the niche

Somehow and in some way, all five entrepreneurs interviewed found their road into the educational market. Though their companies and pathways are as varied as their individual fingerprints, a striking commonality in the data was the nature of the niche. Respectively, each participant found entry into the world of education by discovering, noting, or observing a corner of the market that somehow remained unaddressed—or under-addressed--by current practice or approach. For the participants, niches were unearthed in underserved populations, presentation of new or innovative opportunities, untried techniques or services, improved or innovative approaches to tried-and-true methods, or the realization of in-between spaces that existed in the educational field.

Niche: Underserved populations. Claire, founder and development director of Singular School, noticed her niche while becoming aware of difficulties among student populations, first when she instructed as a high school teacher, and later as she trained to become an administrator. "The pacing of a traditional classroom often doesn't sync up with what a student needs." She noted the "astonishing number of kids who needed help, but for one reason or another couldn't get it." Determined to address this underserved and often neglected population who often went unnoticed, Claire founded Singular School, whose premise was centered on 1-to-1 education.

"It's one student at a time," Claire stated. "This is all about customizing education." The farther she progressed, the more she realized the specifics of her underserved and neglected population: students existing outside the mainstream margins.

> The number of students who aren't in school is pretty alarming; probably the single most surprising fact for me is the way we let scheduling and attendance become a reason for

> kids to exit school. (Claire)

The founder of Singular revealed the following reasons why students stopped attending their regular schools: health, chronic physical illness, terminal illness of a parent, mental health (especially anxiety disorders), special schedules (athletes in training), behavioral issues, learning disorders, etc.

Knute, whose prior experience in heading up a company that pioneered online Advanced Placement courses, also discovered the need to serve students who lacked access to educational opportunities:

> We put AP courses online to make them accessible to kids all over, especially kids in rural areas who had never had the chance to take those classes. It was giving kids access to education they hadn't had before.

Knute noted a similar neglected population of students when he changed gears to head up the first venture to universalize access to online high school education:

> The biggest number of our kids were kids who had to work, who were employed—working 30-40 hours a week helping support their families! Other of our online students had significant health issues, were teen parents, or were kids taking care of their parents. There were also homeschoolers, drop-outs, you name it.

Knute stated that "an inordinate amount" of his online students were obese; "high school can be a frightening environment for them," he revealed.

For Knute's company, finding that niche initiated not just a point of entry into educational entrepreneurship, but the new access changed the very nature of what was considered school: "All over the country, online learning is accepted now, and what it can do for kids is give them access."

Niche: Improvement and innovation. Improving or innovating existing approaches allowed other edupreneurs space to enter the education field. Adam, founder and CEO of a 20-year old company that engages in K-12 consulting and software development, realized early on that whole-scale school adoption of the latest and greatest technology did not necessarily lead to improvements in student learning or instructional improvement. He vowed to change that. Adam understood that tweaking the typical training that occurred at most school sites would gain him access to that crucial component: the teachers themselves.

> Only when we really talk differently or use the technology in new ways to teach were we seeing more effective teaching, more effective learning, more engagement, more ubiquitous use, more frequent use. (Adam)

Though technology was being placed in teacher hands, Adam understood that it wasn't always being effectively used. His query became: "How do we help that next teacher struggling to use technology?" His entrepreneurial answer was to approach professional development through a different lens, one that empowered its users: teachers.

> How can I make the job of a teacher easier? How can technology facilitate, enhance, and support the work of a teacher, how can we help them focus on being better practitioners? Not figure out when do they use it, how they use it… let them focus on being a better practitioner, and let the technology be a better support of that. (Adam)

Entrepreneurial entry into a niche does not always portend immediate success or saturation. Caleb, founder and CEO at Summit Services, understands that reality. He developed a tool to improve implementation of and access to standards-based curriculum in schools, but "the initial idea didn't get much traction...The district saw it and were excited by it--- but it never took off." Caleb, convinced of the efficacy and purpose of his product, pushed forward: "We refocused and iterated and now, in a per cent of districts, the teachers are excited about our tool and are using it frequently."

Niche: The in-between space. The interstitial spaces in education likewise can afford niche entry for edupreneurs. Rachel, CEO of Career Training Incorporated (CTI), operates daily in the space between school and career, a space often left vacant or ignored by business and education both. Rachel classified their organization as an intermediary organization, one that is "unique in our role." Managing 5100 students across 15 high schools and spanning 21 programs in three mega-sized school districts, Rachel is head of a non-profit that finds definition in multiple labels:

> We are a career education organization, an independent non-profit, intermediary organization, a school-to-career intermediary— we straddle both worlds [between industry and education].

Niche: A new opportunity. One commonality tied all participants together: the potential for and possibility of new products, services, or approaches to issues, needs, or improvements within education. Educational entrepreneurs seem guided by an innate vision for opportune moments or moods, and were motivated by the ability to address the discrepancies they observe. Adam explained his viewpoint: "I'm an opportunity seeker, saying well, here's a problem, here's a potential solution, and who do I need to know or meet or work with to facilitate that solution being used to solve that challenge?"

It's not uncommon for edupreneurs to have to muscle through the naysayers in order to grab an opportunity. When helping establish the company that eventually became the leader in online high school education, Knute was initially dissuaded by those who did not see the opportunity in the same way he viewed it: "When we first worked in online learning, everybody was like, 'You're crazy. Kids can't do that!' We were voices in the wilderness, and now it's accepted."

Theme two: The world of business vs. the world of education

With four research participants coming from business or technology backgrounds (even both), the data burgeoned with comparisons between commercial and academic worlds. Most participants duly noted the differences between these two separate universes that often seemed at odds with each other, even for entrepreneurs who crossed both borders.

In some ways, the underlying motives of business and education seemed almost antithetical. A fundamental difference lay in motivation: businesses strive for profit; education entities work to encourage learning. In educational entrepreneurship, these dichotomous motives could sometimes cause dissension or distraction.

Business vs. education: Fundamental differences. As a group, the participants noted the marked overall difference between functioning in a commercial versus an educational space. Generally, they noted the differences in feel, philosophy, and action between the two markets:
"The world of the educational marketplace is different than the free market of business" (Rachel).
"The consumer market is totally different –from the education market"(Claire).
"The users are different, … the whole buying dynamic….is just totally different" (Adam).
"Selling into school districts is HARD" (Knute).
"It's really hard to figure out a scalable education business model" (Caleb).

Business vs. education: Fast vs. slow. Interview subjects often noted the difference in pace between businesses and schools; while the former functioned with a drive and speed that was sometimes frenetic, the latter seemed stymied by a more relaxed gait. This pace influenced many aspects of entrepreneurial work; for some individuals, this was a large and significant difference that at times slowed their endeavors. All five participants, however, seemed to have come to a sense of reality about the slower pace of change and action in the education arena:

"Education is always a little bit slower than every other industry to adopt [new technologies and ideas]" (Adam).

"Change happen really slowly in education" (Knute).

"There's two different languages focused there: business speaks a different language ... and runs to a different rhythm than education" (Rachel).

Business vs. education: Profit vs. mission. Other key differences observed and experienced by edupreneurs were modes of payment and measurements of success. While schools were generally seen as non-profit entities, businesses dwelled in the for-profit arena of money and profit. Sometimes this discrepancy was viewed as beneficial; other times it proved a continual reminder of the two dueling universes:

"In some ways being a non-profit CEO, a non-profit leader, I have less autonomy than a business owner… because I have to serve the mission of the organization—not generate my own profit… so I would say everything is measured against mission" (Rachel).

"It's not just about selling more widgets, but improving the process and practice of teaching" (Adam).

"There is a sense of entitlement that gets built up in public schools, especially in communities where there's always been a culture of need… Of course, it's going to come free! Someone else will pay for it!" (Rachel).

Being able to found a company, continue to grow it, and manage its sustainability were all aspects of the fiscal realm mentioned in some capacity by all participants.

"In a for-profit company—you've got to be sustainable" (Knute).

> To be successful in the ed tech space, you need users who are engaged and using your product, and you need a way to make revenue that gives you enough margin to run the business. That's where most ed tech companies fail…they don't get over those hurdles… or they get enough that they limp along, but they're not successful. (Caleb)

Sometimes the rub seemed to be that the notion of making money went against one primary assumption about education: that profit and learning should not intermingle.

> There are lots of people who think you shouldn't make money if you're serving schools, and you get some backlash…. You can't do that here! … There are times when I think it would be a little simpler if we could celebrate our success when we're profitable [instead of] Oh, you're gouging the kids! (Knute)

Business vs. education: Different systems, different structures. Participants pointed toward deeper systemic variations between business and education, including frequent oppositional differences in structure, management, and change. Sometimes moving fluently between worlds was best served by understanding these essential differences before delving too deeply. Forewarned, after all, was often forearmed.

