

Business as the new doxa in education? An analysis of edu-business events in Finland

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Abstract

The trend towards seeing education as a commodity and part of a global industry has transformed the field of education. We argue that these transformations are reducing the autonomy of the field of education as it has incorporated business rhetoric, logic and practice. We examine this through an analysis of discursive formations manifested in two major international edu-business events in Finland – *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED*. The performativity existing in these events, combining actions and interactions, objective and subjective elements and materialized and symbolic interests and outcomes, enables convergences between business and education. In Finland, where education is overwhelmingly public, there is a subtle marketization, increasingly integrating business rationales and attitudes in education. We employed event ethnography and discourse analysis to examine points of diffraction between education and business. A transversal movement between the field of education and the field of business is enabled by symbolic power. *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* discursive formations reveal the penetration of business in education, which reframes the field of education and fosters the global education industry in Finland and abroad, challenging notions and practices of democracy and citizenship in education.

Keywords

Field of education, discursive formations, global education industry, edu-business events, edupreneurs, edtech, event ethnography, symbolic power

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Introduction

This article explores the incorporation of business rhetoric, logic and practices in the field of education, mostly driven by the expansion of the global education industry (GEI). We examine the changes originating from that process through an analysis of the discursive formations (Foucault, 1989) manifested in the two major international edu-business¹ events in Finland. The events are *Dare to Learn*, the ‘biggest learning festival in Northern Europe’, aimed to ‘rethinking learning’,² and *XcitED*, the ‘most exciting EdTech event’, a side-event of *Slush*, ‘the world’s leading start-up event’.³ The performativity of edu-business events, which consist of a ‘buzz’ (Bathelt and Schuldt, 2008) of actions and interactions, objective and subjective elements and materialized and symbolic interests and outcomes, enables convergences between business and education. We are interested in how these events naturalize the entwinement of business and education and promote the GEI in Finland.

We understand education as a particular social field, a system of power relations and struggles to sustain certain ideas, values and practices (Bourdieu, 2012). As any other social field, the field of education is dynamic and in constant change, due to its internal diversity and conflicts, and external pressures and demands. We investigate how *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* connect business to education by analysing which discursive formations prevail in these events to understand the recent changes in the field of education in Finland, how such formations may be discontinued in the field, and which *points of diffraction*⁴ are visible in the discursive formations within our empirical cases.

In recent decades education has been increasingly considered a commodity and a global industry (Parreira Do Amaral et al., 2019; Verger et al., 2016b). The global education industry (GEI) includes multiple services and goods, brings a variety of new stakeholders to the field of education, who ‘interact in the production, offer and demand of educational services and goods’ (Verger et al., 2016b: 4), and defines ‘the systems of rules and norms through which these educational markets emerge and expand’ (Verger et al., 2017: 325). Thompson and Parreira Do Amaral (2019: 4) refer to the GEI as ‘the establishment of an “ecosystem” or policy infrastructure that is oriented toward business opportunities concerning educational goods and services on a global scale’.

We argue that these transformations have been reducing the autonomy of the field of education. No social field is fully autonomous; education, for instance, cannot be completely independent nor totally dependent on the economic system and the value system of a given society. Autonomy is rather relative, that is, while fulfilling its internal functions, the field complies with external demands under the disguise of independence and neutrality (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2011). In the case of education, this is performed in a dissimulated fashion, to veil its double social function of transmitting and inculcating the legitimate culture and sustaining social conservation (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2011).

We relate the possibility of autonomy loss with the assumption that all practices ‘are measured against the legitimate practices, that is, the practices of those who are dominant’ (Bourdieu, 2012: 53), whereas distinctions are legitimated by forcing non-dominant fields to define themselves by their distance from the dominant field. Business is a dominant field and economic capital is highly regarded in contexts under neoliberal influence. The incorporation of business logic and practices by the field of education does not configure in creating something original from the scratch, but in reshaping education with ‘more adequate’ concepts, practices and language, based on dominant and legitimate ideas transmitted through symbolic power (Bourdieu, 2012; Thomson, 2005). These choices are linked to economic discourses, appropriated by emergent capitalists, and have specific roles in the realization of their interests and desires (Foucault, 1989). The economic imperatives

may surpass other values and principles in education, corroborating the recodification of the *ortodoxa* or hegemonic discourse in the field of education.

