



BUSINESS STUDENTS' SELF-PERCEIVED ENTREPRENEURIAL CHARACTERISTICS AND COMPETENCES AT THE BEGINNING AND AT THE END OF THEIR STUDIES

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Abstract

The purpose of this longitudinal qualitative study was to examine and understand how the self-perceived entrepreneurial characteristics and competences of students were developed during a bachelor programme as well as what kind of relationship there was between the nature of goals and motivation at the beginning of the studies and the outcomes at the end of the studies. The findings indicated that typical characteristics and skills for business and entrepreneurship had been developed, although there were individual differences. It seems that the level of motivation as well as the nature of the goals in the studies were strongly related to the learning outcomes. In addition, the learning outcomes seemed to be connected with the nature of the goals in studies. Further, there seemed to be an obvious connection with the nature of the goals and motivation at the beginning and the outcomes at the end of the studies.

Key Words: entrepreneurial characteristics and competences, intention, students, perceptions, motivation

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial learning concerns knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes of actual or potential entrepreneurs (eg. Erikson 2003), yet there are multiple meanings how different scholars define entrepreneurial learning. Entrepreneurial learning can be related to the learning of current entrepreneurs (Cope & Watts 2000; Minniti & Bygrave 2001; Politis 2005; Ravasi & Turati 2005; Sullivan 2000; Taylor & Thorpe 2004). Further, during the last decade research on entrepreneurial learning in higher education has increased a lot. In that context, it refers to the learning of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes of undergraduate, graduate or postgraduate students, when they are regarded as potential forthcoming entrepreneurs (eg. Leskinen 1999, Paajanen 2001, Ristimäki 2004, Dermol 2010). The concept of competence, in turn, integrates the personality and behavioural perspectives, and it is the synthesis of knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal qualities which can be used for

performing specific professional tasks. (eg. Nab, Pilot, Brinkkemper, & Ten Berge 2010, 22). In this study the competences refer to a student's overall capacity, behavior, knowledge and skills (Eraut 1999, 179), but this study does not regard the competences only as the learnt professional competences which should be possessed for a certain job performance (Gonczi 2003, 182) and they also comprise more generic competences of an individual.

In terms of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, typically they are those which are needed in setting up and running a small business: strategy skills, planning skills, marketing skills, financial skills, project management skills, and time management skills (Leskinen 1999; Paajanen 2001; Ristimäki 2004). In addition, relevant entrepreneurial skills include a variety of skills required when dealing with people, such as leadership skills, motivation skills, delegation skills, communication skills, and negotiation skills (Kuratko & Hodgetts 2002). Then, in terms of entrepreneurial characteristics, there are a lot of positively valued characteristics related to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behavior. For example, they are being self-confident, persistent, creative, independent, flexible, dynamic and optimistic, as well as having need for independence, risk-taking ability, need for a achievement, uncertainty-bearing attitude, and sense of responsibility (Henry, Hill & Leitch 2003; Ristimäki 2004). In fact, the diversity of the features is large and some of them are related to the personality or in-born characteristics, while others are related to learning and growth. (eg. Ristimäki 2004; Gibb 2005). However, the entrepreneurial learning can be divided based on the contents and objectives as follows: the learning about entrepreneurship, the learning for entrepreneurship, the learning through entrepreneurial pedagogy, and the learning in an entrepreneurial environment (Kyrö & Carrier 2005, 28).

To understand the outcomes of entrepreneurial learning of the students, one should also be aware of the motivational aspects of a learner to achieve goals. According to the previous studies motivation is considered to be an important factor in a student's learning and achievement of learning goals (eg. Barkoukis, Tsorbatzoudis, Grouios & Sideridis 2008; Pintrich & Schunk 2002). However, it is worth emphasising that there are two contradicting goals in learning: mastery goals and performance goals. The mastery goals are related to learners' desire to develop their knowledge, understanding and competences, whereas in the performance goals learners desire to avoid demonstrating incompetence. (eg. Kuyper, van der Werf and Lubbers 2000, 183; Clayton, Blumberg & Auld 2010, 350).

Next, to continue with the concept of motivation, it can be regarded as a product or as a process. According to the theory of achievement motivation (Atkinson 1957; 1964), it is a product which has three components: motives (to approach success or avoid failure), expectancy (subjective probability of success) and incentive value (pride, affect, and a sense of accomplishment one will have for accomplishing a task) (Bembenutty 2010, 4). Based on that, a distinction can be made between three motivational components in learning: students' beliefs about the importance and value of the task (value component), students' beliefs about their ability or skill to perform the task (expectancy component), and students' feelings about themselves or their emotional reactions to the task (affective component) (Pintrich & McKeachie 2000, 33). Nevertheless, Pintrich and Schunk (2002, 5) regard motivation as a process rather than a product, since motivation is not observable directly and it is inferred from such behaviours as choice of task, effort, persistence and verbalization. In addition, motivation involves goals, at least something in mind that an individual is trying to attain or avoid.