Adam noted the need for system improvement in schools, and viewed its lack of actualization as part of the educational landscape: "So many times we're trying to retool how we do education, but we never have time for retooling."

For Rachel, a larger realization derived from the power differentials in schools compared to the more egalitarian politics of business: "If you've been a classroom teacher… education is not a democracy—it's a hierarchy—and those cultures are pretty strong…. If you move into the business world—which is not a hierarchy--it's a meritocracy or a democracy."

Caleb saw the lack of training, knowledge, and implementation around school change as unintentional unfamiliarity with its topics and techniques:

> It's really hard to alter anything systemic in a district, especially when it's about process improvement and change management. I think part of the problem [in education] is people are promoted from within. [Teachers] understand curriculum and instruction… but in terms of system-level change and process improvement, no one has shown them how to do it… it's not in their skillset.

Adam likewise viewed a stubborn stasis as problematic for the business side of education: "Education is the one industry that hasn't really transformed how it operates."

Theme three: Challenges, epiphanies, and bumps in the road. Nothing worthwhile comes without challenge, and educational entrepreneurship heralded obstacles, difficulties, epiphanies and hard-earned realizations for all participants. Due to the breadth and depth of experience of this group—a cumulative mean of almost twenty years in educational entrepreneurship—individuals were able to review and reflect on the wide variety of challenging moments and circumstances, as well as derive meaning and understanding from more difficult moments.

Challenges and epiphanies: Money and finance. Acquiring money for projects and ventures was an oft-cited topic among the edupreneurs. Concerns ranged from understanding the unique processes of school district finance, navigating the murky waters sloshing between non-profit and for-profit entities, and acquiring funds to move a business forward. Claire summarized the essential frustration: "Nothing is worse than having finance being the limiting factor." Adam echoed this limitation: "The hardest part when we're working with schools is that there's a tremendous need and not a lot of budget available."

Knute viewed this fiscal challenge through a different lens: the eyes of the outside investor. “Investors are really reluctant to be in a business that sells to schools because it’s really hard to do.” He had direct experience attempting to persuade potential investors to back his then-latest education company. The statistics were dismal: “I talked with 320 investors and had a 95% rejection rate” (Knute). Eventually, he secured the funding, and moved successfully forward with his project.

Challenges and epiphanies: Cumbersome school systems and penurious politics. Edupreneurs often are stymied by both the stasis and embedded hierarchy of school systems. As agent of change and opportunity, the participants were sometimes frustrated by a system not easily amenable to innovation or improvement. Though all entrepreneurs found their respective entry into schools and districts, the education process seemed to frustrate and even confound participants. “It’s like building the plane while flying the plane,” Adam mused, indicating this plane required extensive mechanical and structural work, but never landed long enough to complete the renovation.

Other systemic difficulties included navigating the people and politics of school districts. “It was always the matter of finding, well, what’s the way to get to the right people,” Adam revealed, stating the pathways are not always clear or direct. Sometimes personnel exacerbated problems faced by entering and innovating in the educational market. In his experience helping lead an urban charter school to academic success, Caleb reflected, “In education, it’s [sometimes] about how the adults in the system chose to behave, and not the kids.” In the non-profit arena, Rachel likewise observed challenges during ongoing program implementation as her intermediary school-to-learning interacted with schools: “There is a tension with the teachers, administrators, even the unions… ‘It’s Common Core, and No Child Left Behind, and now you want Linked Learning?’” At times, the political frustration at schools is understandable, but remained a challenge for the edupreneur to navigate.

Challenges and epiphanies: Scaling and stability. Making an education business work involved opportunity, skill, investment, and stability over the long-term. All participants discussed the inherent challenges related to growing and scaling a business, a necessity that was often tricky in the educational realm. Sometimes the impetus to grow the business pushed from outside the doors; other times, the need sprouted from within. "We realized we can't be in more than one place at a time," Adam revealed, narrating his company's gradual shift away from school-site professional development to training and software development in larger publishers and influencers.

A few years back, a well-known educational publisher approached Singular Schools; they wanted to acquire Claire's business and replicate its model. Though Claire was at first reluctant, she stepped up to the challenge: "That was truth time...that was where I had to say, is this concept really viable?" Despite the hurdles of the buy-out, an altered role (she is now founder as well as development director), and rapid scaling, Claire is pleased with the results: "We now have 11 campuses in four states. That is tremendous reach. I look at the number of students who are supported. That is a model that in my mind has proven itself." Perhaps her largest reward from taking the challenge? "I realized I did know my business inside and out."

Cementing the fiscal stability of a business is vital, even for a non-profit, as Rachel understood. When she took the helm as CEO at CTI, she realized her fundamental task was not just to expand, but also to solidify the organization's financial base:

> I would say that my entrepreneurial impact of not being the founder but needing to build on it---is a step from pure entrepreneur to institutionalizing an organization or business and making it stable—I've been a handmaid to that passage.

Rachel grew the intermediary organization from 6 employees to 19, moved the budget from $575K to 1.8 million, and progressed from serving 1200 students to 5100. With all this positive growth, she still retained a slight air of caution: “When we get to 2 million, I think we’ll be more stable.”

With the blessing of experience, Rachel mentioned a few cautions for scaling an educational venture:

> If someone is looking to be an entrepreneur in this area, [she] must keep in mind: what do you gain from scaling? What do you lose? What is your core competence and how do you retain it? The value you provide to that teacher, that school, that district, if you take it to scale, are you still able to provide the quality you are known for?

Claire likewise noted caveats to iterating an edupreneurial business: “To make the program replicate, it really is personal.” She noted:

> You think sometimes bigger is better, but it’s really the same as the philosophy for serving students. What’s right is what works for you regardless of anyone else’s reputation.

Challenges and epiphanies: Epiphanies and moments of “A-ha!” The upside of facing challenges and overcoming obstacles may be the realizations and understandings that sometimes arrive once the dust settles. Though not all challenges lead to moments of transformation, and not all problems promise epiphanies, experience is often a wise teacher. In the field of educational entrepreneurship, lessons are frequently experiential.

Knute revealed a transformative moment when he understood that online education was not just connecting kids to schools, but also to each other. Relaying the tale of Jesse, a formerly overweight, disheveled, disengaged adolescent, Knute was amazed to see the student a year later at an online school meet-up. He almost didn't recognize the formerly reclusive and withdrawn teen, as Jesse was now laughing and joking, vibrantly leading a group conversation of other teens who had gotten to know him online as a great, funny, and smart person--not judging him based on his appearance. He experienced a moment of clarity, for, "Not only did kids have access to these courses—we [also] offered the opportunity for kids to connect with each other---[and it was] really cool to see the effect on kids."

In this and other cases, Knute noted, "The organizations I have run have been able to drive change." In the case of the online public high school venture, an entrepreneurial idea led to widespread adoption and also opened new windows of reference for static school districts: "We saw lots of impact early on…driving districts to be more creative" (Knute).

Claire of Singular Schools also noted an intriguing epiphany. The need for alternate approaches is so high in public education, she explained, that the entrepreneurial opportunities are wide open, affording great opportunities for partnership and collaboration: "I don't think any of us [entrepreneurs] really compete with each other."

Rachel's epiphany is one that has allowed many entrepreneurs to transition into the education market:

> Teachers can't do it alone... I don't know if this relates as much to the nexus between education and business but it certainly provides an entrepreneurial opportunity.

Theme four: Educational entrepreneurship: Practice, perspective, impact, and reach. Educational entrepreneurship operates in its own unique place in the world. Neither wholly altruistic nor completely commercial, it occupies the "nexus between education and business" (Rachel). Just as CEO Rachel described, "[It's] hard to put a category onto it—that also speaks to the educational and entrepreneurial mix." Not only do edupreneurs straddle two seemingly competing worlds, they need to discover and employ effective tools and procedures for moving smoothly between them.

Educational entrepreneurship: Understanding the nexus. Edupreneurs must learn not just learn the rules of school and the rules of commerce, but also a third set of imperatives: the rules of educational entrepreneurship. This task can be daunting and difficult, but likewise enjoyable and rewarding. Practitioners often have to apply this triad of road rules on a daily basis. Claire reported a deep need for edupreneurs to understand the service they provide, and how it intersects with both the school and the client. Functioning close to the school system entails a need for knowledge of educational procedure, politics, and policy. Though the press and pull of daily urgency may rule the moment, edupreneurs remain advocates and influencers:

> [Because] the reality is [that] policy impacts us all far more than most people imagine. So it's really irresponsible for me to say I'm not in educational policy because that's where the opportunity is opened up or closed off. (Claire)

Adam reported the necessity to meld education experience with business practice because "There's a lot of expertise that has both an understanding of the education side of things and the business side." His staff is comprised of both technology and education people: "We've always focused on that blend of expertise" (Adam).

