Entrepreneurs' perceptions of their entrepreneurial process: a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with Education graduates in the Basque Country

Abstract: Entrepreneurship is necessary for the economic development of societies. Universities play a key role in this process by fostering entrepreneurship and promoting entrepreneurial skills. Studies show that entrepreneurship is largely mainstreamed into economics faculties; however, a multidisciplinary approach should be adopted to work across different fields. The aim of this study is to explore how graduates from faculties and schools of education in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country (Spain) perceive the factors that have influenced their entrepreneurial process, in order to establish good practices, and to highlight strengths and weaknesses. A qualitative methodology was used by conducting and analysing 20 in-depth interviews. The main conclusions point to the lack of development of entrepreneurial skills, the use of traditional methodologies by teaching staff, entrepreneurs' passion and their desire to create companies that possess specific hallmark characteristics, among others.

Keywords: graduates; faculty of education; entrepreneurship; entrepreneurs; Basque Country; self-perception; qualitative analysis; interviews; Entrepreneurial University; case analysis; entrepreneurial education.

1 Introduction

Several definitions have been offered for the term 'entrepreneurship'. In 1755 Richard Cantillon first defined the concept of 'entrepreneur' as 'the person who pays a certain price to resell a product at an uncertain price, thus making decisions about obtaining and using resources, and consequently admitting risk in entrepreneurship' (p. 21). After classical economists such as Richard Cantillon and Adam Smith introduced the term with economic connotations (Aldana-Rivera et al., 2019), it is used today in a much broader and more pluralistic sense (Julià, 2013) to mean autonomous action (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005), entrepreneurial spirit, the ability to bring about change (European Union, 2006), autonomy and personal initiative (Spanish Head of State, 2006), and initiative and entrepreneurship skills (Spanish Head of State, 2013). Therefore, entrepreneurship is not only linked to economic and productive activities such as the creation of companies (Ferreyra, 2019; González-Tejerina and Vieira, 2021; Vásquez, 2017), but is cross-sectional and should be included in the all-round education of social subjects (Aldana-Rivera et al., 2019).

Education is a tool that enables individuals to acquire knowledge and develop general and specific skills that are useful for personal and work performance (Rovayo, 2012). In this sense, it is essential to ensure that entrepreneurial education is offered by universities not only to teach students how to run a business or set up a company, but also to foster general creative and critical thinking skills, curiosity, an openness to lifelong learning, a proactive attitude, autonomy, innovation, and an ability to recognise opportunities (González-Tejerina and Vieira, 2021; Jiménez, 2015). In this regard, Davey et al. (2016) noted that entrepreneurship education should encompass four progressive stages: firstly, sensibilisation for entrepreneurship, to raise awareness of its importance; secondly, entrepreneurship education, including the development of both hard and soft skills; thirdly, education for entrepreneurship, providing practical assistance and training to those considering starting a new venture; and fourthly, education in entrepreneurship, providing ongoing business education to those who have already started a venture. Gibb (2008), for his part, proposed ensuring that entrepreneurial education is embedded in the education system, adopting a child-centred approach in primary education, a subject-centred approach in secondary education, and professionally focused skill-centred teaching in higher education. For Timmons and Spinelli (2009), entrepreneurs are not born with the ability or the gift to be entrepreneurs, but through their lifelong training. Martínez et al. (2016) considered that some skills and characteristics of entrepreneurship can be taught and be developed in individuals who do not have them innately.

While the conception of the modern university emerged around 1810 with the creation of the University of Berlin, in Germany (Torres et al., 2018), entrepreneurship is relatively new as a formal subject of study in universities. It has been taught since 1947, and has since gained ground in universities in the United States and Europe, especially in the United Kingdom, Belgium and Germany, among others (Volkmann, 2004). For example, in 2001, entrepreneurship was already being offered in 1200 business schools in the United States (Lackéus, 2015). The aim should be to create acceptance of entrepreneurship programmes throughout the university community and not only in economics faculties (Volkmann, 2004), with entrepreneurship being understood as a cross-cutting axis of the educational process (Rovayo, 2012). In this way, 'from a very young age, students must

perceive entrepreneurship as another alternative offered by the labour market' (Martínez et al., 2016, p.253). Since 2004, entrepreneurship education in Finland has had a presence in all stages of education from primary school to university in various programmes, including Agricultural Science, Tourism Studies, Event Management, Food Science, Engineering and Teacher Training, among others (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009; Korhonen et al., 2012). Volkmann (2004) and Rovayo (2012) indicated that there are two models of entrepreneurial education within university-wide programmes. There are 'magnet programmes', which are taught in a single school or faculty (business school), but allow students from other faculties to attend; and there are the 'radiant programmes', where courses are taught in several schools or faculties.

