



Entrepreneurship— Hop

William B. Gartner

“The future is not coming to you.
You fetch it! Or it goes away.
Who wins and who gains from a failure
Depends on who falls and who stays.
It all has to do with perspective
What prism that you use for a scatter.
But remember: Humble or arrogant
May be a bifocal matter.” (Wahlbin, 2005)

This is a “mash-up” of some ideas on entrepreneurship scholarship using rhymes. The challenge was to compare and contrast special issue articles along national lines. The pondering of each country’s imperative comes out through this “hip-hop” perspective. Please be assured when you read this that these rhymes are serious. There are important issues that scholars’ interest must pay, so do not let this format get in the way, using this poem as a start, of exploring entrepreneurship as science and art. Ideas from each country are beyond differences in methods quantitative and quality: Issues philosophical, rhetorical, historical, and current are the basis for the entrepreneurship field’s ferment.

Pay you back with interest (Clarke, Hicks, & Nash, 1966)

Introduction

“Whom do we pay attention to?” is the subject at hand.
Does anyone seek out knowledge from other lands?
Papers from Germany, France, the U.S., the U.K., and Scandinavia presented here,
Express “a failure to communicate,” so it is clear, (Blackburn & Smallbone, 2008;
Brush, Manolova, & Edelman, 2008; Hjorth, 2008; Lasch & Yami, 2008; Schmude,
Welter, & Heumann, 2008)
That the problem runs deeper than specific country differences,
And, it is more than a reflection of a variety of perspectives.

Please send correspondence to: William B. Gartner, tel.: 864-656-0825; fax: 864-656-7237; e-mail: gartner@clemson.edu.

Must it be that entrepreneurship scholarship remains such a *potpourri*? (Low, 2001)
Can we dodge the lack of convergence in this hodgepodge? (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000)

Some of this was covered in a special issue of *ET and P*

That focused on determining boundaries (Cornelius, Landström, & Persson, 2006; Gartner, Davidsson, & Zahra, 2006; Gregoire, Noel, Dery, & Bechard, 2006; Reader & Watkins, 2006; Schildt, Zahra, & Sillanpaa, 2006),

By delimiting scholarly groups using various cluster analyses,

We suggested a way to move beyond a definitional paralysis.

In using a number of bibliometric techniques,

We sought to find commonalities among scholars on topics they seek.

The study of entrepreneurship is not a singular discussion,

(Though it would be great if “organization creation” could be its reduction) (Gartner, 2001)

But the list of topics that specific groups of entrepreneurship scholars surround:

Corporate, strategic, economic, ethic. . . . Abound.

(What was most troubling to me

Were the many links among prior entrepreneurship scholarship to see

That the entrepreneurship field could be subsumed as a part of strategy.) (Gartner et al., 2006; Gregoire et al., 2006)

So, what can the promise of entrepreneurship scholarship be?

Can the field differentiate itself by being about opportunity? (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000)

When there is so much variety in the topics we see?

Should we seek convergence on what entrepreneurship scholars should talk about?

Or will a multitude of conversations lead to a route,

Of some semblance of theoretical consensus that other disciplines provide?

It seems if we get on their buses they will take us for a ride.

Entrepreneurship is a phenomenon, not a theory,

To always look for some causal explanation makes me weary,

I know scholarship seeks to answer the “why?”

But I am most interested in “what,” “how,” and the nature of “try.” (Gartner, 2004, 2006a, 2006b)

So, I don’t believe in a unity of ideas,

Of what entrepreneurship should be, as

A way to focus a variety of efforts,

Among many different national networks

Of researchers interested in particular topics,

I don’t think we can say to any one group,

That topic, please drop it.

One reason for the lack of attention

For national scholarly research that needs to be mentioned

Is the difficulty of individual retention.

The “Principle of Least Effort” intends

That scholars will minimize the total work they expend. (Zipf, 1949)
It is hard to look much beyond one's immediate circle (Reader & Watkins, 2006)
Of colleagues and friends, to read beyond them seems to be a miracle.
So a national perspective on entrepreneurship is likely to be a foregone conclusion,
Particularly when differences in languages are a factor in the exclusion
Of readers who only read English: Not German, Swedish, or French,
Whoever writes in those languages leaves only them in the game, and the others on the bench.