Educational entrepreneurship: Innovation, change, and disruption. The treasure disguised within educational entrepreneurship may very well be its tendency to influence and effect simple and/or complex change for schools, students, professional educators, and edupreneurs. Most often, entrepreneurs become aware of this ulterior tendency, and can even exploit it for the greater public good. Adam clarified,

> Our whole mission is: what can we do to change education that way [with teacher use of technology]? So it's just trying to figure out what ways can we make a difference, how we can make a dent to change that?

After his company led the way in revolutionizing online public learning, Knute narrated the sudden and rapid realization by traditional bricks-and-mortar schools that this innovative tool could be useful, practical, and successful. "It happened that quickly…. Showing it would work…and that it would work for kids" (Knute).

With school-to-career learning and internship placement, Rachel desired to improve connectivity between schools and industry, cement interest between students and what they learn, and create a bridge between education and life. This mission, she believed, "makes a more intriguing curriculum to interest kids" (Rachel).

"It's all about change and disruption," Adam laughed, "And I'm all in favor of disruption."

Educational entrepreneurship: Understanding impact. Edupreneurs are interesting, innovative individuals who often seem driven to create an impact that stretches beyond mere financial measurement. Though money is always an apt motivator, the participants universally narrated their universal belief in positively influencing students, staff, and educational systems. In the long view, the interviewed edupreneurs were seemingly as interested in the value of their organization's impact as in its financial value. For some, this ideal of creating positive influence and impact kept them engaged in educational entrepreneurship even though they may have had opportunities to exit the arena.

"It's great to be able to build a good company and do good things for kids" (Knute).

"You gotta make sure your product also moves the needle in terms of teacher efficacy…. [that it's] not just spinning the wheels" (Adam).

"We are all about teachers smiling more, and children learning more" (Caleb).

"Our footprint is small, but if we do great work and we deliver on our mission and promises to both education and industry—because the promise is to both, right? —then it will have a ripple effect" (Rachel).

> It is both very rewarding and very stressful--We are taking the neediest and most frustrated students and purposefully shining a spotlight on them so the teacher feels a lot of responsibility for helping the student have that success... it's influential work. (Claire)

Educational entrepreneurship: Values, purpose, meaning, and a spin of the axiological axis. All interviewed entrepreneurs indicated a high level of purpose due to engaging in meaningful work that melded the worlds of business and education. Educational entrepreneurship thus differentiated itself from a purely commercial pursuit due to its perceived high level of meaning and purpose.

Adam–and others—mentioned a desire to make a difference in the world, and welcomed a specific satisfaction at being able to foment that positive impact in the meaningful work accomplished on a daily basis. "It's a passion and an interest in making a dent in the universe [through] improving education" (Adam). Despite ongoing challenges, Rachel found "there's great joy in doing it [educational entrepreneurship]."

Adam also relished the future focus of working in an education-related field: "It's always about what do we do to make the world a better place, and this is one way we can make that investment now that will pay dividends 30 years from now."

A helping metaphor was sometimes used during the interviews, and participants seemed to find meaning in being useful to people beyond immediate selves. Caleb described that "It's about helping people...trying to make a better world at a high level." For Rachel, improving the existing world was a distinguishing and distinctive feature of her foray into educational entrepreneurship:

> My personal temperament was in business… The education aspect of me wanted to be a change maker…to have an impact on an individual or a group… the intangible benefit—save the world, so to speak.

Even Knute, whose career originated in the high-octane start-up zone, admitted to catching the edupreneurial purposeful spirit. Citing the days he worked closely with parents and students while spreading the wod about online learning, he admitted, "That might be the most rewarding thing I've ever done." Even for an entrepreneur with such a successful business background, motivations other than money seemed to take precedence in choosing and sticking with educational ventures. "There might be other places where you can get the same kind of satisfaction—you can build a good company in a lot of places---but doing that and knowing you're doing stuff for kids is something I've really grown to appreciate" (Knute).

The tangible benefit of reaching and teaching kids was mentioned as a specific reward for all the entrepreneurs. "Our mission is to introduce students to high-growth careers," Rachel declared about CTI. It was personally and professionally rewarding for her to witness the direct transformation of young lives:

> [I really enjoyed] watching the internships--the impact of the high school internship on our students and watch[ing] them report back and say, 'WOW! I had no idea what that was like!'" (Rachel)

For Claire, allowing her students the flexibility of 1-to-1 education and mastery-based learning reached students who otherwise might have disappeared into the vortex of neglect. The important factor? The student sitting in front of her instructors. "Money can be made up; time can't." Knute emphasized the value of the combined force of business and education: "It's great to be able to build a good company and do good things for kids."

Whether axiologically defined as passion, joy, or impact, the interviewed edupreneurs all nodded to the intrinsically motivating underpinnings of the helping values. All carried a vision in their minds about how their work influenced students, improved teacher's tasks, or allowed access to learning that didn't exist before their innovations. Most carried a plan for continued work in the field, and even expansion of their entrepreneurial efforts in education.

"I have a vision that CTI will expand and bring our model of school-to-industry connectivity to other areas and sectors… [though] it may not happen as fast as a McDonald's franchising (laughter)" (Rachel).

Knute already had other entrepreneurial ideas on his bucket list, including an online school-to-career program and coding schools for universal access: "We could use online learning to take coding all across the country."

All of the participants echoed part or all of the sentiment echoed in Rachel's compelling words of mission and purpose:

> Going back to that intrinsic value that I saw and that got me interested in education in the first place…. I would never want to make and sell widgets--- I have an MBA, I know how to do a business plan, I know how to run a for-profit company, but I got no heart in that…There's no feel good in that!

Summary

Five actively working, mid-career edupreneurs were interviewed for this qualitative study in order to better understand the unique and shared significant moments and experiences involved in the field of educational entrepreneurship. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and scanned for significant statements. The emergent themes originally numbered ten, and were condensed to five for clarity and concision. The five resultant significant themes were:

1. The nature of the niche. Participants derived opportunities to engage in educational entrepreneurship by locating and serving neglected and underserved populations, improving or innovating existing products or services, discovering in-between or interstitial spaces in the market or in services, and unearthing new opportunities.
2. The world of business vs. the world of education. The business and education sectors were viewed as notably different from each other in their overall philosophical foundations, pacing and speed of innovation and adoption, and underlying financial and mission motivations.
3. Challenges and epiphanies and bumps in the road. Edupreneurs struggled with various obstacles, including money and finance, cumbersome school systems and appertaining political hurdles, replication scaling, and stability. The participants also experienced epiphanies and smaller moments of realization, ranging from the personal to the universal.
4. Educational entrepreneurship: Practice, perspective, impact, and reach. Interviews revealed deep understandings of the nexus between business and education, focal points surrounding innovation, change, and disruption, an adherence to creating impact beyond the individual, and the axiological turn toward values, purpose, and meaning.
5. Lessons learned and hard-earned advice. Discussion in results chapter.

Each of the themes will be analyzed and interpreted in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Results

Overview

This research study considered and described the phenomenological experience of educational entrepreneurship, presenting it in narrative form organized by significant themes derived from the semi-structured interviews of five experienced entrepreneurs. Its purpose was to better understand the unique individual as well as shared experiences and interpretations of entrepreneurs working in the education field. This chapter begins with the presentation of the study's fifth and final significant theme: lessons learned and hard-earned advice. I decided this theme belonged in the study's final chapter due to the reflective and evaluative nature of its content. Following the final theme, the research questions are presented and answered, synthesizing thematic content from the findings. This discussion is followed by philosophical and practical implications, limitations, recommendations, and a final summary combined with researcher reflection.

Final significant theme: Lessons learned and hard-earned advice

All participants interviewed presented not just summaries of their business ventures or overviews of their entrepreneurial actions, they also offered advice based on practical and philosophical lessons gleaned over the course of their respective careers in educational entrepreneurship.

The posed question: if they could advise an individual considering entering into an entrepreneurial, educational venture, what wisdom or lessons could they offer?

Claire was enthusiastically encouraging: "I would say do it! There's a lot of need and there's many solutions. Someone who sees a way to strengthen the system at any level, I think that's a great idea." Claire mentioned that she herself had started her education business where she found herself frustrated by a system that didn't adequately serve a neglected population. "I started where I saw the need," she stated. She alluded to entrepreneurial collaboration as a possible solution to some of education's problems, indicating that the field for educational improvement was so open to possibilities that competition didn't threaten market space. This possibility of edupreneur to edupreneur collaboration was a unique thread, and one that deserves a closer look in future research.

Caleb's advice was pragmatic, suiting his technological background:

> You've got to start super small and solve a very specific problem and do that really well… It has to solve something critical that they really have to use—It can't be a nice-to-have—you have to make it super easy for [teachers] to take advantage of.