We propose three hypotheses to question whether business is a new doxa in education: (1) there is influence from the field of business, which may have attempted to gain space within the field of education to capitalize on it; (2) the re-orientation of the field of education is granted to the work of ‘transfer agents’, that is, socially constructed ‘experts’ or ‘experts of truth’ (Cook and Ward, 2012), or to the interactions of new consumers and producers of education which are circumscribed by influences from other fields (i.e. business); and (3) educators borrow business approaches to innovate and modernize to survive in the current times. The profit of distinction (for individuals and schools) results from the fact that the number of educators willing and qualified to learn from business is lower than it would be if all educators benefited from the conditions of acquisition of legitimate competence (and willingness) to the same extent as the holders of the rarest competence (Bourdieu, 2012).

In any case, incorporating business in education influences how people define and understand education, what they expect from it, how education is designed, and creates changes in the language used to discuss education (Ball and Youdell, 2008). Such incorporation of business (or privatization) in education is manifested either endogenously, through the internalization of private sector ideas, techniques and practices into public education, making it more business-like, or exogenously, in which the public education services are open to private sector initiatives on a for-profit basis (Ball and Youdell, 2008).

Late developments of the education ‘ecosystem’ for market-making⁵ in Finland foster the GEI in a country where education is largely public and free of charge (Seppänen et al., 2020, 2021). The field of education in Finland is characterized by local government (municipalities) as the main education providers of free ‘teaching, the necessary textbooks and other learning materials, and school equipment and materials’, and ‘a balanced and appropriately organised and supervised meal on every school day’ (OKM, 1998, section 31: 1–2). Finnish teacher education is anchored in the principles of autonomy, responsibility and research-based reflection (Niemi and Nevgi, 2014) whereas education’s primary values are civilization, equality and equity, aiming ‘to support pupils’ growth into humanity and into ethically responsible membership of society and to provide them with knowledge and skills needed in life’ (OKM, 1998, section 2: 1–3). Recently, edu-preneurs⁶ joined the field, and together with government representatives, became carriers and retailers of education goods and services, supplying both domestic education and foreign markets that are willing to buy the Finnish education ‘model’ (Candido et al., forthcoming; Kiesi, in press; Lempinen and Seppänen, 2021; Rönnberg & Candido, in press), counting on Finnish public schools to pilot their products to global markets (Seppänen et al., in press). These developments involve an approach to education that incorporates business rationale and attitude, emphasizing innovation, dissemination of ‘best-practices’, quick evidence for decision-making, and return on investments.

This article proceeds as follows. First, we turn to the theoretical frames of this study, which present education as a social field that is increasingly pervaded by the field of business and introduce the Foucauldian analytical lenses that we use in this study to unveil the discursive formations prevailing in the field of education. Second, we describe our empirical case and introduce our research approach based on event ethnography and discourse analysis. Third, we present our results in relation to the points of diffractions between the two fields. Finally, our conclusions show some tensions between the fields of education and business and offer answers to some of the questions raised in this study, particularly concerning the autonomy of the field of education under the influence of the GEI and whether business has becoming a new doxa in education.

Theorizing the interaction of education and business

To understand how education and business interact, our study combines Bourdieusian and Foucauldian concepts and ideas in a complementary way. We begin by drawing on Bourdieu's theoretical insights which could be perceived as deepening Foucault's thoughts on how subjectivity is constructed through power relations, highlighted in the concept of symbolic power (Hannus and Simola, 2010; Hoy, 2005). In education, Bourdieu offers '... better tools for researching the mode of generation of practices: how the prevailing culture and social order is transmitted and challenged, and what kinds of structure and hierarchy of positions could be developed' (Hannus and Simola, 2010:7). Although both Bourdieu and Foucault identify discourses as spaces of conflict based on rules that exclude inappropriate speech and speakers (Eick, 2004), in carrying out our research we have opted to use Foucault's ideas to understand the multi-layered character of power and governance in education, the micro-level mechanisms of power that are present in the incorporation of business in education and their relations to macro-level forms of power.

Field and capital conversions through symbolic power

The field is a space of possibilities, conflicts and interests, a sort of 'game' in which the social positions remain embedded in certain forms of power (and capital) (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Brandão, 2010) and whose rules are defined with the concept of doxa (Bourdieu, 2002). The doxa consists of values, beliefs, logic and arguments that are socially accepted and naturalized in a particular field. Fields are structured upon differences, that is, they are based on the unequal distribution of capital and unequal chances of assimilating different resources (Bourdieu, 2012). The fields' borders are limited and challenged by the clashes of the *ortodoxa* (associated to the rules defined by the privileged and dominant group within the field) with possibilities of *heterodoxa*, or alternative doxa, through questioning and deconstructing the naturalizations of doxa.