The remainder of this article is in two parts,
The first struggles with the past and the state of the art,
While the second suggests that idea retention
Is through the force of paying attention.
What sets national perspectives on scholarship apart
Is often core issues that reflect deep rooted issues of the heart.
Most national scholarship is based on philosophical and humanistic traditions,
Research sensibilities blended by aestheticians.
Ironically then, America's role is that it "Ain't got no soul."

"Upon All the Living and the Dead" (Joyce, 1914)

Which historical names are engrained that remains
At the core of those we cannot ignore?
Weber and Schumpeter are German-speaking sociologists/economists
That in translation to English is a part of everyone's lists
Of the primary ideas upon which entrepreneurship is based,
Yet I find the connection between them and now difficult to trace.
The Protestant ethic seems to be more than of rhetoric.
How do we link up Weber's Protestant past with what we see now
With millions from China and India at the bow
Of the world's entrepreneurship? It is more their trip.
By sheer numbers alone, the rivers of opportunity are the Indus and Yangtze, not the Rhine and the Rhone.
So, is it to flip to say that it is not about Europe?
Or the U.S. for that matter, though Americans assume entrepreneurship is only about them,
and not the latter.

(Americans think that at entrepreneurship they are the best,
Because they are able to ignore the rest).

Is Schumpeter a European or an American scholar?
The first edition of the *Theory of Economic Development* is in German,
But the revision came in the land of the dollar (Schumpeter, 1934)
He gets cited for posting an entrepreneurial dynamic,
That the idea of equilibrium is rather pedantic.
He states that the primary function
Of entrepreneurship is creative destruction,
The level of analysis is, then, that of the environment,
Which is more often the sociologists' and economists' determinant.

A German approach, then, is a social derivative,
The individual is more of a fugitive,
In the factors that consist of entrepreneurship's correlative. (Schmude et al., 2008)

This, I think, is a commonality of a European sense,
That context matters, and makes the difference,
In whether individuals try to improve their affluence.
One more idea I suggest before putting the German perspective to rest.
The heart of environment is embedded in values and culture,
And a society's values are voiced in its music and literature.
The soul of the German *Zeitgeist* and its centrality to Europe for that matter,
Is based on Bach, Händel, Haydn, Beethoven, and other composers of stature,
As well as writers who have probed the "Western" culture's soul,
It surely begins earlier than Goethe in pondering what makes "man" whole,
And, continues in Freud, Jung, Adler, and other German-speaking psychologists,
They looked for something deeper than can be seen by positivists.

For example, when Goethe offers this inscription:

“Whatever you do or dream you can,
Begin,
Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.
Begin it now.”

This is philosophical by prescription.

Compare this to how Americans tick
When we look across the Atlantic. (Brush et al., 2008)
What they see they count in multiple ways,
The need for inter-rater reliability in counting is a malaise,
Comparisons in national perspectives quantitatively appraised.
They give praise to running the analytical maze.
Let me rephrase . . .

I see the schism, in evaluative approaches between the U.S. and Europe
To be rooted in a history of the importance of pragmatism (Dewey, 1910; James, 1907/1997)
The focus on practice is based on what one can see,
Reality is visible, and can be agreed upon by others reliably,
That which is within the person must rise,
Be made observable, countable to analyze.
Comparisons are not thought to be idiosyncratic,
Researcher differences are washed out in the arithmetic.

Contrast this to explaining the Nordic research studies, (Hjorth, 2008)
Exploring whether Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland are buddies,
Commonalities in geography, culture, and history are explored,
And articles in journals are counted to implore,
Whether Nordic research contributions are relevant, beautiful, and will not bore.
Entrepreneurship research is not about the routine,
Playfulness, curiosity, and passion are the amphetamine,
This draws scholars from beyond Business Administration.

There is not an inherent correlation,
For entrepreneurship's identification,
With ideas only about organization.
A better start might be through the heart:
Humanities and art.

Entrepreneurship is as large as the people in it,
The focus on profits and rationality is a counterfeit,
Without love, faith, and hope, our view of "us" is pretermit,
If the glove doesn't fit, then you must acquit!

The French also look by using the qualitative,
They focus on process as the imperative. (Lasch & Yami, 2008)
While detailed data sets and statistics are there for inspection,
Quantitative studies are not the French direction.
I believe that language is the significant differential,
As to why French scholarship is less consequential.
When the majority of their research is in French alone,
Their insights will remain unknown,
To write among themselves is to just "phone home."