In order to continue with the nature of motivation, according to the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 1985), there are three kinds of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as amotivation (the absence of contingency between one's actions and outcomes). (Barkoukis et al. 2008, 40). Intrinsic motivation can be more associated with

challenges and enjoyments whereas extrinsic motivation is more related to affective responsivity to a competitive outcome (eg. winning or losing) (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi 2009, 1615). Intrinsically motivated students are able to develop high regards for learning various types of course information without the inclusion of external rewards. Extrinsically motivated students, in turn, rely strongly on rewards and desirable results which act as a catalyst for their study motivation (Lei 2010, 153). Amotivated students do not seem to have specific purposes and goals, and they do not seem to approach ends in a systematic ways. They do not demonstrate the intent to engage in an activity. (Barkoukis et al. 2008, 40).

To conclude, in order to understand the outcomes of entrepreneurial learning of the students, it is also important to know more about the learners. For example, what kinds of learners are involved and what are their motivational components of learning as well as how they approach their learning goals. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine and understand the development of entrepreneurial characteristics and competences of business students during a bachelor programme as well as the relationship between the nature of goals and motivation of the students at the beginning of the studies and the outcomes at the end of the studies. This qualitative study is a last sub-study for a longitudinal study which has followed the learning process and outcomes of one group of international business students in Finland during their degree studies in 2007 – 2010. This sub-study has also a longitudinal approach since it compares the start-up situation and the end-situation of the students. For this sub-study, four different student cases have been selected based on their self-perceived willingness to set up their own business after the graduation; which is called an entrepreneurial intention in this study.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Research questions

Based on the purpose of the study, the research questions were formulated as follows:

- * How are the entrepreneurial competences of business students developed during the degree programme?
- * What kind of relationship is there between the nature of the goals and level of motivation at the beginning and the learning outcomes at the end of the studies?

Since it is difficult to make a clear distinction between some of the entrepreneurial competences which are learnt during and based on the study programme and those which are developed outside the programme or through up-bringing and growth, in this study the concept of entrepreneurial competences consists of a student's overall capacity, behavior, knowledge, skills and characteristics (Eraut 1999, 179; Gonczi 2003) the students perceived to be their entrepreneurial competences. In addition, the outcomes at the end of the studies do not refer only to the learning outcomes, but also to their interest for further development and future plans based on their learning outcomes at the time of graduation.

Participants

The findings of Pihkala (2008) indicate that the intention of polytechnic (universities of applied sciences) students to set up one's own enterprise seems to be constant during the studies. Using that as a criterion, four different students were selected before their graduation based on their self-perceived intention of setting up a business in the future: no intention at all, maybe, yes later, and one had set up a business already during the studies.

The students had started their studies in the autumn 2007 and graduated in 2010 from the same business degree programme. All of them were good students in terms of the final grades of the courses; they had about 4 as the mean of the all grades in the degree (scale 1-5). The grades of the final theses were good (grade 3) or excellent (grade 5). Table 1 introduces the background characteristics of the cases which are called Tina, Clive, Anna and Bob in this paper.

Table 1: Background characteristics of the cases

	Tina	Clive	Anna	Bob
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
Entrepreneurs in the core family	Brother	Parents	No	Brother
Mean of the grades of all the courses of the study programme (1-5)	4.09	4.66	4.15	4.22
Grade of the bachelor thesis (1-5)	3	5	3	5
Self-perceived competences of business and entrepreneurship (the mean)*	2.22	3.22	4.00	4.56
Entrepreneurial intention after the graduation: asked in the beginning of the studies in 2007	NO	NO	YES	YES
Entrepreneurial intention after the graduation: asked before the graduation in 2010	NO – not at all	NO, - but maybe later	YES – but later	YES – had already set up a business

* in 2010 the students answered a survey of self-perceived competences of the study programme (scaling from 1- 5) which has been reported elsewhere (Kakkonen 2011)

Data collection and analysis

The longitudinal study during 2007 – 2010 has followed the entrepreneurial learning of the student group by using a mixed methods approach (Creswell & Clark 2011). The whole study consists of several sub-studies which have been published earlier or will be published soon. This study is the last part of the research and has a qualitative approach in order to capture the details of the topic addressed here. For this sub-study the data of the cases has been collected by the student names from the previous sub-studies in 2007, 2008 and 2010. The data collection and analysis procedures are presented next.

A triangulation of “between-methods” (Creswell 1994, 174; Brannen 1995, 11) was used in the study as follows: The qualitative data has been collected and analysed in four phases. First, at the beginning of the studies the students were asked to write about their expectations for their studies during the whole programme. The expectations were analysed and described according to the main themes. Next, also at the beginning of the first semester in 2007, at the end of the very first course of entrepreneurship the students were asked to write an essay about their personal features, skills, abilities, traits, and characteristics, and how they appear. The students were asked to regard them as strengths or weaknesses in terms of entrepreneurship, which was discussed during the course. These essays (1-2 pages) were analysed as follows: First, the data was divided into two groups based on the expressed strengths or weaknesses of the students and then they were analysed further and reported according to the main themes.