Entrepreneurship is generally measured in terms of economic performance: a country's economic growth, job creation and Gross Domestic Product growth. However, it can also generate other benefits, such as competencies such as solidarity, happiness, and social capital, among others (Cárdenas et al., 2015). People undertake these courses for a variety of reasons. Some start the process of creating a business in response to having identified untapped opportunities in the market; there are also people who decide to start a business because they need to find a job. Whereas for 70.7% of the entrepreneurial population in Spain, pursuing an opportunity is the main motivation for creating a business, for 22.6% it is a necessity, because they see that the probability of finding a job is low (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2019), perhaps driven by the high unemployment rate in Spain and because of the current situation, which is volatile, complex and uncertain (Lourenço et al., 2013). Specifically, 14.57% of the population in Spain were unemployed in the third quarter of 2021 (Spanish National Statistics Institute).

Being entrepreneurial involves a high level of sacrifice, as well as being stressful and unrewarding (Cárdenas et al., 2015). A total of 3037 students from 6 different countries (USA, China, India, Turkey, Belgium and Spain) identified some barriers to entrepreneurship, including a lack of support structures and considerable tax costs; a lack of entrepreneurial skills (accounting, management and marketing skills); and a lack of mentoring opportunities (Pruett and Harun, 2017). However, 5% of Spanish university students reported that they intended to start a company when they completed their education, a proportion that is higher than in Germany (2%) and Italy (3.8%) (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2019). Three in every ten fourth-year students interviewed considered entrepreneurship to be a career option in the next three years (Guerrero et al., 2016); The highest percentages of students who wanted to be self-employed were in Engineering and Architecture degrees (32.2%), followed by those in Social Sciences and Law (28.5%), and Science degrees (16.5%) (Ruiz et al., 2019).

So far, entrepreneurship has not been seen as a job option for many graduates (Hartshorn and Hannon, 2005). How many graduates of education faculties become entrepreneurs? According to Pérez and Serrano (2012), 'there is a widespread belief among entrepreneurs that going to university does not promote entrepreneurial initiatives but rather the vocation to become a civil servant' (p.295). This seems to suggest that university students are passive, lack initiative, and are unaccustomed to risk (Pérez and Serrano, 2012).

The latest study carried out by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2016) found that the percentage of graduates who register with the social security authorities within a self-employed scheme is relatively low. In the first year after graduation, 7% of people who registered were self-employed. Four years after graduation, this percentage rose to 10.3% (see Table 1). The sector with the highest percentage of self-employed graduates in both the first and subsequent years was Health Sciences. By field of study, they were dentistry graduates (66.1%), followed by podiatry graduates (60.1%) and architecture graduates (48.1%). Very few education graduates were registered as self-employed, although a small increase has been seen over the years (see Table 1).

Table 1   University graduates in the academic year 2009-2010 registered with the Social Security system as self-employed four years after completing their education

	2011	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*
Degrees and Master's degrees	7%	7.2%	8.6%	10.3%
Dentistry	53.2%	57.7%	61.7%	66.7%
Podiatry	40.9%	55.3%	59.0%	60.1%
Architecture	34.4%	37.4%	42.8%	48.1%
Social Education	2.6%	3.2%	4.3%	5.2%
Educational Psychology	4.0%	4.1%	6.7%	6.6%
Primary Education degree	3.5%	3.4%	4.6%	4.8%
Early Childhood Education	2.7%	2.6%	3.8%	4.6%
Education degree	3.3%	4.5%	5.8%	8.8%

According to the latest labour market survey available (Lanbide, 2017), 6% of all graduates in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country (Spain) are self-employed, whereas 73% of them are wage earners (the remaining percentage covers those who were unemployed, in education, or on paid and unpaid work placements). By degree, 84% of social education graduates were wage earners and 1% were self-employed and working for the University of the Basque Country; 75% of early childhood education graduates were wage earners and 3% were self-employed and working for the University of the Basque Country; and

83% of primary education graduates were employed and 2% were self-employed and working for Mondragon University (see Table 2).

Table 2 Employment status of Education graduates from all the universities in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country. 2014 cohort.

