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**Gestiòn Internacional**
**International Management**

# Students' Perceptions of Family Entrepreneurship – A Study on Family Business Academic Education

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Volume 14, Number 1, Fall 2009

L'entrepreneuriat familial, un champ en devenir
Family entrepreneurship: a constantly evolving field
El empresariado familiar, un campo en desarrollo

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/039139ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/039139ar

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

HEC Montréal et Université Paris Dauphine

ISSN

1206-1697 (print)
1918-9222 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Kansikas, J. & Laakkonen, A. (2009). Students' Perceptions of Family Entrepreneurship – A Study on Family Business Academic Education. *Management international / Gestiòn Internacional / International Management*, *14*(1), 55–65. https://doi.org/10.7202/039139ar

Article abstract

The aim of this qualitative research is to analyze university students' attitudes toward family entrepreneurship. The theoretical framework of the study analyzes the interaction between family business, ownership, and entrepreneurship education. 211 students from the University of Jyväskylä participated in the study during the basic business study course "Introduction to Entrepreneurship and Business Operations" in September 2007. 143 of those wrote a one page essay, either in Finnish or English, on family entrepreneurship and family business ownership. The students were told to write about the phenomena in their own words. The results were analyzed with content analysis in order to understand how to improve the development of family business entrepreneurship education. The results of the study show that family businesses are perceived through the concept of family: a family owns, works in, and manages a family business. Students perceive family businesses as small businesses that employ people locally. Entrepreneurship motivates students, but owning a family business was perceived as unattractive. The results of the study can be utilized in family business entrepreneurship education.

# Students' Perceptions of Family Entrepreneurship – A Study on Family Business Academic Education

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**Résumé**

L'objectif de cette recherche est d'analyser les points de vue d'étudiants universitaires envers la condition des entrepreneurs. Le fond théorique analyse l'interaction entre l'entreprise familiale, le propriétaireship, et l'éducation sur la condition des entrepreneurs. 211 étudiants de l'Université de Jyväskylä ont participé à cette étude pendant le cours fondamental de *Basic business studies* appelé "Introduction to Entrepreneurship and Business Operations" en septembre 2007. 143 d'entre eux ont écrit un essai d'une page, soit en finnois soit en anglais, sur les entreprises familiales et les propriétaires familiales. Les étudiants ont écrit sur le phénomène avec leurs propres mots. Les résultats ont été analysés sous la forme d'analyse contenue pour comprendre comment améliorer l'éducation de l'entreprise familiale. Les résultats de cette étude montrent que les entreprises familiales sont comprises par le concept de famille : une famille est le propriétaire de, travaille dans et dirige une entreprise familiale. Les entreprises familiales ont été vues comme des petites entreprises qui emploient localement. La condition des entrepreneurs motive les étudiants, mais le fait d'être le propriétaire d'une entreprise familiale était désintéressant. Les résultats peuvent être utilisés dans l'éducation sur les entreprises familiales.

Mots clés : entreprise familiale, éducation de la condition des entrepreneurs, pédagogie, analyse de content.

**Abstract**

The aim of this qualitative research is to analyze university students' attitudes toward family entrepreneurship. The theoretical framework of the study analyzes the interaction between family business, ownership, and entrepreneurship education. 211 students from the University of Jyväskylä participated in the study during the basic business study course "Introduction to Entrepreneurship and Business Operations" in September 2007. 143 of those wrote a one page essay, either in Finnish or English, on family entrepreneurship and family business ownership. The students were told to write about the phenomena in their own words. The results were analyzed with content analysis in order to understand how to improve the development of family business entrepreneurship education. The results of the study show that family businesses are perceived through the concept of family: a family owns, works in, and manages a family business. Students perceive family businesses as small businesses that employ people locally. Entrepreneurship motivates students, but owning a family business was perceived as unattractive. The results of the study can be utilized in family business entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: family business, entrepreneurship education, pedagogy, content analysis.

**Resumen**

El objetivo de este estudio cualitativo es analizar las actitudes de los estudiantes universitarios en relación con la iniciativa empresarial familiar. El marco teórico de este estudio analiza la interacción entre la empresa familiar, la propiedad y la educación en iniciativa empresarial. En este estudio participaron 211 estudiantes de la Universidad de Jyväskylä asistentes al curso básico de ciencias empresariales "Introducción a la iniciativa empresarial y las operaciones empresariales" en septiembre de 2007. De ellos, 143 escribieron, en finés o en inglés, un ensayo de una página sobre iniciativa empresarial familiar y propiedad de empresa familiar. A los estudiantes se les había pedido que escribiesen sobre el tema con sus propias palabras. En el análisis de los resultados se realizó un análisis de contenido para así poder mejorar el desarrollo de la educación en iniciativa empresarial familiar. Los resultados del estudio muestran que la empresa familiar se percibe a través del concepto de familia: la familia posee, administra y trabaja en la empresa familiar. Los estudiantes perciben la empresa familiar como una pequeña empresa de dimensiones laborales locales. La iniciativa empresarial despierta el interés de los estudiantes, pero la empresa familiar resulta poco atractiva. Los resultados del estudio pueden ser utilizados para la educación en iniciativa empresarial familiar.