The third part of the data collection was carried out during an entrepreneurship course at the end of the first study year in 2008. It was a self-assessment task in which the students were encouraged to recall and describe their most significant learning experiences which relate to entrepreneurial behaviour and entrepreneurial skills and knowledge during their first year studies. They were asked to write an essay and describe the learning situations as detailed as possible (what and how did they learn, what happened, who was involved, etc.). The content analysis of the data had the following phases: First, all the essays (1-2 pages) were read and all pieces of texts describing the learning situations were selected from the essays. Some of the students had focused and described various events or learning experiences and their main outcomes, whereas some of the students described, for example, only two or three bigger learning experiences from different perspectives. In any case, the main principle of the analysis process was that each piece of text was regarded as one learning context which had at least one learning outcome and it was also described through which activities and how the learning had occurred. Based on the analysis, the nature of the learning goals and motivational components of the studies were revealed.

Then, the fourth part of the data collection consisted of the final situation and outcomes at the time of graduation in 2010, and it was collected in the thesis seminar: the students were asked again to write about their main characteristics, and business skills and competences they have learnt during their studies as well as what subjects they lack of or would like to develop further. In addition, they were asked to inform of their entrepreneurial intention and future plans. The data has been analysed and categorised according to competences (knowledge, skills or attitudes related to business and entrepreneurship as well as the "generic competences") they had. In addition, the competence they lacked or had interest to develop further was used as a category in the analysis. Finally, their future plans were described in each case in order to understand their entire situation at the time of the graduation.

The analyses and reports of the findings have been combined as follows: the findings related to the beginning of the studies and to the end of first year studies are combined in the same section of the findings. Then, the findings of the final situation have been analysed and reported in a separate section. Finally, the findings were compared with each other and the relationship between different factors was analysed across the four cases by using a cross-case comparison (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011, 244), and eventually the research questions were answered.

Limitations of the study

The findings of this study improved the understanding of the development of the entrepreneurial competences of business students in higher education as well as the relationship between the nature of the goals and motivation, and the outcomes at the end of the studies. However, there are some limitations in the study which should be taken into consideration. First, the data of the study has been collected at the beginning of the programme, after the first academic year and then at the time of the graduation. In order to understand the development of the entrepreneurial competences during the whole programme, the qualitative data could be collected also during each academic semester. The second limitation of the study is the research method which was based on the self-evaluation by the students: how willing and able they were to write about their personal characteristics and learning, especially about their weaknesses and needs for further development. In addition, they were asked to write only the most important and significant characteristics and competences.

Further, it is worth emphasising that although the findings refer to the most important characteristics and competences during the studies, some of the entrepreneurial competences are related to personality or in-born characteristics, while some of them are related to learning and growth (Ristimäki 2004; Gibb 2005). In other words, since it is not possible to make a clear distinction which of them had been learnt or developed further during the studies and which of them were in-born characteristics, all the findings which were perceived to be learning outcomes by the students were included in the data.

Finally, one more limitation of the study is related to the nature of the findings. The findings of the study are perceptions of the students. In other words, they are not the competences which have been analysed and demonstrated in practice (Nab et al. 2010). Based on this study, it is not possible to evaluate how well these self-perceived characteristics and competences correspond with the actual competences at work. This could be examined in further studies. In addition, the perceptions of the students have not been interpreted during the analysis process case by case, but at the end of the analysis in order to explain the findings and draw the conclusions based on all the cases.

FINDINGS

Entrepreneurial characteristics and study goals at the beginning of the studies

First, the characteristics, motivational aspects and goals of each student at the beginning of the studies are described. Then the nature of the goals and the motivational components in learning in each case are demonstrated. Finally, Table 2 sums up these findings by the cases.

Tina: "Non-entrepreneur"

"...one weakness is lack of motivation. This I have in everything that needs to be done, from dusting or writing a letter to a friend, to preparing myself to an exam or writing a school report or essay. Everything is always done in the last minute and it's not because I'm so busy with something else, there might be nothing else to do but still there is no time for the important things."

Her strengths were especially in group works skills, and she really enjoyed group work. In addition, she perceived herself to be a hard working person who liked new things in life. Further, she perceived that whatever she had started doing she had finished it and finished it well. However, she needed guidance almost in everything she did. She perceived that one of her biggest weaknesses was definitely the lack of self-confidence. She did not believe that she was good at something or that something she had done was good, until someone said it to her. Further, if something was too difficult or she did not succeed in it, she easily stopped trying and gave it up, because she did not see a reason to do it without a good outcome. She claimed to be an extremely complicated person and stubborn to its limits. Further, one of her big weaknesses was the lack of motivation. She claimed that based on it everything was always done in the last minute.