According to Caleb, the temptation to go large and solve all of education's problems should be mitigated by a realistic understanding of focused entrepreneurial purpose.

> You gotta be super narrow and focused. As much as you want to solve every problem, or solve a really big problem, you just won't have enough funding, and there's so many different tools out there that overlap.

In general, he noted, individuals think the rules about working with schools won't apply to them until they find out otherwise. Better to be prepared, he noted, and understand the realities of the situation:

> Entrepreneurs in general feel they can do anything—they think, that it's going to be different for them. *I* felt that way starting this company. The reality is, ed tech takes generally ten to 15 years of slow growth before you think you're successful. It's a slow,

long process. [It's] very rare to go faster.

Adam echoed the decelerated pace of educational endeavors; in this world, patience is more necessity than virtue.

> You have to be in it for the long term. A three-year commitment—totally not gonna work. Five-year commitment—totally not gonna work. Ten years— [that's the] soonest you're going to see the impact of your efforts.

Adam admitted he didn't honestly view himself as an entrepreneur, though he agreed his business scale and personality profile doubtlessly fit the mold. Instead, he portrayed himself as an "opportunity seeker," someone always on the lookout to present possible solutions to educational challenges.

After successful stints in both the business and education worlds, Knute described what he saw as a necessary quality for anyone considering educational entrepreneurship: "As it relates to start-ups, the top success criterion is persistence. You just have to believe in what you're doing and stick with it." He paused, and repeated the thought: "Persistence is important… and belief." He chuckled as he reported that even though everyone may be telling you "No!" at a 95% rejection rate, you still have to push through if you believe in what you're doing.

Rachel revealed that, in education, sometimes the talk exceeds the action. The necessary task, she believed, was focusing on the latter. Her advice to future edupreneurs? "Do a thorough assessment of the landscape to make sure there is a gap you are filling; recognize also what existing competitors are there in place." Like all the participants, she combined vision with pragmatism. It's all great to have the next amazing idea, she said, but "just because you have a good idea doesn't mean that the superintendent is going to buy it." At the close of the interview, Rachel returned to the topic she opened with: the nexus of education and business. The differences were actual and apparent, she asserted, but could be navigated with effort and understanding:

> The world of the educational marketplace is different than the pure marketplace of business…In education, it's not a pure market-based system—there are sacred cows that need to be respected—particularly when dealing with large bureaucracies like school districts and unions--- If you are coming in with an idea that may eliminate a job or threaten a power base, be aware of that. It doesn't necessarily mean that it's not going to be accepted, but there's the politics and a non purely market-base orientation in education that other entrepreneurs may have to face.

Research questions and discussion

1. **What are some of the instigating, contributing, and continuing factors that motivate a business or an educational professional toward educational entrepreneurship?**

All participants mentioned compelling reasons for their entry into educational entrepreneurship. Further, the responses often combined personal, practical, and humanitarian motivations for moving into edupreneurship.

Realization of a need or niche. One hundred per cent of participants pointed to the realization of a need within the field of education that they wished to address. Claire's experience as a teacher and administrator opened her eyes to the unacceptable number of unenrolled students, and her private 1-to-1 academy served this neglected and overlooked population. "Some of the systems can let you slide," Claire noted. Claire's educational business flourished as a result of her comprehension of this need. In a similar fashion, Knute was astonished by the number of students who desperately needed an alternate approach to traditional schools; the company he led discovered that an online platform could provide access to kids who otherwise may have been denied schooling. On another note, Adam observed the discrepancy between technology training and implementation, and realized that teachers were a vital component in the student-content learning link. He built a consulting and software company around “support[ing] and facilitate[ing] more effective use of technology in teaching.” Rachel began her entry to education by volunteering with CTI; convinced of the efficacy of the career organization’s mission connecting kids to careers, she eventually became its CEO, and was excited to continue her leadership into a fiscally stable future. After serving on various school and planning boards, Caleb noted the need for districts to more efficaciously organize standards-based curriculum. With his skilled technology background, Caleb began customizing propriety software to meet this discovered need.

Opportunity found. All participants seized opportunities to enter educational entrepreneurship. Some used their own funds to back their plans (Claire, Knute), leveraged expertise to create a service or tool (Adam, Caleb, Claire, Knute), or improved and innovated an existing educational organization (Rachel, Knute). Whatever the case, all individuals were motivated by opportunity, and all acted on those opportunities. Adam cited a continual understanding of new and shifting opportunities as a premise for new and continuing business:

> We’re service oriented…we’re riding every disruptive innovation. It’s a whole new opportunity for business; we don’t have to worry about retooling or rethinking it, we’re always just looking for the next disruptive technology.

Challenge, interest, and promise. It is clear from the interview data that educational entrepreneurship is rife with challenges, obstacles, and bumps in the road. Despite these hurdles, the participants were deeply interested and invested in their careers, and seemed to overcome their numerous challenges with logic and grace. The edupreneurs seemed to relish rising to the challenges found in both business and education, and eventually enjoyed figuring out how to work in the two conjoined albeit disparate worlds. Applying a full skill-set gleaned from her past business work, Rachel found a pleasing amalgamation in her role as CEO at CTI: "At this current role, I love being able to build the program and the services, and to have the creativity to innovate."

Making a difference. Though on the surface it may seem clichéd, the participants were individually and collectively inspired by the belief that their work was making a difference. They cited direct and indirect influence on students, families, teachers, administrators, employees, and on the ever-changing field of education. Most especially, they desired improvements to products, methods, techniques, and practices that affected kids.

"It's making a dent in the universe in improving education," Adam stated of his motivation. He defined a primary company motivator as "trying to figure out ways we can make a difference." Knute spoke fondly of his time building bridges between families, students, and schools using an innovative platform of online learning: "We had lots and lot of great stories of kids—we turned around their lives." Such higher purpose was often tagged by the entrepreneurs, who exhibited a sound understanding of mission mixed with profit. In educational entrepreneurship, both factors—mission and money—were combined to promote good educational practice, content, and tools.

Doing well by employees was an additional motivator, as well as the benefit of working with skilled workers and teams. Claire mentioned the satisfaction in working with other educators who were deeply invested in helping students, and Rachel focused on the vital and valuable role qualified employees played within a vibrant organization. Knute summed up the notion of doing well by both students and employees: "It's great to be able to build a good company *and* do good things for kids."

Purposeful, meaningful work. What seemed to keep the wheels of the entrepreneurial engine turning was an overarching sense of purposeful, meaningful work. All participants spoke to the sense of contributing to a greater good or creating improved, relevant experiences for students and teachers. Rachel spoke to the underlying joy of working and connecting with students, schools, and industry. Three entrepreneurs mentioned prospective plans to enter the teaching field once they retired, sold their businesses, or moved into different life phases. All three declared they felt this was the best way to have a direct impact on students; sometimes, being an edupreneur with a product or service seemed too many steps away from students.

Conclusions and caveats. Intriguingly, though the participants entered educational entrepreneurship from diverse backgrounds, all were innately motivated to remain in the education market despite a sometimes steep learning curve. Participants were motivated to join the ranks of educational entrepreneurs in order to address neglected populations, achieve more equitable access to education, transform the way students learned or teachers taught, improve and disseminate strong content, strengthen student learning, or provide additional opportunities for students to succeed. Seemingly, this spark to address some of education's prevailing concerns may strike edupreneurs from a variety of sources: personal experience, school observation, volunteer encounter, technology development, and curriculum design, among others. Once engaged in the challenging work, the participants were highly intrinsically motivated to continue their edupreneurial work.

What didn't seem as relevant in entrepreneurial motivation was random chance. The participants purposefully engaged themselves in the education arena, whether through professional or volunteer opportunity. None "fell into" the entrepreneurial space—a modicum of self-direction was involved. Another interesting commonality was the stick-to-itiveness that the edupreneurs employed; despite hurdles in funding, scheduling, selling, accessing, and organizing, the participants seemed determined to stick it out for the long run. It may be that the innate challenges within education may inspire edupreneurs to innovate and adapt out of sheer necessity. Whether this reveals an innate entrepreneurial drive to succeed or whether it demonstrates the helpfulness of perseverance remains a matter of speculation.

2. **How do the studied individuals describe and analyze their journeys from professionals to edupreneurs, and what were key turning points along the way?**

The Journey. In literature and life alike, the theme of the journey nabs a prominent role. In our lives and throughout our careers, we learn much about our hearts, minds, souls, and vital relationships. In many ways, the journey itself is worthwhile, for its winding, irregular path often leads us to places unknown and sights unseen. Without the journey, we may have ended up different people than we are today. In "Ithaka," the Greek poet Cavaty mused not just upon Ulysses' celebrated homecoming to his island kingdom of Ithaka, but about the arduous, convoluted, and magical journey that returned him thence:

> Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
> Arriving there is what you're destined for.
> But don't hurry the journey at all.
> Better if it lasts for years,
> so you're old by the time you reach the island,
> wealthy with all you've gained on the way,
> not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.
>
> Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
> Without her you wouldn't have set out.