Palabras claves: empresa familiar, educación en iniciativa empresarial, pedagogía, análisis de contenidos.

The aim of the study is to analyze how family entrepreneurship is seen by university students in Finland. Students' perceptions of family management and ownership were collected in the form of essays. Content analysis was conducted on the essays. Methodologically, this study attempts to understand students' perceptions of family entrepreneurship through qualitative analysis. The study increases knowledge on how the sphere of family business should be taught in higher education, and especially in academic teaching, which is founded on research and its implications.

More understanding is needed on how family entrepreneurship topics should be taught. Traditionally, family

businesses have been analyzed in the contexts of family business management and family ownership. As Westhead and Howorth (2006a) show, there are family firms with family shareholdings and / or family management. Family shareholders can be powerful in affecting a firm's strategic decision-making. At the same time, firms with family management can be family businesses, even though they are not family owned. The size of family firms can vary from small, local firms to multi-generational national corporations listed on the stock exchange.

Family business teaching has been based on the topics which are important for family businesses. Family business courses are characterized by the influence of the family dimension of family businesses. Family capital is a unique combination of family values, social skills, attitudes and ways of coping with problems and challenges. Financial capital is a combination of the shares and the financial value. Psychological capital is the identity and emotions grandparents, parents, and the next generation can construct in a family business. Transgenerational relationships have an impact on family business survival, improvement and continuity (Moncrief-Stuart et al., 2006). According to Hoffman et al. (2006, p. 137-139) family capital is a combination of dimensions like "*information channels, family norms, reputation, collective trust, identity and moral infrastructure"*. Family capital is cultural by nature: in a unique way it reflects the family business values and heritage that can change over the long-term (like family norms) or in the short-term (reputation, information channels). Family capital can be transferred in a family business through socialization and decades of working together.

Family capital influences other forms of capital and resources in family businesses. Family control can be one of the characteristics of the board of directors of a family business. The family wants to control the strategic management of the family business and at the same time, family corporate identity and wealth (Lane et al., 2006). As Westhead and Howorth (2006b) suggest, a board of directors should not be just a board of family members. Family firms should increase the size of the board and hire independent directors and outsiders so as to increase knowledge in strategic management. At the same time, having a CEO from outside the majority owner-family is often encouraged in order to promote a firm's performance.

Lately family business ownership, in conjunction with family capital and family business characteristics, has been one of the topics debated in the family business research. Discussion regarding family business ownership has been divided into the approaches of legal-financial ownership, psychological ownership, socio-symbolic ownership and responsible ownership. The responsible ownership literature offers a basis for all the other ownership approaches. Being responsible for something offers an ethical and moral explanation for the nature of legal-financial, psychological, and socio-symbolic ownership. It is a framework for all the approaches pertaining to the existence of overlapping ownership dimensions.

Legal-financial ownership discusses family business management from the point of view of an owner-manager. It reflects the expertise and skills of an active owner-manager, or a group of minority or majority shareholders in managing the firm. Ownership can exist with or without a professional position in family business management (Sund and Melin 2007). Psychological ownership reflects individuals' emotions and shared feelings toward the family business. It describes feelings in regards to belonging somewhere or mentally owning something (Ikävalko and Pihkala 2007). Psychological ownership is based on emotional bonds which may be fixed and unchangeable over a long period of time, and in the case of family business, often forever. Family business can represent a mental heirloom even for those family members who do not have any shareholdings or activity in the business.

Socio-symbolic ownership explains symbols, logos, and social interaction as reflections of family business ownership (on socio-symbolic ownership, see Nordqvist 2005). Corporate governance might have characteristics (family councils, family assemblies, family business advisory) which are typical to family corporations alone. As Le Breton-Miller and Miller (2006) argue, family control can increase long-term planning in family businesses. Long-term investment plans and corporate governance characteristics such as low agency and monitoring costs can be a part of family business strategies.