	Self-employed	Wage earners	Unemployed with experience	Unemployed with no experience	Experienced Job seekers	In education	In a paid or unpaid traineeship programme	Other (Family responsibilities, disability...)
Social education (University of the Basque Country)	1%	84%	8%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Social education (University of Deusto)	3%	87%	-	-	3%	6%	-	-
Early Childhood Education (University of the Basque Country)	3%	75%	6%	0%	3%	5%	1%	7%
Early Childhood Education (Mondragon University)	1%	77%	6%	5%	3%	3%	1%	4%
Primary Education (University of Deusto)	3%	83%	5%	-	-	7%	2%	-
Primary Education (University of the Basque Country)	2%	79%	4%	5%	2%	4%	1%	3%
Primary Education (Mondragon University)	2%	83%	4%	4%	1%	4%	1%	1%
Foreign Language Teacher Training (University of the Basque Country)	22%	67%	-	-	-	11%	-	-
Total	6%	73%	6%	3%	2%	6%	4%	Not broken down

For all these reasons, it is important to promote the entrepreneurial ecosystem of universities within the various groups that make up the university community (students, alumni, teaching staff, and researchers, among others) (Castillo-Vergara and Álvarez-Marín, 2016; Guerrero et al., 2016; Martínez et al., 2016). The university community should understand the importance of entrepreneurship and bring it into their classrooms and activities at all stages (Álvarez et al., 2006; Julià, 2013). Furthermore, universities should contribute to regional and national development, favouring the academia-industry-government triple helix model, and the Entrepreneurial University (Carayannis et al., 2016; Etzkowitz, et al., 2000; Kolehmainen et al., 2016; Philpott et al., 2011). However, 'universities do not stand out for an overly entrepreneurial and innovative orientation' (Torres et al., 2018, p.2) and there is still 'much to be done in this area in all our universities' (Torres et al., 2018, p.21). This is why the Spanish Government (2021) has recently promoted the Spanish Entrepreneurial Nation Strategy, which stresses the importance

of using active methodologies such as 'learning by doing' for the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills through practice; promoting a compulsory subject on entrepreneurship and business creation in all university degrees to ensure that students acquire basic skills in leadership, creativity, finance and marketing; promoting a Master's degree in innovative entrepreneurship; creating entrepreneurship centres, chairs and University-Business classrooms; fomenting an entrepreneurial culture; encouraging participation in the capital of university spin-outs (USOs); creating companies and university spin-outs

In Spain, only 37.1% of the students surveyed have received training in entrepreneurship at university (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2019; Ruiz et al., 2019). Education and training are key to fostering entrepreneurship in Spain. In fact, 33% of respondents to the study by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2020) supported this idea. Experts have also pointed to the need to further strengthen government policies (78.8%), financial support (48.5%), and education and training (42.4%) in this area.

Castillo-Vergara and Álvarez-Marín (2016) called for further studies to be conducted to more specifically assess the internal and external factors that could influence university students' entrepreneurship. This study discussed below is a response to this plea, and is focused on graduates of Faculties of Education. The article is structured as follows: first the general and specific objectives of the study are presented, followed by an outline of the methodology, the participants and the procedure used, and finally, the results and some conclusions are provided.

2 Objectives and method

The main objective of this study is to identify the factors that have influenced the development of the entrepreneurial activity of graduates from faculties and schools of education in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country (Spain).

The research also has the following specific objectives:
- To determine the strengths and weaknesses of faculties of education in relation to entrepreneurship.
- To establish guidelines to promote entrepreneurship in faculties of education.

The study was undertaken from a qualitative perspective. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with entrepreneurial graduates of the Faculties of Education. This was a multiple case study based in the Basque Country (Spain), which analysed cases from the University of Deusto, the University of the Basque Country, and Mondragón University.
The model of analysis of the Entrepreneurial University in Faculties and Schools of Education (Paños-Castro et al., 2021) was used. It involved selecting those items that graduates could directly have observed or perceived during their degree courses. The following interview script was used:

Table 3   Interview script

CONTEXT AND PERSONAL QUESTIONS:
- What is the name of your company or organisation?
- What does your company or organisation do (goods and/or services provided)?
- When did you set up your company or organisation?
- At which university did you study? What degree did you receive? What year did you complete your degree?
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXT:
- Did you receive any public support for setting up your company or organisation? Did the faculty inform you about this?
- Have you made use of any public or private infrastructures (incubators, business and innovation centres, technology parks, associations, services...) to set up your company or organisation?
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT:
- Have you received private seed capital to set up your business or organisation?
- Does your company or organisation develop high-tech products?
- Does your company or organisation develop innovative products or services?
- Does your company or organisation work in emerging sectors?
- Is your company or organisation involved in a research project?
QUESTIONS ABOUT TRAINING IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR FACULTY STAFF:
- Do you think that the lecturers and professors you had in your degree had received training in entrepreneurship?
- What in knowledge transfer?
- And in university spin-outs?
QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER ANY PROFESSIONALS FROM THE RESPONDENTS' COMPANY OR ORGANISATION'S SECTOR HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CURRICULUM:

-	Did you any of your lecturers/professors work for companies or organisations outside the university?