In terms of motivational components, the expectancy component of motivation was seen to some extent in doing different tasks and their schedules. She usually planned her schedules "around the dead-lines of the tasks, not when it is a good time to do them". Further, she argued not having any expectations for the grades, yet she was not happy with the low grades. She perceived that the grades and the degree had driven her to study. Further, the lack of expectancy component was seen as follows: She perceived that she did not know what business means to her or to her future. She argued that she was not able to see how

to plan her own development; therefore she needed someone to help her with it. She emphasised that it was not possible to say where she will end up after her graduation, but she was looking forward to getting to know different points of view in business.

In fact, the lack of motivation, an amotivation, for business and entrepreneurship studies was seen of at the beginning of her studies as follows: she perceived that if she wanted to have a better future, she had to study and get the degree to get further with her life and get a career. However, she had questioned everything she heard at school: where did she need this, did she really have some use for this information in the future, etc. Her motives and expectations for the studies were still unclear to her. She claimed that she was studying because she wanted to have a future in the international environment, although she had doubts whether she as a person was enough business-focused. She claimed not to be interested in entrepreneurship at all. To conclude, it seemed that she studied mainly for the grades and the degree, but not for the business and entrepreneurship competences. The extrinsic motivation was dominant for her.

Clive: "Potential entrepreneur"

"As far as I remember me, I have been keen on business and business related themes. Maybe there is a connection with my background, as my parents act as entrepreneurs. I have always asked them about details of particular business actions and decisions which they made. Consequently, I recognize that I will build my future career in the area of business. "

He perceived to have a strong desire to achieve, to create something that he could be proud of. Moreover, he wanted to be the first in everything that he did. Consequently, he was rather competitive. Further, he had a desire to constantly learn new things and acquire skills. He explained that he had learnt best from his mistakes and previous experiences. He argued that he could handle different processes as a complex structure, however simultaneously paying enough attention to important details. Nevertheless, there were weaknesses that he wanted to reduce. Firstly, he was not a very flexible person. To him flexibility meant different ways of fulfilling tasks. Secondly he wanted to develop his communications and organization skills. He perceived that he was not particularly good in motivating people. Furthermore, he wanted to train himself to find positive sides in people around him, to trust in their potential and abilities.

The value component and affective component of motivation seemed to be dominant in his learning. He had always been interested in business and entrepreneurship. He perceived that maybe there was a connection with his background, as his parents worked as entrepreneurs. However, he perceived that he was not ready to accept the whole range of responsibilities of an entrepreneur. He considered his future career in the area of business very important and he had decided to concentrate on international business. Nevertheless, he still sought in which business subjects he should put his efforts. He had high need for achievement and was highly motivated in his studies. His learning expectations were related to such business disciplines as marketing, finance, strategic and risk management as well as entrepreneurship.

Anna: "Future entrepreneur"

"I want to get all the possible information to become a good businesswoman, because in the future I want to have my own company or to work in some international company to participate in trade relations. I need to develop myself and to improve my education to get all important features to become an entrepreneur. I hope that I will develop all the

necessary characteristics and features while studying here, because in the future I would like to set up my own business and to be an independent entrepreneur. "

She perceived herself to be a good organizer of the working and planning process. She organised her study process very well, she was punctual and did all the necessary things in time. She was very communicative and social. She was able to work hard, to take initiative in the situations requiring it. In addition, she preferred to work independently with using her creativity, where she could do her work as she wanted to. However, it did not influence on working in groups, because she was also a flexible person to work in a group, when it was needed. Further, she perceived that one of her good personal traits was responsibility. She emphasised that she was very responsible for all her decisions and words. As a weakness she mentioned oratorical skills, and therefore she wanted to learn how to speak in front of a public successfully, briefly and clearly.

Although she had also the performance goals, the mastery goals were dominant in her studies. In principle, she wanted to learn "all possible things" during the studies. She wanted to get all the possible information to become a good businesswoman, because in the future she wants to have her own company or to work in some international company. Further, she seemed to have the value component in her study motivation. She wanted to get skills in doing different kinds of projects and to communicate well with people in each business situation. In addition, she perceived that she needed to learn a lot to become a good entrepreneur. She wanted to know how to sell, how to sell successfully and how to make profit, how to provide products to customers, and how to attract customers. To summarise, she was a punctual, responsible, communicative and social person, and she preferred working independently. She had the performance goals and the mastery goals in her studies.

Bob: "Entrepreneur"

"I have always been interested in business. I want to be an entrepreneur and I think this degree programme will equip me with the tools I need to succeed in the business world. After completing this programme I want to work for companies in order to gain some hands on experience, which will come in handy when starting my own business in the future."