Based on these findings, more understanding on family entrepreneurship, rather than family business management, is needed. At the same time, academic family business teaching has not been debated lately. Discussion on family entrepreneurship education is needed. To analyze students' understanding on family entrepreneurship the research problem of the study is as follows: *How is family entrepreneurship perceived by university students?*

## Family business as a pedagogical context

Stewardship theory explains corporate governance with trust. According to the stewardship theory managers are willing to work for a family firm because they want to further their own careers (Miller & Le Breton-Miller 2006). Institutional theory understands corporate governance as studies of structural changes, environmental challenges, and organizational culture as well as the impact of those on family business management. Institutional theory analyzes the role that family plays in corporate governance and management. Family as an institution can explain family business goal setting and goal achievement (Leaptrott 2005).

Founder generation family enterprises create employment on a national level as well as tax revenues for local areas. Pragmatically this poses a challenge to the man-

agement of succession in transferring these family enterprises from one generation to another family or non-family generation of managers and owners (see for example Lee 2006). In most family firms a founder's most crucial role lies in the influence he has on the family business culture. Founder centrality affects family business operations and decision-making. The retirement of the founder and the age of the owner-manager have an impact on the family business culture and founder dependency (Feltham et al., 2005). Succession reflects organizational commitment. It is both an individual as well as a collective process; individual in the incumbent's and successors' expressions and motives, and collective in stakeholders' and shareholders' opinions and agreement concerning the succession process, family business management and leadership changes in the organization (Sharma & Irving 2005). As Sharma et al. (2003a) point out, the goals of succession are to be satisfied with the succession process and performance of the family firm after succession. Problems often exist with finding equilibrium in decision-making among the family members in the succession process of family firms. Differing opinions about the future of the business may exist within the family. Reaching joint decisions and compromises is needed. Succession denotes a mix of emotions, financial planning, and decision-making among the founder and successor generations.

According to Le Breton-Miller et al. (2004) succession is a shared planning process between the key members of a family business. Obviously, successor's (or successors') and incumbent's motives, desires and hopes affect succession. The process is not merely financial and juridical (planning and managing taxation, firm capital and wealth), but also managerial (organizing the ownership and management structures in family business), and emotional (feelings, emotions and culture in the family business).

Succession in family business seems to be a process that can be examined in the theoretical frameworks of values, cultures, strategy, goal setting and goal achievement, innovation capacities, management, founder-successor(s) relationships, human resource management, decision-making and business operations (see Miller et al., 2003). Innovativeness can be based on family business strategy. As McCann III et al., (2001) argue, it can be based on product and service innovations, planning, and dynamic management decision-making like recruitment of needed non-family employees and managers. Conflicts in family businesses seem to have a generational nature: the challenges differ from one generation to another (Davis & Harveston 2001). The succession process must be negotiated and planned by the founder and next generations in order to estimate the conflicts different generations might face in the future.

In succession family firms have both a burden and a source of opportunities; succession is a dominant characteristic of family firms, and does not take place once every 25 years, but in fact continuously. The family must socialize, educate, and train new family and non-family managers and employees incessantly so as to answer the family business needs and expectations.

## The educational needs of family entrepreneurship

Peer reviewed entrepreneurship education has covered individual, micro and macro levels. The nature of entrepreneurship education has been multidisciplinary: not only the educational field, but also psychology and social sciences have contributed to entrepreneurship education debates (Béchard and Grégoire 2005). This study focuses on family entrepreneurship education, especially on the individual level of students, in order to contribute to the literature on academic family business education.

Entrepreneurship education, which aims to understand individual behavior, has been seen as cognitive (increasing knowledge), affective (feelings), and conative (doing) (Sagie and Elizur 1999). According to Peterman and Kennedy (2003) entrepreneurship education research has covered the themes of feasibility and desirability of becoming an entrepreneur and the demographics of respondents. As such, the role of entrepreneurship education has been to promote new business start-ups or entrepreneurial thinking. Business idea competitions and business planning, as well as intrapreneurship, have dominated the field of entrepreneurship education. Promoting self-efficacy, feeling that one can succeed through one's own abilities, has been one of the goals of entrepreneurship education (Wilson et al., 2007). Okudan and Rzasa (2006) mention that entrepreneurship education can also promote leadership in project based learning, too. The students' skills, knowledge, motivation, and communication can be improved for managing an entrepreneurial project.

As Kuratko (2005) points out, the number of universities and business schools that offer entrepreneurship courses has risen over the last few decades to approximately 1,600. More specific entrepreneurship programs are needed. Family entrepreneurship and family business education, among others, also need to be further researched.

When trying to enhance students' entrepreneurial attitude, pedagogical solutions are challenged. Acting, thinking and understanding rather than just memorizing and listening are encouraged. This is the case when creativity is one of the aims of entrepreneurship education (Morrison and Johnston 2003). As such, creativity, and also proactiveness, innovativeness, and initiative making can be goals in promoting entrepreneurial behavior among students.