The struggle between the different authorities who compete within the field '... tends constantly to produce and reproduce the game and its stakes by reproducing, primarily in those who are directly involved, but not in them alone, the practical commitment to the value of the game and its stakes which defines the recognition of legitimacy' (Bourdieu, 2012: 58). In this sense, the field establishes its own epistemic community, consisted of 'sociologically complex actors, located in (shifting) organizational and political fields, whose identities and professional trajectories are often bound up with the policy positions and fixes they espouse' (Peck and Theodore, 2010: 170). Distinct struggles, therefore, define the structure of the field (e.g. doxa, types and volumes of capital that are regarded as legitimate, relative position of individuals in the field, etc.), which reproduces the differences that objectively distinguish the conditions and dispositions of existence within that field and of that field in relation to other fields (Bourdieu, 2012).

Each field is relatively autonomous, possessing specific rules and unyielding to the rules of other fields. The more specific the legitimate capital and the *habitus* of the field, the more difficult it is to enter the field and to be affected by external agents and circumstances. The conflicts produced by the relations of domination within the field often follow an internal logic alone. Vertical movements (i.e. ascending or descending positions) within the field are based on changes in the volumes of capital. However, conflicts which are external to the field sometimes impact its internal relations of power. Transversal movements, implying the passage from one field to another, manifests in horizontal or other planes and require conversion of a specific capital to another capital or sub-capital. One example of a transversal movement is the incorporation of business rhetoric, logic, concepts and practices in the field of education.

Conversions and movements are grounded on symbolic power, the ‘invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it’ (Bourdieu, 2012: 164). It constructs reality by

. . . making people see and believe, (. . .) confirming or transforming the vision of the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization – is a power that can be exercised only if it is recognized, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary. (Bourdieu, 2012: 170)

Symbolic power is

. . . defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it, i.e., in the very structure of the field in which values are produced and reproduced. What creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief. (Bourdieu, 2012: 170)

Thus, the transformations in the field of education with the incorporation of business may go beyond the visible and tangible to the spheres of the symbolic power. It may redefine the structure of the field of education, its dispositions and the positions occupied in the field, the values, beliefs and rules of the field, as well as the capitals, *habitus* and discourses that are considered legitimate. This is done through a dissimulated process of legitimization.

Discursive formations, constellations and points of diffraction

Discursive formations are systems of dispersion (Foucault, 1989), focusing on a diversifying instead of a unifying effect on the understanding of discursive statements. They invoke a structure that exists only when it is enacted (i.e. through enacting a systemic paradigm or reality that only exists if certain practices and discourses are being used). In other words, discursive formations lead to the dissemination of certain realities and ways of thinking that are enacted by the formation. If someone (or a group of people) stops performing the practices and disseminating the discourses, the ‘reality’ created and sustained by such practices and discourses may disappear.

The archaeological description of a discursive formation is not necessarily an attempt to interpret the meaning behind an idea and a discoursing subject but is concerned with discovering the rules which define its specificity. The ‘rules of formation’ are the objects, forms, concepts and themes of discourse themselves, also called ‘discursive regularities’, (Foucault, 1989).

Each discursive formation belongs to an *economy of the discursive constellation*, which permits or excludes, certain statements (Foucault, 1989). But the discourse is dynamic, not static; it can be placed in a new constellation, revealing new possibilities. Thus, elements can be permitted and excluded in different ways and other choices can be made when the discourse is inserted in a new discursive constellation. This may alter the function of the discursive formation, its role among non-discursive practices, and the rules and processes of appropriation of the discourse (e.g. the right to speak, ability to understand, access to previously formulated statements, capacity to use this discourse in decision-making).

The themes of a discourse are referred by Foucault as strategic ‘choices’ or ‘options’, whereas the discontinuity of a discourse may be revealed by its *points of diffraction*. These *points of diffraction* may include *points of incompatibility*, *points of equivalence*, and *link points of systematization*. The points of incompatibility refer to two objects, types of enunciation, themes or concepts

that appear in the same discursive formation but are contradictory. Thus, they are characterized as points of equivalence: ‘the two incompatible elements are formed in the same way and on the basis of the same rules; the conditions of their appearance are identical; they are situated at the same level; and instead of constituting a mere defect of coherence, they form an alternative’ (Foucault, 1989: 73). They are equivalent in the sense that they appear in the form of ‘either. . . or’. Finally, the link points of systematization combine the equivalent yet incompatible elements in a coherent series of objects, types of enunciation, themes, or concepts.