He perceived that his greatest competences lied in the areas concerning international environments. His family was international (six different nationalities in the close family) and due to such a multicultural foundation he considered international competence as one of his personal strengths. He claimed that he often struggled at staying focused. He was also impatient and wanted sometimes to see things happen faster than they did. He found it difficult to wait since he wanted instant results. On the other hand, he knew that this was something which will be dealt with and also will be beneficial in the fast paced business world.

The mastery goals seemed to be dominant in his studies. He perceived that he wanted to become an entrepreneur and he believed that the degree programme equipped him with the tools needed to succeed in the business world. He expected that the degree programme included a lot of training in personal and professional development. Actually he expected to acquire all the fundamental skills he needed to enter into the world of international business. In terms of motivational components, the affective components could be recognised as follows: He perceived that he had always been interested in business. He considered that the business management degree was a "fantastic" opportunity; one which he wanted to make the most of. Also the value component was emphasised since he regarded the Finnish education as great. He took the education seriously and said to be thankful to be able to study in this university of applied sciences. The achievement motivation seemed to be

obvious in his learning, since his motives were to be successful in all he does. To sum up, he had strong multicultural competences. He had a high need for achievement and he wanted instant results. The achievement motivation was strong and he had mastery goals in his learning.

Table 2: Strengths, weaknesses, goals and motivation of the students

	Tina	Clive	Anna	Bob
Strengths / positive features	Hard working Likes new things Group work skills Able to finish what has started	High need for achievement Wants to the best; competitive Willing to learn new things Sees "big pictures", yet can also focus on details.	Good organizer Punctual Good communication and social skills Hard working Initiative taker Independent Group work skills Flexible, responsible	International competence High need for achievement Ability to get fast results
Weaknesses / areas which could be reduced	Stubborn Lack of confidence Gives up easily Lack of motivation	Not very flexible Social, communication and organizing skills. Unwillingness to take full responsibility.	Presentation skills	Not always able to stay focused Impatient
Learning expectations	Not specific expectations.	Social and communication skills. Flexibility. Marketing, finance, strategic and risk management. Entrepreneurship.	All relevant business and entrepreneurial competences. Project management. Marketing. International business. Presentation skills.	Personal and professional development. International business.
Nature of goals in the studies	Performance goal dominant	Mastery goal dominant	Mastery goal dominant	Mastery goal dominant
Motivational components in the studies	Expectancy component in doing tasks & Lack of expectancy component – needs somebody to say that she is able to perform a task.	Value and affective components are dominant – highly interested in entrepreneurship and business. Achievement	Value component – considers it important to get the skills which are required in the international business	Affective and value components - always been interested in business and considers this programme a great opportunity to get the competences.

	Instrumental, extrinsic motivation - for the grades and the degree, not for the business competences.	motivation – wants to be the best in everything.		Achievement motivation - his motives are to be successful in all he does
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To sum up the key findings of the students' strengths, weaknesses, goals and motivation, it can be concluded that there were some similarities as well as differences between the cases. Tina was hard-working and liked new things; however she did not have any specific expectations for her studies. She was able to finish different tasks, however she easily gave up. She lacked a basic motivation for her studies and had a performance goal in learning. Clive and Bob had the high need for achievement and had the strong study motivation in order to learn and master the learnt things. The value and affective components of motivation were dominant in their learning. Anna, in turn, was a hard-working and punctual initiative taker. She had the value component of motivation and the mastery goal as dominant in her learning.

Entrepreneurial competences of the students at the time of graduation

First, the characteristics and competences of each student are described. Then Table 3 sums them up and presents also the interest for further development as well as the future plans of the students.

Tina: "Non-entrepreneur"

"Always when owning a business, there is a risk of losing everything: money, reputation, family and nerves, no matter what the environment is. In the end I am not a big risk taker. I like to live spontaneously and take insane risks, like jumping out of an airplane with a parachute on my back, but not big life changing risks like being responsible for a company. I like to have a boss, that someone to turn to in a tricky situation and someone to give me tasks to do. "

At the time of the graduation, in terms of having learnt business competences, she perceived that she had received knowledge of business cultures and how people work in them. In addition, she had got the basic knowledge of accounting, marketing and entrepreneurship. In fact, she perceived that that she had learnt general business knowledge in many topics: all the facts about business, business operations, different types of companies, risks and managing them etc. In terms of learnt skills, they were presentation skills, interviewing skills, and academic writing and reporting skills. In addition, she had learnt responsibility and organization skills with the tasks and their dead-lines as well as persistence with the longer tasks and exams. Especially group work had taught her adaptability and organization skills. She perceived that she had learnt a realistic way to look at herself; ie. there were different kinds of people with different kinds of skills.