And isn't it an irony,
That entrepreneur is "French" in its entirety?
To talk about entrepreneurship will always be,
An inherently French idea as the field's reality.
So this will always guarantee,
A French touch in entrepreneurship's pedigree.

Hey! What about the U.K.? (Blackburn & Smallbone, 2008)
"Small is beautiful" is not just a matter of testament, (Schumacher, 1974)
Small firms help an economy be resilient.
Birch's study on small firms was an astonishment (Birch, 1979)
That job growth was an important argument,
For SME research to become more pertinent.
The Bolton report points out the predicament
That new and small firms have not been salient
In the discussion of making the U.K. more affluent.
Much of U.K. research appears to be driven,
By how much the national government has given,
So that spurring evidence-based policy's development,
U.K. research explores whether government choices are relevant.

And, there is a consistent orientation toward methodological diversity,
Which has led to scholarship in the U.K. with much vibrancy,
Scholars there are willing to explore the ontological, epistemological,
Ideological, dialogical, metalogical, symbolological, the logical, and illogical.

"Attention is the Beginning of Devotion" (Oliver, 2004)

In reviewing these papers to offer a diagnosis
I have come to somewhat of an anagnorisis.

What surprised me,
Was how little overlap in certain ideas there were between each country.
What is interesting to see, in this cacophony
Were the multitudes of intellectual choices among these various voices.
An example would be the idea of liability of newness, (Stinchcombe, 1965)
Which might be just an update of Hobbes view that
Life is short, solitary, nasty, poor, and brutish.
I can see Aldrich and Auster across this roster, (Aldrich & Auster, 1986)
That their title “Even Dwarfs Started Small” is an idea that should foster,
More thought about the predicament regarding the process of establishment.

Most ideas stay small,
It is not that these ideas are banal,
It is that they fail to gain social capital. (Price, 1976)

So, for me, I can see that the field’s *ennui* is merely a facsimile,
For the struggles with creating and recognizing community.
Should the purpose be the degree to which we enhance the field’s *esprit*?
There is no guarantee, that what is interesting to me
Can form the basis for that which engages the we.

Es ist für mich (It is for me).
To determine what is interesting to see.
Or does the attention I pay, involve what others might say? (Davis, 1971)
So what becomes interesting to study
Depends on the question: Who is my buddy? (Latour, 1987, 1999)
I see that the development of a paradigm
Involves a dialogue across time. (Kuhn, 1962)
The movement of science, depends on Bernard of Chartres’ idea that
We see further by standing on the shoulder’s of giants.
A community impetus, will show that
Es ist für uns (It is for us).

“Attention is the beginning of devotion” is not merely a focus on facts,
We need to recognize our colleagues’ acts.
This requires a yearning for mindful learning: (Langer, 1989, 1997)
Openness to novelty, alertness to distinction,
Multiple perspectives and present orientation.

This task,
Starts with considering the questions we ask. (Weick, 1999)
Yet, “what there is to conquer . . . has already been discovered” (Eliot, 1943)
It is a conundrum that the fundamental questions have already been covered,
“By men whom one cannot hope to emulate” (Eliot, 1943)
Coming late to the game, is our fate.
So, there is no denying, that
“For us, there is only the trying.” (Eliot, 1943)
“The rest is not our business.” (Eliot, 1943)