QUESTIONS ABOUT MISSION AND STRATEGY:
- Do you feel that your faculty gave importance to entrepreneurship in its mission and strategic plans?
- What about social engagement?
- What about internships with local companies?

QUESTIONS ABOUT TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
- Did you develop entrepreneurial skills as part of your degree studies, either as a general and/or as a transversal skill? As part of which subject was this delivered?
- Did your faculty offer extracurricular programmes on entrepreneurship? Which ones? Did you participate in any? Why did you do this? What benefits has it brought to you?
- Have you participated in any entrepreneurship training courses offered by the Alumni Association? Which ones? Why did you do this? What benefits has it brought to you?
- Have you participated in any research related to entrepreneurship?

QUESTIONS ABOUT EXTRACURRICULAR TRAINING IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
- Have you taken in any extracurricular courses on entrepreneurship awareness, opportunity identification, business plan development, innovative project development and/or spin-out launching?

QUESTIONS ABOUT ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES:
- What kind of active methodologies did your lecturers/professors use?
- Did you have the opportunity to take a work placement with an entrepreneur? Where? What did you learn about entrepreneurship from these placements?
- What kind of educational resources did your lecturers/professors use? Were these innovative?
- Have you developed any innovative resources yourself?

QUESTIONS ABOUT INTERNATIONALISATION:
- Did you take part in the Erasmus programme? Where?
- Did you have the opportunity to participate in any international conferences or forums? Was it a source of inspiration for setting up your company?
- Did you have any exchange lecturers/professors from universities abroad?
- Did you have the opportunity to meet students from universities abroad?

3 Participants and procedure

Participants were selected on the basis of the following criteria:
- Companies registered since 2000
- Companies still in business
- Education Graduates from universities in the Basque Country, i.e., who completed degrees or Bachelor's degrees related to education, such as Primary Education, Early Childhood Education, Social Education, Education and/or Educational Psychology.

An informed consent form was designed to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and free choice of participation. The form also stated the research objectives. In order to select the participants, contact was made with official bodies such as business incubators, entrepreneurship centres, the SPRI group, staff from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor of the Basque Country, the Department of Digital Transformation and Entrepreneurship of the Basque Government, Development Agencies, directors of masters and degrees in entrepreneurship, and Provincial Councils.

Participants received an email invitation and were subsequently contacted by telephone. Interviews were conducted between 1 July 2021 and 22 September 2021 via Google Meet, and had an average duration of 40 minutes.

In order to improve validity, the interviews were recorded in order to collect verbatim accounts from participants, and they were analysed and reviewed by three researchers. As two criteria were established for the selection of participants (university and type of university course), at least two subjects meeting each criterion were necessary for representativeness (Miles et al., 2020). Except for two cases (one graduate of the University of Deusto who had completed an Infant and/or Primary degree, and one graduate of the University of the Basque Country who had completed an Infant and/or Primary degree), representativeness in subject selection was assured (see Table 3).

Table 3 Resulting segmentation

Criterion 1: University	University of Deusto	University of the Basque Country	Mondragon University

Criterion 2: University degree	Infant/ Primary	Social Education	Education / Educational Psychology /	Infant/ Primary	Social Education	Education / Educational Psychology	Infant/ Primary	Social Education	Education / Educational Psychology
Number of interviews to be conducted	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0^1	0
Number of interviews conducted	1	3^2	7^2	1	6^2	4^2	2^2	0	0

A total of 20 subjects took part, of whom 16 were women (80%) and 4 were men (20%). Five respondents were entrepreneurs who had recently created companies (in the last 3 years), and the rest had well-established companies, the oldest dating back to 2001 (see Table 4).

Table 4 Study participants by type of company, degree and university

Participant	Sex	Type of company	Year the company was established	Degree	University
1	Woman	English School	2016	Primary education	University of the Basque Country
2	Woman	Feminist training association	2021	Social Education	University of the Basque Country
3	Woman	Educational Psychology Practice	2020	Social Education	University of the Basque Country
4	Man	Provides services to develop motivated, cohesive, innovative, and highly competent work teams	2009	Social Education and Educational Psychology	University of the Basque Country
5	Woman	Educational Psychology Practice	2009	Educational Psychology	University of Deusto
6	Woman	Equality service, participatory processes	2002	Education Sciences	University of the Basque Country
7	Woman	Education Association	2021	Education	University of Deusto
8	Woman	Education centre	2016	Early Childhood Education and Educational Psychology	Mondragon University and the University of the Basque Country
9	Woman	Education centre	2016	Early Childhood Education	Mondragon University
10	Woman	Coaching service	2016	Education	University of Deusto
11	Woman	Socio-educational intervention service: child protection, people in exclusion, project facilitation...	2001	Social Education	University of the Basque Country
12	Man	Socio-educational intervention service: child protection, people in exclusion, project facilitation...	2001	Social Education	University of the Basque Country
13	Man	Socio-educational intervention service: child protection, people in exclusion, project facilitation...	2001	Social education	University of the Basque Country
14	Woman	Education and Sexology Institute	2014	Social Education	University of Deusto
15	Man	Education and Sexology Institute	2014	Education	University of the Basque Country
16	Woman	Wedding planning	2019	Primary education	University of Deusto
17	Woman	Consultancy	2019	Social Education and Educational Psychology	University of Deusto