We consider that education and business constitute different economies of the discursive constellations (Foucault, 1989). We use the points of diffraction as analytical lenses to examine the discursive formations within the edu-business events in Finland that present the contradictions between discourses of business and education, the equivalence carried on by conditions in which those discourses derive from one another, regulate one another, and are involved with one another, and the link points of systematization that build coherent ways of referring to education in a business discourse and to business in an educational discourse.

Our research in Finland: Event ethnography in edu-business events

Edu-business events are complex social, political and business gatherings in which different stakeholders (e.g. government authorities, researchers, entrepreneurs, teachers, school leaders) come together, mingle and discuss education. The complexity relies on the role of edu-business events in a wider infrastructure of institutions, organizations and technologies that frame knowledge about best-practices, successful cases and cutting-edge ideas delivered to specific audiences (Cook and Ward, 2012). They share a narrative that combines different agendas and marketable tools, targeting a wide audience (Player-Koro et al., 2018). The events are temporary and transitory assemblages of institutions, presentations, exhibitions, awards, websites, but some of their elements remain more stable through the circulation of event materials (slides, videos, notes, services, products) all year long, and also through networks, meetings, discourses and emerging business opportunities (Cook and Ward, 2012).

They are embedded in power relations, dependent on different degrees of ‘legitimate’ capital accumulated by the stakeholders. As such, edu-business events are ‘symbolic systems’ (Bourdieu, 2012) that exercise a political function, ensuring that dominant ideas prevail and contributing to the ‘domestication of the dominated’ (Weber, 2009). Those events mobilize individuals and collectives, consolidate policy and business networks, legitimize visions of education, integrate corporate solutions into public education interests, set commitments and partnerships and encourage entrepreneurship in education amongst school staff and other stakeholders (Ball, 2012; Ball et al., 2017; Cook and Ward, 2012; Player-Koro et al., 2018). This is enabled in both formal settings during the events (e.g. presentations, keynotes, panels, roundtables) and informal ones (e.g. hallway conversations, meetings over coffee, registration desks), as personal contact between people remains a decisive mechanism of communication, knowledge exchange and problem solving (Bathelt and Schuldt, 2008).

We conducted event ethnography (Ball et al., 2017; Cook and Ward, 2012; Jobert and Player-Koro, 2019; Player-Koro et al., 2018) in *Dare to Learn 2018* and *XcitED 2018* and *2019*. The data consists of ethnographic notes, flyers and brochures collected at the events, materials available in those events’ websites (e.g. program, information about the event and the organizers, blog publications) and publications about the events in the media and the website of partners and sponsors. Ethnography enriches the comprehension of meaning-making processes, whereas the ‘lived

experience' of attending the events offers deeper insight (Player-Koro et al., 2017) to the analysis of edu-business processes in Finland. Author #1 attended *Dare to Learn 2018* and *XcitED 2019* as a regular participant. Both authors #1 and #2 attended *XcitED 2018*. The participation in the events included listening to keynotes and panel discussions, attending workshops, roaming the exhibition floor and talking to exhibitors and other participants.

We employed discourse analysis to examine the data collected from the written material. We classified the data as DtL (*Dare to Learn*) and XEd (*XcitED*), to signal which event they relate to, and with numbers, each one indicating a different material from our dataset. Our ethnographic notes, which were not coded, helped to interpret the analysis. All direct quotations in this article are from actors involved in the organization of the edu-business events.

This study does not aim at comparing the *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* but at analysing the intertwinement of business and education in the discursive formations from these two events from multiple perspectives. We use two empirical cases because they offer different windows for analysis, allowing us to illustrate the incorporation of business rhetoric, logic and principles to education more thoroughly than if we relied on only one of them. Our analysis is often guided by differences and similarities between the two events, contrasting them as well as observing common grounds, which may lead to inevitable comparison to some extent. However, our goal is to identify the *points of diffraction* (Foucault, 1989) in the discursive formations on education manifested in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED*, rather comparing the edu-business events we analyse.