Much like Ulysses, the interviewed participants accepted their chosen pathways, stayed the course despite eventual hardships and obstacles, and gained enough insight to reflect on the individual and collective meanings of the grand adventure itself. Unlike the great Greek demigod, the edupreneurs were not universal but everyday heroes, diligently endeavoring to improve education for kids one day at a time.

The edupreneur's journey begins with a holistic interpretation of the conjoined business and education worlds, followed by an investigation into key turning points or epiphanies of the individual entrepreneurs. Along the way, incredible vistas of the Aegean Sea are contrasted with glimpses of the gods, and mitigated by the demons within as well as the Cyclopes without.

The space between: The nexus between business and education. Following their respective entries into the conjoined fields of business and education, the interviewed entrepreneurs all realized the interesting in-between space they occupied. This intersection of business and education was mentioned by all subjects, and seemed a vital concept, appearing early in all individual's noted experiences. Rachel eloquently described this space as "the nexus between education and business," noting that "we find ourselves having two very different worlds and needing to move between them"

Knute narrated the importance of fluency in both worlds. When asked to take over as CEO, he was tasked with turning around an education company that had been unprofitable and unsustainable. "The board said, 'Let's bring in a dot.com guy,'" Knute revealed, "and there I was." His tenure was effective if not popular: he fired excess staff and tightened the financial reins.

> When I arrived, [XYZ] had 250 K in lifetime earnings in its first four years—and investors were thinking of shutting it down. Two years later we were at 25 million in sales, we'd gotten the company to profitability---growing revenue and shrinking headcount. I saved the company and got it sold and it's still around today, and doing very well.

Within his consulting company, Adam confronted the merging of the business and education worlds in his own staff, a concerted blend of former educators and technology people. His employees needed to understand both the business and education side of the work they did, and he spent necessary time bringing those from outside of education up to speed. Though a for-profit business, their work required intensive and focused knowledge from the complex world of teaching. "There's a lack of credibility," he admitted, "if you haven't come from the inside." The CEO noted: "There's a whole different way of thinking, right? so helping [employees outside of education] understand [teaching] is a much bigger challenge than you might imagine" (Adam).

Though running a non-profit entity, money was one of Rachel's continual concerns. In this regard, her business background permitted a realistic financial perspective that allowed her to run a high-quality intermediary organization like CTI:

> Much like a for-profit CEO, I need to meet and ideally exceed budget… so that's a nut to crack every year, and my ability to do that or not is how I'm measured, and I think everything else feeds that outcome because you don't raise that money unless you're delivering quality programs, and you don't deliver those programs unless you're hiring and retaining good staff, so it's all a virtuous circle.

Understanding the client and following the money. In business, the client is the receiver of services, goods, or knowledge. Money is the mode of exchange, and the client pays when satisfied or in possession of the product. In education, the client may be more nebulous. For some businesses, students (or their parents in proxy) may be the client; for other educational businesses, school districts, individual schools, administrators, teachers, or other entities may receive training, goods, services, content, or tools that serve the market. Often, the services are intangible; online learning, for example, or access to curriculum or training.

Edupreneurs indicated that understanding the various clients and gaining access to the client were sometimes problematic in education. Figuring out the supply chain as well as persons responsible for purchasing was not always clear-cut. Understanding the slow and often cumbersome process was cited as a stepping stone to eventual success. Learning the budget and adoption processes was mentioned, as well as understanding the lengthy time frames involved. Noting that there's often not a lot of money to spare, getting into the actual school or district budget—and thus getting paid—remained a vital part of the edupreneurial skill-set. Further, many school districts set unique purchasing policies, making one standardized approach to soliciting most challenging. Selling to schools versus getting schools to buy was also cited as an obstacle. "In education, you need buyers" (Caleb). Thus, arriving at both general and specific understandings of the school-client relationship and how money moves was key to edupreneurial stability and success.

The slow tick of school time. Time ticks inevitably on, marching into the future second by second, moment by moment. In education, however, clocks seemed warped by Dali's inveterate twisting and teasing. All interview subjects mentioned the slower pace of innovation and adoption in the education market, and the need to work in this more tenuous space. Some edupreneurs were able to put a positive spin on the slow ticking of school time: "Change happens really slowly in education, but that's good" (Knute). Participants mentioned the need for patience and perseverance, combined with a resolution to stay the entrepreneurial course. Once they adapted and understood this premise, they seemed better able to adopt techniques to deal with its temporal reality.

Growing, scaling, replicating. Each unique edupreneur experienced growth, change, scaling, or replication of his or her business. All mentioned these moments as key points in time, and derived lessons from the growth or replication. Claire's Singular Schools was acquired by a larger company, growing from three to 11 campuses, and establishing its presence in four additional states. Knute grew XYZ to profitability while shrinking its employee count; he also headed up an online education company that was acquired by a large company. Further, he began his own venture, scaled, and sold that as well. Currently, he was CEO at an online educational company, leading changes in innovation and fiscal stability. Caleb's venture grew from one employee—himself—to four, and moved its operations to a neighboring state. He thought perhaps a good scenario would be to get acquired by a large educational company and placed in-house for better content access, and to more effectively serve clients. Over twenty years, Adam's company grew to 23 employees, and pivoted from serving individual school clients to larger educational entities. CIT, where Rachel was CEO, saw significant growth from 4 to 19 employees, including a budget that burgeoned from $575K to close to two million. All entrepreneurs expressed humble pride in their accomplishments.

Adam noted a distinction between a more traditional entrepreneur and an educational entrepreneur:

> I'm not a serial entrepreneur because they are really good at building things and leaving things…. And in education, this does not work, does not compute, does not fit the model for education.

Claire noted a key to her growth and success: "To make a program replicate, it really is personal." Regarding the expansion, she admitted, "Never would I have accomplished that [scaling by] remaining a private owner." Claire did note the benefit of remaining the original innovator: "I can always dance a different line because I'm the founder."

Turning point: Future focus. In their businesses, participants valued the possibility of touching the future. Engaging in purposeful work allowed them a sense of legacy, and a hope and drive to change education for the better. Future focus may have been emphasized due to the significant cumulative work experience of the population (almost twenty years); in mid-career, edupreneurs possessed the skill, time, and understanding to reflect on their good work and its potential impact on the future. Adam indicated his personal and business focus, "It's always about: what do we do to make the world a better place, and this is one way we can make that investment now that will pay dividends 30 years from now."

Likewise, Rachel discerned great value in CTI's ability to help students where they currently found themselves, and, more importantly, how they carried their new school-to-career knowledge into their prospective futures. She asked, "What does [school-to-career education] mean in terms of this graduate's ability to be focused, [to be] successful I their pursuing of their life afterward?"

The journey, redux. Travelers who venture off to foreign lands usually return to their starting points, wiser, road-worn, and weary from their exhausting trips. Some small number, however, remain entranced with their travels, and carry them on in perpetuity, perhaps never returning from whence they came. Ulysses himself is said to have continued his journey even after returning to Ithaka, his long-sought home; unsatiated and omni-adventurous, he gathered his aging crew and set sail for unknown isles in uncharted waters

In some ways, edupreneurs are these perpetual travelers, wandering far afield to learn, absorb, and enlarge their personal and business perspectives. Though they may have begun the journey as novices, they emerged as seasoned nomads enamored by the roads they trod and the great vistas they surveyed. For edupreneurs, going back to a former rote existence as a business person or professional may be anticlimactic. It’s hard to face monotony once kissed by ocean winds.

When asked what they might do if provided with a certain sum of money to accomplish something different, all demurred. “I’d have to think bout that!” Claire laughed. “I think I would keep doing what I’m doing…. Maybe expand it further.” Knute already had been offered a potential exit from the educational entrepreneurship, but turned it down. He stated that he liked building great teams, as well as working to influence students and teachers. “I think online career ed has some great possibilities… and online coding…. I’d like to stick it out and see where these go.”

The participants shared universal understandings about their unique edupreneurial journeys. Each educational entrepreneur was confronted with the clash and consonance of the business and education worlds, and all found ways to adapt to this dualistic existence. In fact, successful edupreneurs might have been highly adept at navigating this in-between world, harnessing the powers and benefits of each realm while consecutively avoiding the unavoidable weaknesses and pitfalls. Further, traveling along the cliffs and canyons and traversing open oceans required skillful navigation and a careful compass. The interviewed edupreneurs revealed understandings of education’s unique pace, clientele, philosophy, and future focus. Though they differed in their journeys, all participants were particularly driven by this final factor: leaving imprints on the sands of time.