International entrepreneurship education needs alliances and partners locally in developing participants' business ideas and opportunities for exporting and importing. Support mechanisms on financing, marketing and cultural knowledge are needed. As such, international entrepreneurship education increases the need to promote language and

cultural skills in addition to building networks with foreign partners (Bell et al., 2004).

Enhancing entrepreneurial intention has been one of the goals of entrepreneurship education. This can be seen in business school courses where it has gained attention. Intention to become an entrepreneur, in addition to business planning, has been at the core of entrepreneurship education. Feasibility, desirability, and attitudes influence intention (Krueger et al., 2000). In family businesses, entrepreneurial intention might be born out of the interaction of work, ownership, and management.

The entrepreneurial orientation to become a family business owner manager is embedded in regional and cultural factors. Local circumstances, in addition to personal characteristic and willingness to choose entrepreneurship as a career in a family business, also have an influence on motivation (Pistrui et al., 2000).

The need for more family business research has been argued for previously based on the amount of family firms and their importance in tax revenues and employment. At the same time the succession process needs more research and education as well. However, the increasing amount of family business research has also received criticism. It has been said that family firms are studied from every possible business topic angle. In this study, the previous literature has shown that family business research is not just about family entrepreneurship but has expanded into debates on accounting, financing, marketing, management, commercial law, and economics. This challenges the nature of family business research. We will see in the future whether family business research and education will integrate and disappear into other business fields such as management or entrepreneurship or if entrepreneurial education will create an independent nature for itself as a discipline contributing new knowledge to various multidisciplinary fields and family business centers as well as master's and doctoral programs in universities.

Concurrently, the definition of a family firm has been challenged: it seems like most companies in many countries possess various dimensions of family ownership, management, and leadership even though they do not consider themselves to be family firms. Most small firms are local family owned firms. However, small firms have been studied for decades. It is worth analyzing what novelty and relevancy the family filter (Sharma 2004) can contribute, for example, to small business literature.

Family firms have been recognized in the small, medium, and large business categories. The size of the family enterprise has an influence on our understanding of what a family business is. Every time a family business study is written the family business must be defined through the dimensions of family influence, succession, management and ownership. In this particular study, family firms are seen as small, medium and large businesses owned and/or managed by the same family members.

As Henderson and Robertson (2000) suggest, the role of academic entrepreneurship education might lie in promoting entrepreneurial behavior, skill development, identity, and self efficacy. The educational needs of family firms, based on the previous sections, could include characteristics such as the following:

1) Next generation commitment and joining the family business management,
2) Succession planning and management,
3) Internationalization strategy and growth management challenges,
4) Human resource management questions, such as recruiting and educating competent non-family employees and managers,
5) Entrepreneurial thinking and innovating in family business.

## Methodology

This study is based on qualitative content analysis. Students' open answers have been evaluated with content analysis the aim of which is to interpret the findings. The answers were collected from the Introduction to Entrepreneurship and Business Operations course. 143 out of 211 students answered the questions in September 2007. They wrote a one page essay on family entrepreneurship and ownership in Finnish or in English. Gender or demographic variables among the students were not collected. The students were first year university students in their twenties mainly from the business school, the school of social sciences, and the faculty of information technology. Based on the idea of informative survey it can be said that male and female students were equally represented in the study, and the average age of the respondents was 20-25 years.

The data is very rich in this case, and according to King et al. (2001) it matches the idea of content analysis. The aim of this content analysis was to increase understanding of how family entrepreneurship can be taught in academic education. Taking the number of the informants into consideration, understanding family entrepreneurship needs content analysis which offers a variety of approaches on how to manage a considerable amount of data in qualitative research.

Content analysis can be used for testing questionnaires and gathering information to develop empirical studies. It offers possibilities for understanding linguistic and verbal material gathered. Coding and categorization offer possibilities for content analysis. (Bolton 1993). In the case of categorizing results content analysis is qualitative and interpretative in nature. In this particular study, category

approach will not be used, because this study is not a pre test for a forth coming empirical study. Instead of categorization, tone, values, principles, and practices are used in this content analysis (Bell and Bryman 2007).

The content analysis in this study aims to analyze the printed text through themes and typologies. Based on the suggestions of Carlson (2008), in order to achieve an in-depth view as a result of the content analysis, a qualitative approach was chosen for this study. This study follows the idea of Bell and Bryman (2007) and constructs the content analysis on four elements, labelled as tone, values, principles, and practices. These elements describe the students' perceptions of family entrepreneurship and ownership. They can also be reflective of how family entrepreneurship can be taught in academic education. Direct quotations can be used in content analysis (Calder and Aitken 2008) and in this research their aim is to demonstrate the results of the study. Direct quotations are added to increase accountability and transparency in the reflections of the interpretations reached. They offer a venue for argumentation and its logic between authors and readers.