Dare to Learn* and *XcitED

Dare to Learn, an annual learning event, was organized by the National Union of University Students in Finland and supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM), the Finnish National Board for Education, the City of Helsinki, Finnish universities, unions and start-ups. It started in 2017 and has been defined as a 'learning festival' and a 'playground for those who dare to create the future of learning' aimed to gather 'learning enthusiasts' from different fields and from all over the globe. *Dare to Learn 2018* hosted around 4000 participants coming from over 40 different countries. It included 19 speakers and around 30 presenters in the Demo Area. The event happened along the first Helsinki Education Week, defined as 'a week-long celebration for learning'⁷ and sponsored by the City of Helsinki.

Dare to Learn started with the 'Dinner with the Night School' ('*Koulutusviennin iltakoulu*'⁸), a networking platform organized by representatives from Finnish Education technology (edtech) business and the OKM. It was an expensive and exclusive dinner (limited to 115 participants) served to edu-preneurs, school and university staff, government representatives, journalists, investors and entrepreneurs from other fields than education (e.g. electronics and technology industries). Participants were asked to suggest topics beforehand and rotated around tables and topics in each part of the three-course menu for discussion, brainstorming and networking. Topics included the future of education, the role of technology in education, how to assess education quality and education export.

This facilitated dinner was followed by the *Dare to Learn* main 2-day paid event, organized around five themes and supported by keynote speakers, panel and roundtable discussions and workshops. Speakers and workshop organizers ranged from researchers to successful edu-preneurs. The themes were: (1) developmental organizational culture, framing lifelong learning as a competitive advantage to organizations; (2) emotions and learning, socio-emotional skills and teachers' and students' wellbeing; (3) curriculum 2026, concerning what should be learned in the future, primarily focusing on ICT (e.g. artificial intelligence – AI, robotics, coding); (4) self-directed learning, and possibilities of informal and alternative learning; and (5) learning for

sustainability, reflecting on how to tackle the challenges we face today to build learning processes that ensure an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future.

XcitED, also an annual event, aims to foster ‘education excellency’ and education start-ups. It is organized by the 2015 founded education business accelerator company XEdu, which claims to be ‘Europe’s leading business accelerator’ for edtech start-ups creating ‘transformative learning solutions with pedagogical impact’.⁹ Another paid event, it brought together over 1000 industry leaders, 250 edtech start-ups and 67 ‘top-class’ speakers from 16 countries in 15 hours of interactive program in the three *XcitED* events in 2017, 2018 and 2019. *XcitED* is a side-event of *Slush*,¹⁰ the Finnish start-up event that became well-known across the globe and gathers annually around 25,000 participants to Helsinki.

As a 1-day event, *XcitED 2018* program included 24 speakers from 10 countries covering ‘hot issues’ in education business, technology, investment and impact. Fifty edu-tech companies from 11 countries were showcasing their products and services in *XcitED 2018*. The day ended with the pitches of the start-ups accelerated by XEdu latest programme, in a competition for ‘the ticket to the Global Startup Super League’. This was followed by ‘The Night School Dinner’ organized by the same stakeholders who led the ‘Dinner with the Night School’ in *Dare to Learn 2018*. The selective participants in the dinner chose a table to sit according to the topic they wanted to discuss. The same topics also guided the main event: (1) AI and big data in education (‘will the machine learning change the way humans learn?’), (2) public-private partnerships (‘what is the price of quality in education?’), (3) impact investing (investors’ view on education market of tomorrow) and 4) future learning trends (social and emotional learning, technology and the future of learning). The three-course menu around these topics offered an informal atmosphere to network.

XcitED 2019 introduced a new slogan to the event – ‘The most exciting Edtech event. Ever.’ – along with innovation in its location, ‘the brand-new cutting-edge Otaniemi upper secondary school of Espoo’ (XEd7), a prestigious school located in the same areas as the Aalto University, in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Inviting participants to ‘. . . create the future of education together’, *XcitED 2019* gathered companies and schools interested in new edtech solutions, organizations looking for partners and new talents, edtech industry experts, teachers, investors looking for the next edtech unicorn, and pedagogy researchers.¹¹ The topic of *XcitED 2019* was impact and its organization and layout consisted of a demo area, a hygge¹² space, the pitch pong and the speaker swing, where anyone could meet the speakers at the end of each session. Speakers included an educator with entrepreneurial and visionary leadership, a Professor of Economics, a representative from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and many edu-preneurs ranging from small Finnish and international start-ups to large corporations such as Amazon, Lego and Pearson, as well as a couple of Finnish teachers and researchers. The event also held a workshop about the insights of the ‘unicorn game’ for creating and maximizing the impact of edu-businesses.