Nevertheless, she explained that she had lost a specific goal in life. Actually, she was quite uncertain what her skills really were, and what she could achieve in life. She perceived that she needed support from others in order to understand that she could do tasks or was good at something. According to her perception she had a low self-confidence. Further, she argued that she did not know what she should do in practice, if she actually wanted to start a business (where to contact, what papers to fill, how to do accounting in a real firm, etc).

She also perceived not having achieved a deeper knowledge or understanding in any specific field of business. She concluded that she might have studied in a wrong field of studies or just in a wrong time in life. However, she emphasised that nothing in the studies had been bad or for nothing. At the moment, her future plans were to apply to military service and then continue from there to do peace keeping service.

Clive: "Potential entrepreneur"

"Confidence in personal abilities is one of the main outcomes of my study period here. In fact, I regard my rather successful studies as an achievement. And this sense of achievement gives me, on one hand, confidence in my abilities, and, on the other hand, it pushes me to go forward - if I can finish my tertiary education in a foreign language in a foreign country successfully, so I can do other, more challenging tasks in my life, right? It gives me a sense that I am the creator of my future..... my entrepreneurial intention? No, not yet. I prefer to get extra work experience. Nevertheless, I always remember that I have a possibility to start my own business. Knowledge and skills I received will certainly be beneficial if I ever want to start my own business."

At the time of the graduation he perceived that the ability to live, study and work in the intercultural atmosphere was one of his main strengths, and this strength had been developed only due to his studies. While studying, he had had to communicate and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. Further, communication skills were the most important feature he had acquired and developed during his studies. In addition, stronger self-confidence was one of the main outcomes of his study period. He had learnt and received knowledge especially about entrepreneurship, about accounting and marketing. In addition, he had also learnt a variety of skills: group work skills, presentation skills, communication skills and social networking. He had learnt the following teamwork and leadership skills: the importance of leadership, when a true leader can successfully guide the group of team members and motivate participants to work better and achieve better results and outcomes. Finally, he emphasized that he had learnt the unique feeling of sharing the responsibility, when each team member is responsible for the results of the whole group work. In terms of having developed his attitude toward entrepreneurship, he perceived that his attitude was more realistic than what it used to be. He had also learnt that there should be a balance between the goals and resources (eg. time and knowledge) and he should not give up easily (persistence) when doing assignments.

In terms of further development, he perceived that leadership skills were the skills that he could improve considerably. Even though the programme provided an overview of major aspects, he wanted to have more in-depth knowledge of some aspects which were of special interest for him (eg. finance and accounting). Therefore, he wanted to continue with master studies in order to get acquainted with more advanced topics. He explained that he wanted to continue his education in Finland, as he respects the level of education here.

Anna: "Future entrepreneur"

"My entrepreneurial intention. Yes... in ten years, when I have experience enough. It will be in the hospitality field, I will set up a hotel in Finland. As to my own features and abilities as an entrepreneur I hope that I have enough of them, because I really would like to work in that field and become an entrepreneur."

She perceived that she was a positive, determinant, and responsible person. She was able to finish all things on time, although she sometimes left things to the last minute. Before the decision-making, she always thought of positive and negative sides first, making the decision

after that. She argued that she had good language skills and good social and communication skills. Nevertheless, sometimes she could have been too talkative. Further, she perceived that sometimes she was afraid to present her own ideas and thoughts, as well as being too stubborn to consider other people's ideas. She had learnt much knowledge of entrepreneurship and business: different types of companies and their categories, business forms, basic knowledge of business and management, the business idea, competition and risks in the business field and important details in business. Further, in terms of having learnt various skills, the most important ones were group work and presentation skills, and social and communication skills. Further, a significant experience had been a big assignment in which the students had to create a company and manage it. The students needed to think of many aspects in business, such as financial aspects, recruitment of employees, purchasing different factors for production. Her future plans were related to master studies first in Sweden. However, she started working in a hotel in Finland in order to get work experience. She perceived to have a strong entrepreneurial intention in order to start a hotel in Finland in ten years.

Bob: "Entrepreneur"

"The teachers here encourage and foster entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning. Being in an environment where entrepreneurial learning can be nurtured, brings about many advantages. University of applied sciences is a great environment for students to recognize the value in their ideas, and to understand the reality of the risks involved. It is great how the teaching here is not hyped up, it remains on a realistic and practical view of the business world. ... I have, with a friend, we have actually started the business. It is a part time project on the side, while we study. The business has just been set up and we have learned a lot about setting up a company in Finland."