Furthermore, content analysis has been used as quantitative analysis too, on analyzing the existence of certain impressions and words in the published sources, such as journals (see Bryan 1997). In this study the quantitative approach did not match the research interests to study students' attitudes on family entrepreneurship education. To achieve in-depth results on understanding and interpreting students' attitudes and the nature of family entrepreneurship education, qualitative approach by Bell and Bryman (2007) was adopted and modified as a methodological tool for the study.

To sum up the methodological choices on this study, content analysis is based both on the Carlson, and Bell et. al suggestions. Students' perceptions of family entrepreneurship will be analyzed through the Carlson, Bell and Bryman methodological guidelines as tone, values, principles, and practices.

## Findings

The study was conducted at the University of Jyväskylä, in Finland. The respondents were English and Finnish speaking university students. The following weaknesses can be discovered:

1) Some of the direct quotations were written in Finnish, and they were translated into English for the analysis,
2) Demographics of the respondents cannot be traced. Knowing students' background more in detail may have helped to make a more in depth analysis.
3) The informants were a random group of students who happened to be present when the open answers were written. They were first year university students who were enrolled for the course Introduction to Entrepreneurship and Business Operations.

Additionally, mistakes in coding and typing by the researcher are possible in conducting the content analysis.

The results of this study are based on tone, values, principles, and practices of students' perceptions on family entrepreneurship. The following direct quotations reflect the interpretation and abductive logical reasoning behind the content analysis. (see table 1). These quotations were chosen because they occurred repeatedly on several occasions among students and they seem to construe students' perceptions on what family entrepreneurship is.

Students defined a family business through the family's involvement in the daily business operations; work, management, and ownership. The family business was the family members' playground. Students also saw that the existence of non-family members is typical for family businesses (1). This seems to be characteristic for family businesses: family members manage family business, and non-family members are regarded as outsiders.

A family business is a combination of both family and non-family managers' and employees' expertise. Family businesses are seen as being both small and large companies. The students consider a family business to be a collective learning environment. Communication is needed to avoid conflicts and pitfalls in family business management (2). Communication skills seem to be essential for family business continuity. As such, family businesses are seen as local and employing organisations. They have the role of value creators within the society. In general, family businesses were seen as good citizens who take care of the local community (3).

Family harmony is one of the goals students see of being of essence for family business success. Family members' interaction and the connection between the family and the business are typical for family businesses (4). Family businesses need tools and suitable capabilities to be able to handle succession management. Also, individual managers and family members might be influential in determining strategy and its planning.

The combination of family and business can be a source of conflict which in turn can pose challenges to the daily decision-making. Favouring family members over non-family members and nepotism are threats for family businesses. Non-family members might sometimes get a feeling of inequality within the family business (5).

Family business ownership is a phenomenon which needs long-term orientation. If there is no trust and long-term commitment family businesses will not survive from one generation to another. Students felt also that senior and

**TABLE 1**

**Direct quotations**

| Direct quotation | Language |
|---|---|
| (1) *In family business, the top positions are often allocated to family members, but they might have non family members as employees.* | Finnish |
| (2) *One of the most important things in solving problems and getting along with each other, is an open and constructive communication.* | English |
| (3) *Family businesses offer the right to control for the family. They can take out profits as well as being completely free to make the choice about starting or ending the business. Dividends to shareholders are not such a priority and these businesses often play a social role rather than being purely profit centres. Many will be committed to good citizenship and how they benefit the local area.* | English |
| (4) *Possible weaknesses in family firms are conflicts between family members and how to keep the business life separate from personal life. Another difficult aspect in family businesses is how to handle the succession.* | English |
| (5) *Family interests can conflict with business interests, for example in the decision-making process of hiring a family member who is perhaps a little less competent than another, non-family member, candidate.* | English |
| (6) *Family business ownership is a responsibility. Family members have a joint goal…Transferring responsibility is challenging, when the senior generation's knowledge and expertise should be transferred to the new generation. Finding a successor can also be challenging. Interest in the business is the basis for everything. Trust between the family members and joint goals can be the keys to success.* | Finnish |
| (7) *Family businesses have their strength in togetherness. Family members are often more loyal to each other and remember to keep the best of the family in mind, which is also the best of the company in many cases. Loyalty can also bring problems for the business if the positions are always given to family members.* | English |
| (8) *While a typical company is controlled and managed by a board of executives, in a family business the whole process of setting goals and controlling if they are being achieved is done by the family members.* | English |
| (9) *Generally, business houses are owned by people who have risen through time to top position, also seek people with similar background for main posts in the organization. Such people learn through more practical training throughout their life and are bonded by family based ties and values.* | English |
| (10) *I have noticed how a family business brings work into your life and how there is a greater sense of responsibility than when working for someone else. You cannot simply quit from the family business!* | Finnish |
| (11) *One of the strengths in a family business is the long-term orientation – working and owning together, brings measured thinking which solves any problems. A family business is more than just a job. This increases members' responsibility and adaptability to work.* | Finnish |
| (12) *On the downside control of the company is a tremendous burden, and some family members may not be up to the task. Stress and the duty to continue the hard work of many generations cal also be difficult to take.* | English |
| (13) *As family businesses are quite often relatively old companies, there is a kind of responsibility for each generation to keep the company alive and pass it over to the next generation.* | English |
| (14) *When family members work together, it has to be figured out how to differentiate working relations and family relations. It is not possible to achieve this completely, but with good managerial skills mastered by the owner, this problem could be controlled.* | English |