3. **How can individual stories of educational entrepreneurs help illuminate the topics surrounding educational reform, student and community needs, and teacher professionalism?**

From the outset, the researcher was interested in the potential contribution of educational entrepreneurship to school improvement, education reform, and other aspects of increase in student learning and teacher professionalism. If not necessarily a universal panacea for educational ills in the United States, entrepreneurship could become a hopeful player in the larger game of educational reform. Its potential would seem to find additional verity given the strong free market found in the U.S. economy. Supply and demand have long dominated our capitalistic landscape, and have certainly fostered memorable instances of both incremental and innovative change (Hollywood movies, iPhones, and Tesla all come to mind).

Arguably, the structure and philosophy of the public education system may not seamlessly mesh with the tenets and tendencies of raw capitalism. Our schools are the single largest public service institution (PSI) in American existence, and adhere to a system that is more monochromatic and hierarchical than varied and meritorious. These challenges are exacerbated by the administration of local, state, and federal regulations with which public schools must comply. In essence, schools are thus more closed markets than open ones.

Hess (2008) posited that educational entrepreneurship possessed the possibility to augment if not alter the current school reform landscape. In this hopeful assessment, both schools and private business could ostensibly prosper; schools and districts would benefit from the innovation and alternate approaches fomented by entrepreneurs, and the entrepreneurs would benefit fiscally and purposefully by the market and challenge provided by public schools. Viewed optimistically, it seems like the amalgamation of business and education could result in a win-win.

Things always look better on paper, however, and the notion of a combined business-education nexus is no different. The reality is always much messier and more random than the linear calculations and projections of theoretically sketched plans. With that caveat, realists (and even cynics) may be pragmatic, but they can also be wrong. What educational entrepreneurs may offer in innovation, imagination, and implementation may supplement or supersede the limits of an often entrenched system. What edupreneurs may offer the American public school system is this: hope.

But this is all philosophy and conjecture, which are perhaps the apotheosis of the entrepreneur. Conversely, these individuals dwell in daily practice and action, in work and adjustment, in change and innovation. Entrepreneurs roll up their sleeves and get to work. For edupreneurs especially, the work comes first and the philosophizing follows. For the moment, the problem must be solved, the need addressed. The opportunity is seized, and the niche is located. Finding the "in," they push forward, bent on success. The edupreneur has her ear on the ground but her mind on the mission. She is a bit of a mystery, because her brain is dominated not just by profit, but also by purpose. She understands fiscal stability, but also comprehends her impact on the learning landscape.

How then can what this group of experienced edupreneurs shed light on the many and varied issues confounding and hampering the public school system? How can their innovation alter the educational landscape? How can their individual and collective efforts inspire continued school reform, improvement, and change? What can they tell us about reaching both teachers and students in order to implement best practice and improved learning opportunities? After considering the data, I will answer these pressing questions in eight categories: the entrepreneurial lens, alternate approaches, niche solutions, universal applications, ongoing innovation and adaptation, conjoined ventures, process and system change, and growth and scaling.

The entrepreneurial lens. First, educational entrepreneurship provides a different lens through which to view the myriad issues, both small and large, that hound public schools and the organizations that surround them. School staff, including teachers, administrators, and school boards, frequently engage in thinking that limits solutions to what is known and familiar. This tunnel vision can narrow options instead of expanding choices. Consulting with experts outside the immediate environment can allow better filtration of viable ideas and solutions, and can offer alternative views and options. Opening schools up to outside ideas can be threatening to those on the inside, but the potential benefits outweigh the negligible risks. Perspective change often entails radical or transformative experience, and entrepreneurial endeavors in schools could predict or promote altered frames of reference toward solving school needs, issues, and mandates. From data collection software to online learning, entrepreneurial ideas have incrementally and holistically changed public education; inviting edupreneurs into schools could prove to be a valuable endeavor for schools, teachers, and students alike.

Alternate approaches. In the business world, one size does not fit all, and entrepreneurs must conform to changing clientele, markets, cultures, and values. Within the world of public education, the norm remains the practical and philosophical impetus of teaching. The beauty and the beast of public education is that schools must and do educate all; the dark side of the story emerges in the number of students that are underserved, neglected, or passively discarded. As Claire noted, “There are many great paths for kids who can operate in the norms;” however, such norming also can abandon outliers and students who fall between the cracks. In 2015, the U.S. high school completion rate stood at 83%; conversely, 17% of students did not earn a diploma. In 2016, approximately 15 million U.S. students attended public secondary school; 17% of this 4-year cohort (representing grades 9 to

12) predicts 2.5 million students who will not graduate (NCES). By any calculation, this is a significant number of students who may miss opportunities for jobs, internships, continuing education, and higher incomes due to lack of a high school diploma. Though high school education is but one piece of the educational puzzle, assuring students successfully complete this baseline level of remains a viable goal of every public school. Clearly, schools could use some additional assistance in retaining or redirecting this large cohort; entrepreneurial offering such as Claire's Singular Schools—among other models--can assist in stemming the student attrition. "Keeping a student if you are not the best way to serve that student is really a loss for everyone down the road," she asserted, "At some point, we're going to have to get more and more diverse to help students."

Niche solutions. Entrepreneurs locate a gap, understand a need, and provide a solution. Sometimes the need is highly targeted to a specific population or need. Claire's Singular Schools addresses a population niche: students who require a flexible or specialized schedule. Because her schools are accredited, students are able earn credits and not just receive tutoring assistance, allowing them to complete their education at their own pace based on mastery learning. Caleb's volunteer experience with schools allowed him to observe the need for a tool to access standards-based curriculum; he built a company around that niche, using his technological savvy to help teachers gain better access to content they needed to teach more effectively.

Educational entrepreneurs keep their eyes open and their minds in motion as they immerse themselves in their working environs. From a business standpoint, locating the niches in education can certainly advance the edupreneur's vested interests, but it can simultaneously assist schools address neglected issues and underserved populations in corners of the educational world they may not have had the time, focus, or resources to confront.

Universal solutions. Entrepreneurial solutions vary from small to large, from specific to general, and from local to global. Regardless of size, educational entrepreneurship can offer potentials and solutions to address school concerns and needs. From software to teacher training, schools require solution sets for the everyday effort of running effective schools. The entrepreneurs in this study all worked diligently to offer excellent solutions for schools, and simultaneously worked to understand the learning and teaching environment where their products and services were embedded.

Sometimes, the solution grew to become a universal solution for an unmet need. Knute saw this happen in a prior company that initiated online public high schools. Very quickly, the hidden universal need became apparent, and students and parents clamored to sign up for services:

> After we opened the online school, we got massive media attention---Our goal was to have 200 kids in year one—that would have been 1 million in revenue. We had 3000 applicants in three weeks… We had lots of districts calling us and saying, 'Can you show us how to do that? We want to figure out how to do online learning for our kids.' … I couldn't hire teachers fast enough… It happened that quickly: showing it would work…and that it would work for kids. And now you see online learning as accepted.

Even though the level of interest and success in online public schools was unanticipated and unprecedented, Knute immediately observed that its rapid growth forced school districts to think outside their traditional boxes, impelling administrators to more creatively understand the boundaries of education.

Ongoing innovation and adaptation. Though edupreneurs may invent a product or implement a service, they don't stop and sit for long. Much like learning, educational entrepreneurship requires continual development and continued momentum. Sitting stationary is not an option; serial innovation and recurrent adaptation are dynamic norms of educational entrepreneurship. Caleb's organization revised and revamped its content navigation tool to its current iteration, and continue to work on its usability: "At the end of the day, the biggest lesson learned: if a teacher doesn't need to use it, they won't."

All participants discussed continual ongoing work to tweak, advance, iterate, or refine their organization, product, or service. Ideally, schools could share in the ongoing innovation and adaptation of entrepreneurial products and services by providing feedback, focus groups, pilot studies, and an enlarged acceptance of edupreneurial endeavors. Though admittedly schools are not an open market, they could be set the course toward more navigable waters for innovating, adaptive entrepreneurs.

Combined ventures. Edupreneurs work in a multimodal environment that combines business and education, and that requires knowledge and implementation from both worlds. Schools themselves could be more receptive of combined ventures with outside entities. In many respects, schools--as the nation's largest public service institutions—often exhibit exclusionary and proprietary behaviors that can be resistant to outside influence. This siege mentality is not always productive, and may not allow appropriate, relevant, or revolutionary ideas to easily slip by the outer walls. Rachel reflected on the differences between the open world of commerce and the closed universe of education:

> Business is much more ecumenical—Businesses, they pull from everywhere; you're multidisciplinary when you're in business—In education, you're silo-ed—and we need to see those silos broken down.