18	Woman	E-learning services	2015	Social Education and Educational Psychology	University of Deusto
19	Woman	Speech therapy	2006	Education	University of Deusto
20	Woman	Pedagogical support services	2005	Education	University of Deusto

The interviews were transcribed using F4 software to obtain an accurate verbatim transcription. The Atlas.ti programme was then used for data analysis.

4 Results

Based on a categorical content analysis of 719 quotes, 218 codes and 11 code groups (categories) were established. A deductive coding technique was used, that is, the initial categories were determined prior to data collection on the basis of the interview script. However, emerging codes and categories have been created (Miles et al., 2020) (see Table 5).

Table 5   Table of categories and codes

		Deductive codes	*Most significant emerging codes (inductive codes)*
Deductive categories based on the dimensions of the Entrepreneurial University in Faculties and Schools of Education model (Paños-Castro et al., 2021).	Infrastructures	Public infrastructure Private infrastructure	Family Financial assistance Counselling Support Lack of knowledge Own financing Incubator Financial costs Business start-up process Bureaucracy Feasibility plan
	Funding	Loan Initial investment	
	Organisational context	Seed capital High-tech product Innovative products or services Emerging sectors R&D budget	Adaptation to the external context
	Teaching staff	Entrepreneurship training Training in knowledge transfer Training in spin-off creation	Entrepreneurs Subject knowledge
	Mission and strategy	Presence in the mission Social commitment Internships with local companies	
	Methodologies	Use of active methodologies Innovative educational resources	Economic sphere Regulated Methodological change Large groups Project-based learning Age of teachers
	Internationalization	International forums and congresses Exchange teaching staff Exchange students Erasmus	Disinformation Travel cooperation Family Language Interdisciplinarity

	Curriculum-related work placements	Internships with entrepreneurs	No referents Business idea
	Improvement actions for faculties of education		Training courses Interdisciplinarity Entrepreneurship department Advice Entrepreneurial culture
	An entrepreneurial person		Characteristics Weaknesses
Emerging categories from the unplanned questions	The entrepreneurial process		Unemployment Entrepreneurship out of necessity Opportunity entrepreneurship Age Experience Family Incompatibility Security Economic insecurity

A quick way to have an overview of the content of the interviews is by creating a word cloud or word list. The words that were most often mentioned (after using the filters to exclude words such as prepositions and determiners) were: Business (N=157); University (N=144); Lecturers (N=94); Work (N=92); Entrepreneurship (N=86); Training (N=83); People (N=83); Create (N=80); Education (N=70) and Individuals (N=69).

The most represented codes were related to methodologies (N=80), training (N=48), characteristics of the entrepreneur (N=45), entrepreneurship (N=34) and Faculty of Education initiatives (N=32).

The results of the categories are presented below:

1. INFRASTRUCTURES:

Half of the participants had applied for public financial support or advice from organisations such as the Ministry of Public Works, Emekin (from the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa), Bilbao Ekintza (from the Bilbao City Council), the Entreprenari programme (from the University of the Basque Country), BEAZ (from the Provincial Council of Bizkaia), Elkarlan and the Government of Cantabria. They had obtained the information by their own means; in other words, at no time did the faculty inform them that this type of financial support was available. The benefits from this support as reported by the participants were the funding, the training focused on financial aspects and sales (marketing and social media), and the availability of a technical expert to answer questions. Only two people mentioned two disadvantages: having too much freedom and feeling a bit left out, and the excessive paperwork to apply for financial support: 'Look, I tried to go to Inguralde, here in Barakaldo, and they wanted me to do a project, and this, and that.... honestly, I had to fill in a 500-page form and in my case, I didn't see the point in filling in 500 pages because I was very clear about what I wanted, how I wanted it...'. (Participant 1).

Finally, four people indicated that they had used incubators at Innogune at the University of Deusto, at the San Sebastian business incubator, at the Bilbao City Council and at Bic Berrilan. Benefits included training in marketing and financial issues, and cheaper rent.