next generation communication is needed. It can be seen as a way to transfer practices and skills from one generation to another (6). Not only trust but also the sense of belonging to the family business explains the long-term orientation. Family members have a feeling of belonging to the same business entity together, which can increase loyalty. It is typical for family businesses to have a joint vision as a resource. If family businesses manage this resource of shar-

ing a vision and being together, this might produce more long lasting family business dynasties (7).

Family firms are seen as playgrounds for families and family members. Family businesses are a synonym for family domination. This has a direct impact on goal setting. Family members decide goals and how to control those by themselves without outside expertise (8). As such, family is seen as the only origin of management in family businesses. It has ties which influence the family business. Family ties are bonds that transfer values within the business family (9).

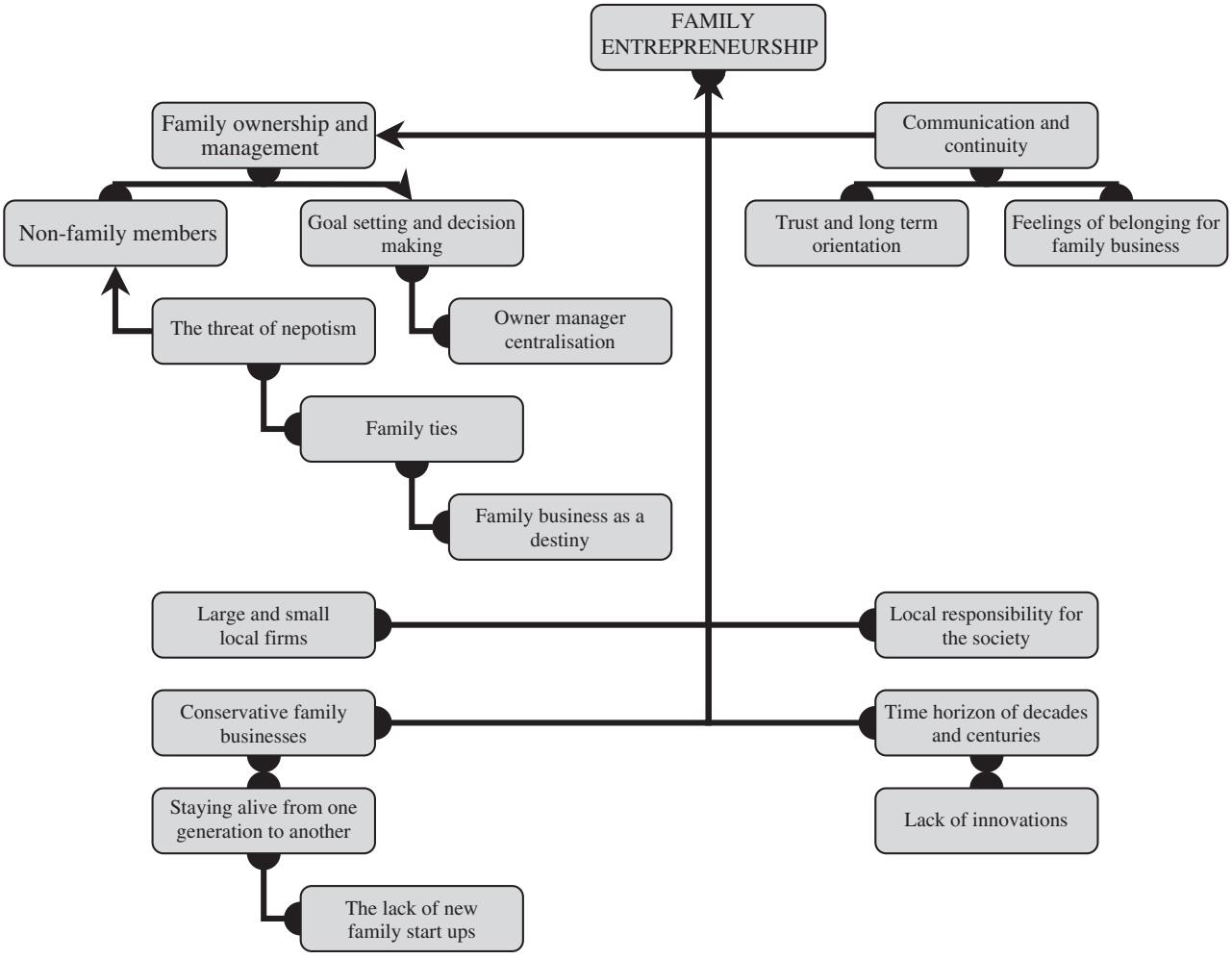
A family business demands good ownership and management. It is typical for family firms to feel a strong sense of responsibility for the business, family, and employees. Family businesses call for a lot, but they might also give a lot back in return. Family business is something that one has in one's blood: it is like destiny that needs to be accepted just like one accepts a family member. Family business may be a source of duties and challenges (10). A family business can even be seen as a burden, which has to be carried. At the same time, a family business is seen as something that increases commitment to work for the business. It is not just a job, but a lifestyle demanding resources and motivation from key members (11). Family businesses can be a source of such high level of stress that not all family members can cope with it. The next generation might not be willing to work as hard as the previous generations have worked (12).