Educational entrepreneurship could assist even more than it does in cracking open the exclusionary castles of education. Schools, for their part, could invite benevolent outside interests and businesses into those ivory towers, and even listen and learn a bit from those willing to help improve education for some or all.

Growth, replication, scaling, and the almighty dollar. When school districts grow, they pass a bond measure and open another school or two or four. As PSIs, schools have permitted access to public funds—usually via tax dollars—and they utilize their budgets for salaries, curriculum and content, student services, and other physical and management costs. Businesses operate in a different realm; owners and operators must generate cash flow in order to pay for their expenditures, and they ideally do so with a measure of profit in order to maintain fiscal stability and create desired growth.

So: the two dichotomous worlds often collide. When edupreneurs interact with schools, questions of budget and payment factor in negotiations. While students are not widgets, their progress *is* measured in learning, growth, test scores, and other tangible and intangible assessments of educational attainment. All interviewed participants were motivated by creating better educational opportunities and/or connections for students, and districts should increase their welcome of this mutual interest. What edupreneurs can offer schools is a deeper understanding of how programs, products, and services can be iterated and scaled for mutual educational and fiscal success. Schools, for their part, must develop a more nuanced understanding of how to measure, replicate, and scale a successful program into other schools, and beyond that to other districts, communities, and states. Also, school leadership could work to develop additional partnerships between themselves and edupreneurial programs and services that offer sound solutions for their extant issues and needs.

Process and system change. Do schools need to change? Does the system need revamping? Can public education be serving its clients—its students—more effectively? These questions find response in the public's prolonged interest in the topic: when asked, the great majority of U.S. citizens would like to see marked public school improvement (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Part of the issue with school reform is the complexity of the query: *what* do we change? According to Hess, (2008), school reform advocates fall into one of two camps: capacity builders, who believe in school improvement from within using tools such as professional development, differentiated curriculum, etc., and choice-based reformers, who advocate in change from outside, thus favoring vouchers, charter schools, and so on. Thus far, neither camp has effected real, deep, or lasting change in schools. The reality of change always looks much different than its philosophical or axiological underpinnings. Furthermore, implementing and measuring effective change are two different albeit related tasks. Arguably, before such large measures are initiated, schools can begin where they are, and can learn from their own successes and failures. *Perhaps.*

As a data guy, Caleb eventually realized that many individuals in school leadership may not possess the ability to create change. System-level change and process improvement are not in their working vocabulary, he posited.

Adam viewed the issue holistically. The problem, he argued, is that education has remained static; it has not undergone the revolutionary change evident in other fields:

> You can take a teacher from 100 years ago and put them in front of a classroom and they could still teach; take a doctor from 100 years ago and put him in the operating room and he would not recognize it and think he had been abducted by aliens.

Education, Adam mused, has never retooled. It has lurched forward, replacing parts as they fall off the train, and never pulling into the station for an overhaul. He didn't see this tendency changing anytime soon.

Implications

This study has generated several implications for education leaders, policy makers, educational entrepreneurs, and universities. Understanding educational entrepreneurship as a viable and desirable part of the educational conversation in the U.S. may help in its broader and accelerated acceptance into school culture and educational policy, as well as its expansion into university education and business departments. A better understanding of the topic may also encourage the generation of entrepreneurial education businesses and non-profits, and stimulate interest in educational entrepreneurship as a career choice.

This study generated implications for educational entrepreneurship that are both philosophical and pragmatic:

Philosophical implication: Value of educational entrepreneurs. Educational entrepreneurs are viable actors in the field of education. Though often seen as outliers, especially in public education, their novel approaches to existing issues, innovative solutions for student learning, and nimble responses as service providers revealed that educational entrepreneurs can be effective and efficacious agents of "innovative opportunity" (Drucker, 1986). In this study, the participants showed themselves to be adaptive entrepreneurs who were able to alter pathways and transform experiences in order to enter the challenging and often opaque world of schools (Berkun, 2010). These individuals practiced Eyal and Kark's (2004) proactivity, an inclination to actively shape an environment rather than passively react to it. Working to produce positive results in schools, this group of unique edupreneurs were action-oriented and purpose-driven; their brand of entrepreneurship generated new realities and opportunities not just for themselves, their companies, their boards or their investors, but for students, teachers, administrators, and communities.

Philosophical implication: The role of educational entrepreneurs in school change. This study has pointed to the reality that edupreneurs contributed to needs and issues that the larger public education system failed to address or neglected to uncover. All the interviewed participants located niches within the existing school system, thereby addressing underserved populations, unseen issues, training/instructional shortcomings, broken connections, and other unresolved or unseen problems faced by students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other educational leaders. Their entrepreneurial efforts created solutions and offered alternative approaches to existing educational problems or shortcomings. Hess (2008), who coined the term "edupreneur," noted that these individuals innovated in order to positively affect the outcome for a child, or positively influence many children. As such, educational entrepreneurs should not be viewed as capitalistic opportunists, but instead acknowledged as valued contributors to the ongoing conversation related to school improvement and reform. As workers and movers and do-ers in the field, they have continued to prove their worth to schools and students.

Practical implication: Educational entrepreneurs as school partners. The participants of this study demonstrated their respective value to schools, districts, and students by concertedly creating solutions and implementing innovations aimed at positive change. They proved themselves as effective resources for varied educational needs. The studied edupreneurs generated effective goods, solutions, and services, including new approaches for marginalized students, original content, training and implementation of best practices, internship opportunities, data collection, and intermediary connection and management. Hess (2008) indicated that school districts have witnessed an array of excellent result from partnering with entrepreneurs, further strengthening the implication that such partnership should not just continue but also increase. Promoting an expanded and more streamlined relationship between interested edupreneurs and schools would seem a win-win scenario.

Practical implication: Helping schools implement, replicate, and scale innovations. The educational entrepreneurs in this study all described their respective experiences with growth, replication, and/or scaling of programs, innovations or business models. As successful, seasoned practitioners, these individuals could share valuable knowledge about project growth and expansion with schools, who often flounder in this area. Hess (2008) described the innovation found at schools as generally shallow, while Katzman (2012) found school processes to be essentially unchanging. This is an area where experience may find practical application. Phelan et al. (2013) noted that educational organizations that exhibited a high entrepreneurial orientation tended toward better performance than their peers; if invited into schools as advisors and partners, such initial and continued partnerships between educators and entrepreneurs could allow entrepreneurial practices to imbue the school site. Ideally, the further implication would hope that these partnerships could produce better understanding and practice related to implementation, growth, replication, and scaling of successful programs and innovations.

Practical implication: Bringing edupreneurs into the ongoing conversations. On their own merits (and on their own dime), educational entrepreneurs joined the conversations surrounding school change and educational reform. This study has revealed its participants to be passionate, knowledgeable, goal-oriented, and proactive arbiters of innovation in schools. Inviting these individuals and their peers into the ongoing practical, political, policy, and academic conversations would provide other relevant voices and perspectives to be heard. In this study and in the literature, educational entrepreneurs are open to disequilibrium, disruption, and innovation, traits that are often limited or markedly absent in traditional school structures (Hess, 2008; Sandler, 2010). Thus far, bureaucrats have failed to create the conditions for real innovation in the American public school system (Wagner and Dintersmith, 2015). Edupreneurs in this study were intrinsically motivated by mission and purpose, and driven by conscious and stated motivations to help students in their learning. As ethical business people, they can and should be trusted to join the larger conversations that may help schools transform and improve.

Limitations

As we live, learn and mature, life invariably reveals its constraints; some we find amenable and live with, others we dismiss as unacceptable or unnecessary. In qualitative research, the researcher accepts certain embedded limitations of her study, yet attempts to ethically reveal and acknowledge the inevitable shortcomings. In this study, the methodology itself was a constraint. Narrative inquiry focused on the unique entrepreneurial stories relayed during interviews, while phenomenology attempted to understand the shared experience of educational entrepreneurship. Both approaches derived intended meanings and universalized concepts that could have been misconstrued or misinterpreted.

The study involved five participants, a relatively small sample, though an acceptable number for qualitative research. The results could ostensibly change with additional participants. The participants were varied in gender and experience; only one participant came from an education background, however, and it may be appropriate to consider a larger study with additional entrepreneurs who are former teachers and administrators. Further, the participants were all West coast inhabitants and all Caucasian; a subsequent study could incorporate more diverse geographic regions as well as more varied ethnic backgrounds.

The subjects were purposefully chosen due to their leadership roles in educational entrepreneurship. A broader population with younger, less experienced entrepreneurs could result in different findings and conclusions, and result in varying recommendations.