2. FUNDING:

All respondents have mainly relied on their own savings, with the exception of two people who took out a small loan to furnish their business premises and one person who took out a loan from the ICO (Spanish Official Credit Institute). One of the participants had his father as the main investor in his business.

They considered that their initial investment was not high, especially considering that many had equity partners. The initial investment was around €3,000 to cover mainly the costs of the website, furniture, graphic design, and a laptop. They argued that having some savings was essential, as there is no short-term economic stability.

3. ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT:

The participants interviewed noted that their company did offer innovative services, but these were not linked to any research projects, nor did they work in emerging sectors or offer high-tech products.

4. TEACHING STAFF:

Participants indicated that the teaching staff were classic and old-school. They were experts in their field and had a broad theoretical background, academic and professional experience, and no work experience in their field. Most had no training in entrepreneurship or spin-out creation, although they did have training in knowledge transfer.

Only three participants noted that they had some lecturers who were entrepreneurs as well as working at the university. They worked in an educational psychology practice, a psychomotor education company, and in state-subsidised schools.

5. MISSION AND STRATEGY:

None of the participants perceived that their faculty prioritised entrepreneurship in its mission and strategic plans, but they did give importance to social engagement, given the type of institution and the degree programmes offered.

6. METHODOLOGIES:

Most of the participants reported that the teaching staff used traditional lecturing, passive methodologies, mainly based on listening to theory and note taking, which they found boring: 'There were some exceptions that were striking precisely because of that; they made you do things outside the university or tried to apply new things. But in fact... of all my lecturers, I can say that there were two who made us do those things (...). Otherwise, the practical side left a lot to be desired' (Participant 6). To a lesser extent, the teaching staff used group and individual work, oral presentations, practical cases, discussions, reflections, project-based learning methodology, case studies, role-play and research. There were no major differences with regard to the old university curriculum and the Bologna Plan (Ministry of Education and Science, 2007). Eight participants completed their degrees under the old curriculum, and claimed that classes were mainly theoretical and instructional lectures. More active and participatory methodologies were relatively rarely used, although case studies, group work, reflections and role playing were mentioned. There were some differing opinions regarding the adaptation of the Spanish University System to the European Higher Education Area, but lectures still predominated. However, some participants said that they had good memories of university, even if the methodologies were not very good. They argued that universities are currently in a process of methodological change: 'It seems to me that I had really awful lecturers, really awful, and had awful methodologies (...) Even so, I think that things are being done in the universities and I think that they are on the right track' (Participant 7).

Some considered that younger lecturers were much more involved in active and participatory methodologies, and believed that teachers are constrained and do not have much freedom to use innovative methodologies.

Some participants pointed out that the large class sizes of up to 160 students made it impossible to use more active and participatory methodologies: 'Lecturers tried to do something participative, but with 150 students it is not easy' (Participant 8). The large number of students mainly corresponded to the former university curriculum, before the Bologna Plan was implemented. Finally, textbooks, slides, and tests were the most frequently used educational resources, followed to a lesser extent by videos and worksheets. Participants also noted that lecturers rarely gave them freedom to create innovative educational resources.

7. INTERNATIONALISATION:

Few respondents took advantage of the Erasmus programme for different reasons: lack of information, language issues, family problems and the high cost involved. Those who did participate in the Erasmus programme chose London, Venezuela, the United States and Finland. For some of these entrepreneurs, Erasmus did not serve as an example of good practice for entrepreneurship. One of them reported: '(...) I have been able to do volunteering work overseas, which has allowed me to learn other practices as well' (Participant 2). However, the main benefits they highlighted included having a broader vision, being much more empathetic, having better active listening skills, meeting people, and learning values.

Only three respondents took part in forums and conferences as listeners, but none of them as actual participants. Sometimes they were also encouraged to attend other workshops or conferences held outside the university.

No participant recalled having had exchange lecturers from universities abroad. Some of them had had exchange students in the final years of their degree courses.

8. CURRICULUM-RELATED WORK PLACEMENTS:

All participants were required to take curriculum-related work placements in different settings such as schools, educational psychology practices and social organisations. However, hardly any of them considered their work placement mentor to be someone to look up to as an entrepreneur. Four participants reported that the work placements had helped them to see what they did not want to do and to learn new business models: 'I was lucky that the university had an agreement with Iberdrola and they gave me access to Mundo Hogar, so I wrote educational reports online; then I became an expert in e-learning, which is what I later studied. This allowed me to get in touch with the company, and I learnt a lot about new business models' (Participant 10). 'It allowed me to see what I didn't want. It was basically about experimenting and seeing that it was an experience about getting to know myself; I mean, I don't want to work like that. I want to be an educator, but I don't want to do this' (Participant 11).

9. IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS FOR FACULTIES OF EDUCATION:

The respondents made many proposals for improvement that the faculties of education could implement to promote entrepreneurship. Firstly, they proposed that training in entrepreneurship should be available in all degree courses, and not only linked to the faculties of economics. They suggested that students should be informed that there are some employment options other than working in a private state-funded school, being a civil servant, or being a wage earner: 'I would definitely make people see that not everything is about preparing for the civil service entrance exam, or about being employed by others' (Participant 5); 'It's a shame that everything is in economics, in business studies… People who are educators and have no interest in implementing an idea and a project that can make a contribution to the community, I think that's a shame' (Participant 12)

Secondly, two participants believed that it would be useful to teach basic knowledge in order to understand a payslip or to know where to look for relevant information on public subsidies or training: 'This doesn't have to be only if you study business administration or management. For example, in higher degrees there is a subject called Career Guidance and Training, which helps you with payslips, employment contracts... And I don't understand why the University of the Basque Country doesn't do that. It seems to me that this should be something basic' (Participant 1).

Thirdly, respondents suggested that emotional training should be provided, because students are very insecure about their abilities. Fourthly, they argued that students should have more freedom and autonomy, so that they are not so closely supervised by lecturers and they can better develop general skills. Fifthly, cross-faculty and project work would be very useful: 'I think the idea that faculties are like hermetically sealed boxes is a mistake. The university is a privileged place where you have very strong disciplines that could collaborate with each other' (Participant 6).

There was also a proposal to create an entrepreneurship department; to adapt basic and applied research to real contexts; to create new spaces to be able to explore, be more creative and put new ideas into practice; to provide further support in practical aspects; and to give more information, as most of the respondents felt uninformed about the services offered in relation to extracurricular courses, training courses offered by Alumni, etc.

10. AN ENTREPRENEURIAL PERSON:

10.1. Characteristics:

The participants identified several characteristics that an entrepreneurial person should have, including having a sense of vocation, being courageous, risk-taking, determined, committed, adaptable to change, innovative, creative; having people skills, the ability to make decisions; being dynamic; having the ability to learn from failure, to engage in teamwork; being stubborn, obstinate, enthusiastic, constant, fearless, able to manage uncertainty, persevering, with own initiative and motivation and self-taught. They are people who are very confident and not afraid of the future: 'So what if it goes wrong? I can do so many other things!' (Participant 10); 'I have been doing temporary substitute teaching and I am on the official employment lists, so that gives me a kind of security: the 20 years I worked before being here' (Participant 9); 'I think that I've always been ok with not knowing what is going to happen in 6 months or a year. I have always felt that it was an opportunity to create something different, to do new things' (Participant 6).

Practically half of the participants considered that the characteristics of the entrepreneurial person are intrinsic. Others, however, believed that they are extrinsic, which accounts for the importance of entrepreneurial education throughout life, and of each individual's experiences and decisions: 'It is true that the entrepreneurial process does not come so much from universities, but also from other areas of our lives, because in the end we are beings who are connected to everything' (Participant 2).

10.2. Weaknesses:

The main limitation that the respondents found in the Faculties of Education was the financial side; specifically, aspects related to accounting, numbers and Excel sheets are something completely alien to them, and they find them difficult to visualise and manage. They even considered themselves to be useless in these areas. However, they solved most of the financial aspects by hiring a manager or advisor, and to a lesser extent others relied on the support of a family member or a partner with financial knowledge, whereas others handled these issues by taking a self-taught approach.

11. THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESS:

Some of the entrepreneurs interviewed had decided to become entrepreneurs because they were unemployed and needed some income; or simply because they were fed up with working in organisations where they did not feel represented. However, others had identified an opportunity in the market.

All the participants shared that they had a passion for building something personal that possessed specific hallmark characteristics: 'Let's say that I felt a bit like the kids in talent shows who say that they knew they wanted to do it and they fought until they got there and gave their all' (Participant 20).

All participants reported that they want to continue to manage their company, except for one of them, for two different reasons: to have peace of mind and time for their family, and because having a civil servant job in education is incompatible with having another job.

Age and years of experience were two key elements. All the interviewees have set up their business after completing their degree; as they were so young, they did not know how to focus their careers: I really found myself at the end of my degree, literally not knowing what to do' (Participant 20); 'My only interest was to get my degree, work and leave my parents' house...' (Participant 17). Moreover, the fewer family and financial burdens they had, the more security they showed: 'The first few months we didn't know what our income would be. Well, we were young and didn't have any family responsibilities, so...'. (Participant 13).