Family businesses are seen as traditional and even conservative companies that endure for decades or even for centuries. Seeing family businesses as a synonym for old companies rejects the possibility of new family business start ups and family businesses as a source of new joint ventures. Family businesses try to stay alive generation after generation. As such, innovativeness or innovations are not related to family businesses in the students' perceptions regarding them (13).

Students' perceptions of family business management are seen as being dominated by single family members. Family businesses have visible and well known managers

**FIGURE 1**

**Cognitive map of students' perceptions**



who are making the decisions on behalf of the organisation. Family businesses can be seen as dominated by one single owner manager and his / her skills and capabilities. This might be connected to the fact that family unity and ties facilitate the creation of centralized decision making and strong leadership. Founder generation family business owner managers have often been dominating decision makers in family businesses, their influence continuing on for decades (14).

Based on these direct quotations, and the interpreted findings, the following cognitive map of the students' perceptions was formulated (see figure 1). The aim of the cognitive map is to demonstrate the content analysis done on the students' perceptions on family entrepreneurship. The cognitive map illustrates students' perceptions, and how they connect family entrepreneurship and its characteristics conceptually to one another. The map links family entrepreneurship cognitions to each other, and as such, is based on the findings of the study. The cognitive map summarizes students' thinking and conceptual understanding, interpreted and reasoned by the data. The map (figure 1) will be discussed next.

## Discussion

*The tone* of students' perceptions regarding family entrepreneurship was uncritical. Students had respect for and a positive image of family enterprises: they were seen as employers and the engines of society. At the same time students' perceptions were deterministic: family firms were seen as a burden, which a person is born into. In that sense family firms are seen only as organizations that have existed for a long time: family enterprises cannot be started up, as they already exist through the activity of entrepreneurial families (see figure 1).

Students' perceptions were dominated by the role of family and its unity in family business. This is supported by Westhead and Howorth (2006a) and Hoffman et al. (2006) who emphasize the role of family in family business. *Values* reflect senior generations' existence and dominance. On the students' perceptions, paternalism and maternalism guide family firms and their future expectations. Having a single dominant decision maker in family business was also found among the students' perceptions.

According to the students' perceptions shared vision fosters family business unity (Le Breton-Miller et al. 2004). Communication and sharing family business every day activities is needed in the process of transferring family business heritage from one generation to another. Perceptions were based on the interplay between the founder generation and the next generation beliefs, actions and behavior. Family was in the key role in family entrepreneurship perceptions.

Simultaneously, a long-term orientation is one of the factors that influences *values*, as seen by the students' perceptions. Continuity and responsibility for a family business were seen as the guiding values. Corporate social responsibility on passing the baton – transferring a family business from one generation to another – was also seen as a value in family business management. As Lane et al. (2006) mention, family is in charge of the strategic management, which in turn has an influence on long term orientation and survival of family businesses from one generation to the next.

The findings of the study indicate that students' perceptions of family entrepreneurship seemed to be characterized by family unity, family domination in family businesses, and a reluctant attitude toward innovativeness and change. *Values* reflecting hard work and responsibility taking came up repeatedly. The portrait of family businesses was influenced by small family businesses, but also increasingly with family dynasties and well known large family enterprises. There seems to be a need to activate the discussion on family entrepreneurship instead of large family business management that has been going on in the Family Business Review. This might offer possibilities to understand why and how family entrepreneurship should be studied and learnt.