Recommendations

Academic studies on educational entrepreneurship are sparse. Landstrom et al. (2012) targeted entrepreneurship itself as a relatively young field, with most of its published research dating back to 1984 (with a few exceptions, most notably Schumpeter, 1928 and 1934). If entrepreneurship in general is a youthful field, educational entrepreneurship is even younger. I recommend that further studies, both qualitative and quantitative in methodology, be initiated by scholars in order to better understand this educational entrepreneurship topic and its implications for and potential benefits to the field of education in general, and American public education in particular. I would also recommend that this study be expanded with more participants representing a deeper and more diverse population of participants, incorporating subjects with varying career experience, backgrounds, geographic location, and ethnicity.

Knowledge is valuable when it is shared. Hess (2010) posited the creation of a vendor wall of entrepreneurial activity in education; Katzman (201) cited the building of an education genome project, a database of ideas and data accessible to educators, administrators, educational entrepreneurs, and other partners invested in improving education. Perhaps a specialized entrepreneurial platform could be built and maintained, showcasing existing successful school-edupreneur partnerships and projects, projecting future plans, and forecasting trends and needs.

In the U.S., universities are responsible for teacher training and preparation. University education departments could widely acknowledge the potential of educational entrepreneurship as a career possibility for educators at the beginning, middle, or end of their careers. Similarly, education departments could create internships in educational entrepreneurships, encourage academic research on the topic, and create other opportunities where teachers and edupreneurs could connect. Additionally, public schools themselves could encourage internships and entrepreneurs-in-residence programs between edupreneurs and interested students, innovative teachers, as well as between administrators and other staff

Lastly, I would recommend that edupreneurs continue to reach out in all directions—personal, professional, and academic—in order to allow their expertise and cumulative experience to assist other novice edupreneurs, interested researchers, education leadership, teachers, and other community members.

Summary and Researcher Reflection

The purpose of this narratively phenomenological study was to describe and better understand the journey of professionals into educational entrepreneurship, and to discover any commonalities and universal experiences of significance. The collected data revealed a rich collection of individual narratives that illuminated unique as well as universal experiences, epiphanies, emotions, values, and reflections.

As a group, a notable characteristic that all studied individuals exhibited was a distinct passion for their chosen career paths. Altogether, each edupreneur shared his or her story with reflection, thoughtfulness, and openness. An affective trait the participants predominantly shared was enthusiasm conjoined with realistic pragmatism. A common perspective was a deep sense of engagement in purposeful or meaningful work; all participants mentioned their direct or indirect efforts to do well by the students who were the de facto end users in their varied educational endeavors. Overall, a strong sense of mission pervaded the interviews and resulting narratives. These participants were individuals who had worked conscientiously to improve, tweak, or strengthen some small or large part of education, who had offered sound solutions to educational needs they observed, and who still came to work each day with their mind not obsessed with profit but also guided by mission.

Though their tales are unique, the common experience of educational entrepreneurship binds these individuals together. The significant statements and emergent themes that arose from the data verified the researcher's initial inkling that edupreneurship may accurately be researched and described as a phenomenological event. The universal ideas condensed from the interviews resulted from shared observations about the experiences of entrepreneurs engaging in educational businesses and ventures. While conducting interviews, I was actually astonished by the unfolding narratives and the resulting overlap of topics. As the interviews were largely semi-structured—loosely grouped around four global questions—the participants often brought the relevant shared topics and sub-topics to the conversation before I even probed further!

In sum, commonly rehearsed topics and subtopics were: finding a niche as a way into entrepreneurship; creating improved access for students and teachers; the dual nature of the conjoined business and education worlds; reach, impact, and vision; purposeful work and other statements of inherent value; challenges and other obstacles to edupreneurship; defining and understanding educational entrepreneurship; career lessons and advice to new edupreneurs; expansion and scaling; and improving schools and the education system. The resultant condensed significant themes were: the nature of the niche; the world of business vs. the world of education; challenges and epiphanies; educational entrepreneurship and its practice, perspectives, impact, and reach; and lessons learned and hard-earned advice.

The process of interviewing was itself phenomenologically intriguing; I often found myself drawn into the interview as a rapt listener more than an empirically dispassionate researcher. Though of course I strove to maintain a polite, somewhat reserved, and what I thought to be a research appropriate manner, I found myself deeply interested in what the participants revealed about their worlds and their work. Perhaps this is a common occurrence, however, this interest in ones unfolding research, this immersion into an evocative world of newly acquired information. I also found myself musing over the dualistic roles as researcher and participant, and considering the phenomenon of that interplay. Perhaps this also merits further study…

Personally, I was inspired by my participants; the narratives of educational entrepreneurship made it seem possible to use this platform to solve education's myriad of real-world problems. I feel that the potential exists for teachers, students, parents, and professionals to view educational entrepreneurship as another possible way to empower individuals to improve their own public education system, or even their local schools. If we all believed we could become opportunity seekers and solution brokers, and honestly followed through on focused, viable, and uniquely inspired ideas that came to us as we lived and worked and learned, our school system could be retooled with valuable actions and approaches that could be locally and sometimes globally applicable, fomenting a grass-roots change that could be revolutionary in scope. But I'm a bit of a dreamer…

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APPENDIX A: Email letter for potential participants

Re: Dissertation Interview?

Hello Mr/Ms X:

Up front, let me state this is a bit of an unconventional email.

I am a mother, educator (adjunct prof at Willamette University), former English teacher, and final semester doctoral student at George Fox focusing on education leadership (EDFL program). I am mid-way through writing my dissertation, whose topic is educational entrepreneurship.

I am looking to interview a select number of educational entrepreneurs for my research, a narrative inquiry into the journeys of selfsame entrepreneurs. I am hoping, hoping, hoping! that you may be amenable to being one of my specialized subjects.

The interview would take 60 minutes (though it could be less, depending on your time availability), and at a place and time of your convenience and choice (though a time slot in March would be ideal). All names and incidents would be pseudonym-altered, and IRB approval for my project has already been obtained.

Your acquiescence would help to further educational research into a relatively under-researched area. I can forward the literature review as well as the research questions to you if you desire.

Thank you for considering my request!

Graciously,
Audrey Nieswandt
503.XXX.XXXX
abnieswandt@willamette.edu
anieswandt11@georgefox.edu

APPENDIX B: Letter of Participant Consent

My name is Audrey Nieswandt, and I am a doctoral candidate at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. You are respectfully invited to take part in a research study that will culminate in my doctoral dissertation. Please take the time to read and consider the following information, and to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please notify me if you would like additional information or clarification.

The purpose of this study is describe, understand, and relate the journey of educational entrepreneurs using narrative inquiry as the research method. The resulting data will be published in narrative form, and pseudonyms will be used in lieu of actual names. With this research, I am hoping to better understand the experiences and journey of entrepreneurs within the field of education.

Your expected time commitment for this study is two to four hours, during which time I will personally interview you, check the notes I have taken, review the transcripts with you, and verify that the conversation is correct. The interview may take place in a selected, convenient location, or via Skype.

The risks of this study are minimal. You may decline to answer any questions, or request alternate questions. I will keep all names, dates, and personal information confidential so that no individual may be personally identified. Your time will be respected with courtesy and gratitude on my part.

All research materials (i.e., audio recordings, transcripts, and signed consent forms) will be digitally stored to a secure cloud-based service and separate hard drive – all password protected. I will be the only individual who will have access to these materials. After three years, I will personally destroy all relevant materials and delete the audio recordings.

I graciously thank you for your time and for your consideration of this dissertation project. If you choose to participate, please be aware that you are making a contribution to educational research. I would happy to share my findings with you when this project is completed. If you have any research or related questions, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Patrick Allen, at pallen@georgefox.edu or myself at anieswandt11@georgefox.edu and (503)XXX-.XXXX.

If you understand the use of this research and consent to participate, please sign below and send this form back to me.

Participant signature: ____

Researcher signature:____

Sincerely,
Audrey Nieswandt

APPENDIX C: Demographic Data

DISSERTATION: Educational Entrepreneurship

Audrey Nieswandt, EDFL, George Fox University

Demographic Data

Number of years—business/education/entrepreneur

Age

Formal education

Number of years in current business

Role in business

Type of business

Number of employees

Business size

Professional organizations

Any other relevant data?

APPENDIX D: Research questions/Interview questions

DISSERTATION: Educational Entrepreneurship

Audrey Nieswandt, EDFL, George Fox University

Research Questions

1. What are some of the instigating, contributing, and continuing factors that motivate a business or an educational professional toward educational entrepreneurship?
2. How do the studied individuals describe and analyze their journeys from professional to edupreneur, and what were key turning points along the way?
3. How can individual stories of educational entrepreneurs help illuminate the topics surrounding educational reform, student and community needs, and teacher professionalism?

Interview Questions

Can you tell me about your initial entry into the field of education?

How did you move into educational entrepreneurship? Can you narrate that move?

What have been your turning points or epiphanies along the way?

What advice or words could you provide to individuals considering educational entrepreneurship?