He perceived that he had acquired new skills in business and his eyes had been opened to the world of business during the programme. Further, he had learnt that it was important to understand the reality of the risks involved. He had also had to change his attitude and approach towards the assignments. For example, in writing essays he had learnt to reflect and write about himself. In his home country he was taught to never be self-centered, since self-centeredness was seen as a negative trait. He had learnt how to do it in a correct way. All in all, he had learnt a realistic and practical view of the business world. He had learnt a lot about setting up a company in Finland. After having learnt the basics of entrepreneurship and business planning he had set up a business with a fellow student at the end of the first academic year. He perceived that ever since he had learnt all the things for the company and through the company. He had learnt in practice how to manage and run the business. The motivation had been the ability to grow as an individual, learn how a business is set up, how it is run and all that is involved in it. He had to learn to make the contracts and also to evaluate whether the sales force was able to make sales at an efficient rate. Due to the increased number of projects, the next step was to increase web developers and programmers. Human resource management was the area to be learnt in practice. He explained that he had to learn "the tricks and the trades" of the design industry and maintained the company at an innovative pace by researching the latest web technology in order to provide the best to its clients. This had included in-depth research on new industry standards and guaranteeing clients high standards. To conclude, his future plans were related to continuing and developing business with his business partner and working in the company on a full-time basis. He perceived that "the future looked promising for the business founded by two business students".

It can be concluded that the learning outcomes of the students differed at the time of their graduation. Tina had learnt basic knowledge of business and entrepreneurship as well as different communication skills. She still had a low self-confidence and she felt not being aware of her actual learning outcomes. However she lacked advanced competences of business and entrepreneurship. Clive and Anna had learnt different kinds of knowledge about business and entrepreneurship as well as different kinds of skills for business operations. Both of them were willing to achieve deeper knowledge and skills by continuing their studies at a master level as well as by having work experience in their fields. In addition, Anna had an entrepreneurial intention at the beginning of the studies and is still willing to set up her own business later in the future. Bob had learnt all the relevant things for and through his own company: how to set up a business, how to run it, how to lead and manage it in practice. He had been highly motivated to learn and master those topics in order to succeed with his company.

Table 3: The perceived outcomes of the students at the time of the graduation

	Tina	Clive	Anna	Bob
Knowledge of business and e-ship	Basic knowledge of business and its operations.	Knowledge of accounting, marketing and entrepreneurship.	Knowledge of business and entrepreneurship.	Special features and standards of the business industry.
Skills of business and e-ship	Communication skills: such as presentation skills, interview skills, academic writing and reporting skills.	Business planning skills Group work skills presentation skills, communications and social skills.	Decision-making skills. Language skills Group work, Social and Communication skills Presentation skills	The skills for and through the company: how to set up a business, how to run a business. HRM skills.
Attitudes		More positive attitude towards entrepreneurship		Attitude for learning skills.
Generic competences	Sense of responsibility Group work and organization skills Persistence; adaptability. A realistic way to look at herself	Good multicultural competences Strong self-confidence Ability to share responsibility. Ability to assess his own goals and resources.	Positive, determinant and responsible individual. Punctuality.	Grown as an individual
Lack of skills or need / interest for further development	Low self-confidence Lack of deeper knowledge and skills in business. Not aware of her own actual business skills, but not any interest in	Interest for developing leadership skills and advancing the knowledge in accounting and finance.	Interest to learn more advances business studies.	Interest to continue personal development in his own business.

	further development.			
Future plans	Plan to apply to military service and then continue to do peace-keeping service.	Master studies. Need to get work experience.	A work place in a hotel. Plan for master studies. Strong entrepreneurial intention to start a hotel.	To develop business with his business partner and work in the company full-time basis.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine and understand how the entrepreneurial characteristics and competences of business students were developed during a bachelor programme as well as what kind of relationship there was between the nature of goals and motivation in the beginning of the studies with the outcomes at the end of the studies. In order to summarise the findings related to the development of the entrepreneurial competences, it seems that the typical entrepreneurial characteristics and skills for business and entrepreneurship had been developed (Leskinen 1999; Paajanen 2001; Ristimäki 2004), although there were individual differences. Further, it seems that the level of motivation as well as the nature of the goals in the studies were strongly related to the learning outcomes (eg. Barkoukis et al. 2008; Pintrich & Schunk 2002). In the end the learnt entrepreneurial competences, ie. knowledge, skills and attitudes towards entrepreneurship, relate also to the expectations of the students in the beginning. The findings of this study also illustrated that if a student was motivated and willing to learn and master various and specified knowledge and skills, he or she seemed to achieve them better. In addition, the learning outcomes seemed to be connected with the nature of the goals in studies: A performance goal drives and ends-up with basic knowledge and skills, whereas a master goal drives for more advanced skills for business and entrepreneurship. (Kuyper et al. 2000, 183; Clayton et al. 2010, 350). The findings indicated that the entrepreneurial intention was a driving force for the development of the entrepreneurial competences, and vice versa.