*Practices* that students see as being connected with family business entrepreneurship are succession and its management. Family firms are characterized by senior and successor generation interaction: they represent a platform for learning to become an entrepreneur. Students did not see themselves as potential family entrepreneurs: they did not regard entrepreneurship as being a realistic future goal for themselves. This might be explained partly by the lack of work experience and young age of the respondents.

Family is the *principle* that guides students' thinking. The family was seen as the key actor in goal setting and control in family business. This perception is supported by Leaptrott (2005), who sees family as an institution having an active influence on the family business goal setting. Family decision making, management, and even nepotism were reflected on in the students' perceptions. The students experienced that there existed favoritism among family members: family businesses were seen as nepotistic and inward looking enterprises which do not recruit the best possible employees, but instead recruit from within the owning family.

In the content analysis, communication and commitment were also seen as being one of the principle elements of family businesses. Family firms were seen as building business operations through open communication and flexibility: they were seen as active and entrepreneurial small businesses which build their business operations on the trust and loyalty between family members. As much as succession has been debated in family business literature (see for example Sharma and Irving 2005 and Sharma et al., 2003a) it did not dominate students' perceptions on family

entrepreneurship to the extent the multiple roles of family members in family businesses did.

The gap between students' perceptions on family entrepreneurship and the existing family business research literature are the governance mechanisms typical for growing medium and large family businesses. Family council, family assembly, board of directors, and family forum did not come up in the responses. The lack of specific family entrepreneurship education literature, compared to entrepreneurship education literature in general, indicates the need to study more how we should educate family entrepreneurship in business schools.

While students' perceptions on family entrepreneurship were family focused thinking, external expertise on family business management was not debated. Increasingly family business literature is discussing non family managers and recruiting. This is in part a reflection of students' perceptions of family businesses as small businesses without career opportunities. Family businesses were not seen as attractive employers. Connected to this, family business brands, and family business dynasties were not brought up in the responses. Both family business marketing and family corporation studies seem to need more attention.

## Conclusions

Based on the literature review, educational needs of the family enterprises were: Commitment of the family's next generation and joining the family business management, succession planning and management, internationalization strategy and growth management challenges, human resource management questions, such as recruiting and educating capable non-family employees and managers, and entrepreneurial thinking and innovating in family businesses. Commitment, succession, HRM questions and innovating were recognized among the students' perceptions. However, internationalization and growth management were not mentioned in students' responses. Family businesses were not debated in the context of international business operations.

Both growth and internationalization pose a challenge for family businesses. Focusing on the characteristics explaining family business growth is needed. This would help both entrepreneurs and family businesses to survive in global competition. Many locally owned family businesses might benefit from offering career opportunities in international business and marketing to students. This in turn might alter students' perceptions on family businesses as local and small businesses.

Family entrepreneurship is not perceived as a career opportunity by university students. Experiences of family and friends in business offer perspectives on family business reality, but for the most part students do not see that starting their own business as family entrepreneurs is realistic. Family entrepreneurship is something that is inherited or exists locally in some industry. Regarding themselves as outsiders, outside family businesses, was repeatedly found among students' perceptions of family entrepreneurship.

The results show that academic family entrepreneurship education needs the following:

1) Tailored family business programs which reflect academic and practical experience and expertise, (to foster family entrepreneurship teaching and learning that are still in their infancy);
2) Networks of researchers to produce education based on the latest research results, (to keep the family entrepreneurship education standards high);
3) Interaction of local networks to produce unique family business programs, based on the characteristics of the local area and its economics, (to answer the local demands of economies and cultures);
4) Active mentors from family businesses, (to actively develop the field of family business together with practitioners and academics) and
5) International collaboration for increasing the quality and the quantity of family business education (to conduct cross cultural studies on family business, and to benchmark practices between international communities).

Increasing both the quantity as well as the quality of family business academic education offers meeting venues and forums for interaction and production. To achieve a critical mass of family business educators, developers and researchers opportunities and networking without organizational borders are needed. Family business education is rooted in multidisciplinary thinking between business, social, educational, and human sciences. Multidisciplinary collaboration between universities and university departments is needed for contributions on how families can generate new business operations. At the same time, in order to keep the quality standards high, family business education could be rooted in active interaction and communication between practioners and scholars. Practices and theories, in harmony, cover educational needs of university students.

Overall in regards to the practical and educational implications, the study shows that family entrepreneurship pedagogy is still in its infancy. More knowledge on how to develop family business education from the perspective of students, teachers, and family firms, is needed. Family business education must be tailored to meet the current needs, the size, the industry, and the age of a family business. Themes such as succession, innovations and innovativeness, growth management, and internationalization create a pool of opportunities for family businesses and their academic education.

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