REFERENCES

- Aldrich, H.E. & Auster, E. (1986). Even dwarfs started small: Liabilities of age and size and their strategic implications. In B. Staw & L.L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. VIII, pp. 165–198). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Birch, D. (1979). *The job generation process*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Program in Neighborhood and Regional Change.
- Blackburn, R. & Smallbone, D. (2008). Researching small firms and entrepreneurship in the UK: Developments and distinctiveness. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 32(2), 267–288.
- Brush, C.G., Manolova, T.S., & Edelman, L.F. (2008). Separated by a common language? Entrepreneurship across the Atlantic. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 32(2), 249–266.
- Clarke, A., Hicks, T., & Nash, G. (1966). *Pay you back with interest, for certain because*. London: Parlophone.
- Cornelius, B., Landström, H., & Persson, O. (2006). Entrepreneurial studies: The dynamic research front of a developing social science. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(3), 375–398.
- Davis, M.S. (1971). That's interesting! Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. *Philosophy of Social Science*, 1, 309–344.
- Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath.
- Eliot, T.S. (1943). *The four quartets*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Gartner, W.B. (2001). Is there an elephant in entrepreneurship research? Blind assumptions in theory development. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 25(4), 27–39.
- Gartner, W.B. (2004). Achieving “critical mess” in entrepreneurship scholarship. In J.A. Katz & D. Shepherd (Eds.), *Advances in entrepreneurship, firm emergence, and growth* (Vol. 7, pp. 199–216). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Gartner, W.B. (2006a). A “critical mess” approach to entrepreneurship scholarship. In A. Lundstrom & S. Halvarsson (Eds.), *Entrepreneurship research: Past perspectives and future prospects. Foundations and trends in entrepreneurship* (Vol. 2(3), pp. 73–82). Hanover, MA: Now Publishers.
- Gartner, W.B. (2006b). Entrepreneurship, psychology and the “critical mess.” In J.R. Baum, M. Frese, & R.A. Baron (Eds.), *The psychology of entrepreneurship* (pp. 325–334). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Gartner, W.B., Davidsson, P., & Zahra, S.A. (2006). Are you talking to me? The nature of community in entrepreneurship scholarship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(3), 321–331.
- Gregoire, D., Noel, M.X., Dery, R., & Bechard, J.-P. (2006). Is there conceptual convergence in entrepreneurship research? A co-citation analysis of “Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research” 1981–2004. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(3), 333–374.
- Hjorth, D. (2008). Nordic entrepreneurship research. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 32(2), 313–338.
- James, W. (1907/1997). *Pragmatism, a new name for some old ways of thinking, popular lectures on philosophy*. West Valley City, UT: Waking Lion Press.
- Joyce, J. (1914). *Dubliners*. London: Grant Richards.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Langer, E.J. (1989). *Mindfulness*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.
- Langer, E.J. (1997). *The power of mindful learning*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.
- Lasch, F. & Yami, S. (2008). The nature and focus of entrepreneurship research in France over the last decade: A French touch? *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 32(2), 339–360.
- Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (1999). *Pandora's hope: Essays on the reality of science studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Low, M.B. (2001). The adolescence of entrepreneurship research: Specification of purpose. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 25(4), 17–26.
- Oliver, M. (2004). *Blue Iris: Poems and essays*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Price, D.J.D. (1976). A general theory of bibliometric and other cumulative advantage processes. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 27, 292–306.
- Reader, D. & Watkins, D. (2006). The social and collaborative nature of entrepreneurship scholarship: A co-citation and perceptual analysis. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(3), 417–442.
- Schildt, H.A., Zahra, S.A., & Sillanpaa, A. (2006). Scholarly communities in entrepreneurship research: A co-citation analysis. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(3), 399–416.
- Schmude, J., Welter, F., & Heumann, S. (2008). Entrepreneurship research in Germany. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 32(2), 289–312.
- Schumacher, E.E. (1974). *Small is beautiful: A study of economics as if people mattered*. London: Abacus.
- Schumpeter, J. (1934). *The theory of economic development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Shane, S. & Venkataraman, S. (2000). The promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 217–226.
- Stinchcombe, A.L. (1965). Social structure and organizations. In J.G. March (Ed.), *Handbook of organizations* (pp. 142–193). Chicago: Rand McNally & Company.
- Wahlbin, C. (2005). *Commentary on “Fail Forward!”* Presented at the Entrepreneurship and Small Business Conference, Gothenburg, Sweden, September.
- Weick, K.E. (1999). That's moving: Theories that matter. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 8(2), 134–142.
- Zipf, G.K. (1949). *Human behavior and the principle of least effort*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.

William B. Gartner is the Spiro Professor of Entrepreneurial Leadership at the Spiro Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership, 345 Sirrine Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634-1345, USA. The author would like to thank the special issue editors, Friederike Welter and Frank Lasch, for their willingness to let him offer a commentary in a non-traditional format and for their comments and encouragement during the revision process; to Ulla Hytti, who graciously allowed me to present a version of this paper at the ICSB 2007 Conference in Turku, Finland; and to Clas Wahlbin for showing that this was possible.