Some considered that, while entrepreneurship is now very fashionable, it is not for everyone, , as it involves fear, uncertainty, financial insecurity, and it is an exhausting and highly demanding process that requires many hours spent on it: 'I don't have a calling to be an entrepreneur at all because I hate numbers, I am afraid of economic insecurity... and today I have two children, a company, I am separated and I am not afraid at all' (Participant 10); 'Every year when I receive the lists to be updated, because you have to include the points for the work you have done... well, every year I feel a bit shaky, you know? I feel a bit shaky as in... Is this where I should be? If I was looking to the future, this would not be the place. If I was looking into the future… if I get sick, if I have a difficult financial situation when I retire... this wouldn't be the place, would it? But then I look at the day to day, and I say: I can't lose this' (Participant 9).

5 Conclusions, future research, and limitations

As stated by Balu and Johanson (2010) and Aldana-Rivera et al. (2019), entrepreneurship entails high risk, hard work and determination as one needs to give up economic stability. Therefore, it is not an option for everyone. The participants were aware of this, but their passion prevailed over their fears and insecurities. Taking into account the high unemployment rates in Spain and the current dynamic and global environment (European Commission, 2006), universities are required to promote employment options that go beyond salaried employment (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2020).

Almost all participants reported a lack of information from the faculties on various entrepreneurship issues such as extracurricular courses, public grants, infrastructures and training courses from the Alumni Association. As a result, it is suggested that information on these issues should be provided on what future employment options exist from the first years of the degree course, and not only when students are about to complete their studies. In this way, students would be able to develop their business idea, create networks, receive training and take some steps from the beginning of their university education.

Member of the education faculty have hardly any training in entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer or spin-out creation. As the European Union (2014) pointed out, 'all lecturers and future lecturers should at least have access during their career to training experience in the key issues and methods related to entrepreneurial learning and entrepreneurship education' (p.7). Consequently, it is necessary to include entrepreneurship in the initial training of university teachers either through extracurricular and/or curricular courses, and as part of general and/or specific competences. Unfortunately, however, entrepreneurship is not sufficiently integrated into the curricula of education faculties, but it is included in business and economics degrees (European Commission, 2008). Entrepreneurship is no longer seen as a field that belongs exclusively to business degrees (Roberts et al., 2014) but should be offered to all disciplines, faculties and students (European Commission, 2006). A good practice is inter-faculty collaboration between economics and non-economics faculties, as interdisciplinary teams are more conducive to promoting entrepreneurial skills among students (Lackéus, 2015; Lourenco et al., 2013). Likewise, raising

awareness of the entrepreneurial culture is essential, since a greater awareness of the entrepreneurial profession, (...) would result in a greater number of enterprises and greater global, regional and national development (European Commission, 2003, p. 46).

It is clear that university lecturers still tend to use traditional, non-participatory methodologies, such as lectures. A competent teaching-learning process requires active, student-centred methodologies such as Project- or Problem-Based Learning, Cooperative Learning, Solidarity Learning and Service, and design thinking and gamification, among others (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2015).

Undoubtedly, universities must adapt to social needs and 'Strengthening co-operation with the world of work and analysing and anticipating societal needs (…) Developing entrepreneurial skills and initiative should become major concerns of higher education, in order to facilitate employability of graduates who will increasingly be called upon to be not only job seekers but also and above all to become job creators.' (UNESCO, 1998, p. 6).

In response to the first specific objective, this study formulates three proposals for the future. Firstly, to provide Faculties of Education with greater flexibility to adapt curricula to social demands, and to this end, to create a specific competence in entrepreneurship within the 30 and 60 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) that official university degrees in Primary Education can award for qualifying and non-qualifying areas (Ministry of Education and Science, 2007). Secondly, to strongly promote both initial and ongoing training in entrepreneurial skills and active methodologies for university teaching staff. In this sense, the new Royal Decree 822/2021, of 28 September, which establishes the organisation of university education and the procedure for quality assurance (Ministry of Universities, 2021), includes lifelong learning of the skills and abilities of citizens for better employability, and recognises up to 30 ECTS credits that are complementary to the bachelor's degree. And thirdly, to introduce more flexibility regarding the current incompatibility between being a civil servant and working on a self-employed basis in education, as provided for in Law 53/1984, of 26 December, on the incompatibilities of personnel in the service of the public administrations (Spanish Head of State, 1985). With regard to the second specific objective, the entire university community should be made aware of the importance of entrepreneurship and students should be made aware of its importance as an employment alternative.

Finally, the limitations of the study should be noted. As this is a specific case study from the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country, it would be advisable to replicate the study in other Autonomous Regions. It would also be interesting to investigate the perspective of university lecturers and students who are about to complete their degree in order to explore whether entrepreneurship may be a job opportunity for them.

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Notes

1   These university degrees were not offered.
2   Graduates who had completed more than one university degree.