Further, in order to answer to what kind of relationship there is between the nature of the goals and motivation at the beginning and the outcomes at the end of the studies, it can be presented that based on this qualitative study, there seemed to be an obvious connection with them. The student, who was considered an amotivated student (Barkoukis et al. 2008, 40) in terms of business and entrepreneurship, had a lack of expectancy component of motivation and had a strong performance goal in her studies, she seemed to be very uncertain of her actual business skills and competences at the time of the graduation. She seemed to have a strong extrinsic motivation in her studies. The students, who had value and affective components of motivation at the beginning of their studies, were willing to achieve all the needed competences for their career in the international business, and they perceived to be quite pleased with their learning outcomes. They had mastery goals dominant in their studies and intrinsic motivation seemed to be a catalyst for their learning (Lei 2010, 153). Further, they did not have so much interest in further development in business studies in terms of quantity, but the quality: they were interested in continuing their studies at a master level. In addition, it seemed that the student, who had set up a company during his studies, had learnt most the entrepreneurial competences as well as grown as an individual. Since having set up a business, he had learnt the relevant

entrepreneurial skills for and through the company (see Kyrö & Carrier 2005, 28). The achievement motivation was to master everything in practice and to be successful in the real business.

To conclude, the self-perceived entrepreneurial intention was used as criterion to select the different cases for the study. However, the findings of this study illustrated that the entrepreneurial intention seemed to be stable during the studies, which supports the findings of the previous findings (eg. Leskinen 1999; Pihkala 2008). Further, the findings of this study illustrated that the entrepreneurial intention seemed to be connected with the nature of the goals (performance vs. mastery) and the nature of motivation (intrinsic vs. extrinsic). However, how strongly these factors are involved and how much they are related with each other, are important aspects that need further studies. Nevertheless, to start with, Table 4 presents a proposition of the relationship between the nature of the goals and the entrepreneurial intention.

Since this study was a last part of the longitudinal study which followed the learning process and outcomes of one group of students in 2007 – 2010, the conclusion can be drawn related to the whole student group as well. The group consists of 20 students who have graduated or will graduate soon. The students can be divided into four categories introduced above. First, they were divided in two categories based on their self-perceived entrepreneurial intention, and then based on their nature of the goals in their studies. It is worth emphasising that the latter is based on the interpretation of the all the data of the study as well as observations and the discussions with the students during the study years. Nevertheless, it provides an insight into the issue how the whole programme has influenced on the entrepreneurial learning of the students.

Table 4: Relationship between the nature of the goals and the entrepreneurial intention of the students

		Entrepreneurial intention	
		Low	High
Nature of goals	Mastery goals	"Potential entrepreneur": high expectations for the studies in the beginning strong interest in personal growth and the development of business competences high motivation in studies "Clive" as an example Three of 20 students (15%) were Potential entrepreneurs at the time of the graduation	"Entrepreneur" (during the studies): high expectations for the studies in the beginning strong interest in personal growth and the development of entrepreneurial competences high motivation in studies "Bob" as an example Two of 20 students (10%) were Entrepreneurs at the time of the graduation

	Performance goals	<p>"Non-entrepreneur": (quite) low expectations for the studies in the beginning low interest in personal development in terms of business and entrepreneurial competences, but mainly interest in the grades and the degree low motivation in studies</p> <p>"Tina" as an example" Eleven of 20 students (55%) were Non-entrepreneurs</p>	<p>"Future entrepreneur": motivated for becoming an entrepreneur, yet insufficient entrepreneurial competences interest in personal development in terms of business and entrepreneurial competences, but strongly interested in the grades as well (quite) high motivation in studies</p> <p>"Anna" as an example Four of 20 students (20%) were Future entrepreneurs</p>
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Practical implication for higher education

Finally, it can be concluded that since there are differences what the students really learn and since there seems to be a connection with motivational components, the learning goals and the outcomes, it should be paid more attention to. In other words, the motivational factors should be taken better into consideration in the beginning of the studies. The students could be encouraged and motivated better in order to have more master goals and achieve the competences, not only having performance goals to pass the courses and to get good grades. Anyway, it seems also that more complicated objectives might be beneficial for the development of the entrepreneurial competences. Eventually they will demonstrate in practice the competences what they really will master at work and are able to do at work (Nab et al. 2010) or when setting up and running their own businesses after the graduation.

Based on the findings of this study, it can also be concluded that setting up a business is really significant for the learning motivation and outcomes (see Kyrö & Carrier 2005) in entrepreneurship. It seems that then the learning goal is strong since all the learnt knowledge, skills and competences are learnt for the real need as well as the success in business will be based on these competences. Nevertheless, of course the students should be able and willing to set up a business during their studies before encouraging them to do so. Therefore there is a practical contradiction – how to know when a student knows and masters enough of the business and entrepreneurship, and has enough entrepreneurial competences to set up his or her own business, in order to learn more entrepreneurial competences for and through the running of a company. However, there might be possibilities for this kind of learning context to several students. The students who have a strong entrepreneurial intention already at the beginning of the studies as well as strong motivation and mastery goals in their studies, could be encouraged more to consider that setting up a business is worth doing already during their studies.

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