Diffractions in the field of education

To reflect the transformations undergoing in the field of education, our analysis was guided by the *points of diffraction* that permeate the discursive formations on education in the contexts of *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED*. Thus, our findings are presented below as *points of incompatibility*, *points of equivalence* and *link points of systematization*.

Incompatibilities in the discursive formations present in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED*

The most relevant *points of incompatibility* carried by the discursive formations in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* consist of (1) the people involved with the events, as organizers and participants are

not necessarily educators, don't necessarily have an education background, and work in different sectors than education, and (2) the themes and purposes of the events prevailing in the discursive formations and how the events have been portrayed online, in their websites, which quite often seem more relevant to entrepreneurs and investors than to educators. They unveil some contradictions between the field of education and the field of business.

Both are paid events, and their entrance fee made them relatively exclusive. Many of the attendants of the *Dare to Learn 2018* also attended *XcitED 2018* and *XcitED 2019*. Teachers and teacher education students participated in *Dare to Learn* more often than in *XcitED*. Teachers and researchers were listed as targeted audience in *XcitED*, but, in practice, the audience primarily consisted of edu-preneurs, investors and 'influencers' in edtech business. These stakeholders were also present in *Dare to Learn*, but in lower numbers than at *XcitED*. One reason for this is that *XcitED* is run by *XEdu*, a business accelerator for edtech start-ups, and its partners are companies such as Microsoft, Amazon, Samsung and edtech associations in the Nordic countries, whereas *Dare to Learn* is organized by students and supported by governmental agencies, universities and unions. Bringing together people from different sectors, affiliations and nationalities, from entrepreneurs and technology innovators to policymakers and education, however, seems to be central to both events, as 'the gap between education sectors and actors has to be bridged' (DtL1). Such feature was also observed in other edu-business events (Cook and Ward, 2012; Player-Koro et al., 2017). Targeting wide audiences facilitates the alignment of different agendas, contributing to the dissemination of new ideas and practices in education, which is supported by the current governance modes in education that incorporate new actors and organizations to the networked infrastructure that constitutes the field of education (Ball and Junemann, 2012; Candido, 2018, 2020; Ozga, 2009; Savage and Dang, 2021).

Around 150 volunteers from 'different fields: pedagogy, communications, marketing and industrial management, general and adult education, social psychology students, not to mention entrepreneurs or PhD students' (DtL34) worked in *Dare to Learn 2018*, in addition to people working in core part-time paid positions. *XcitED*, conversely, has a lean structure, consisting mainly of *XEdu*'s small team (two people) and a network of industry leaders, partners and collaborators. The voluntarism present in *Dare to Learn* was also captured in *XcitED*, which, in 2019, had voluntary collaboration of students from the upper secondary school that hosted the event. This undoubtedly provides cost efficiency to the events within the frames of the GEI (Verger et al., 2016b).

Keynote speakers in *Dare to Learn* usually had an academic background, whereas speakers in *XcitED* had a slightly stronger business orientation (e.g. start-up CEOs, investors, strategy directors in big corporations) as well as a political stance (e.g. MP, chair of political party). Nonetheless, edu-preneurs shared the stage in both events.

One point of incompatibility lies, therefore, in the incorporation of different attendees (as both edu-business events' audience and organizers) to the field of education, who are not necessarily trained for discussing and working with education-related tasks but become involved because of the business possibilities enabled by education (e.g. profit, visibility, financial investment, career development). So, education turns into a more encompassing field, in which credentials are not necessarily needed.

Even though there were recurring themes in both events (e.g. AI, robotics, digital learning, co-creation, futures of education), their core thematic areas diverged. In *Dare to Learn*, future skills, competencies and approaches to education gave the tone of the speeches, workshops and discussions: '...our program is a mixture of the latest research, thought-provoking innovations, new ways of thinking and maybe some surprises' (DtL33). Conversely, *XcitED* concentrated its talks and debates on best practices, successful business cases and investment on education. Although the pedagogical focus was more visible in *Dare to Learn* throughout workshops and keynotes about teaching and learning, the business mindset was present when presenting best practices, quick

solutions and measuring impact and outcomes. In *XcitED*, education was often associated with a business solution. All in all, the themes in both events resonate with the agendas international organizations use to create anticipatory strategies for education future-making (Robertson, 2022).

The slightly different thematic areas and approaches to the themes could be justified by the fact that the *Dare to Learn 2018* program was ‘co-created’ with what was called ‘the learning community’. *Dare to Learn* organizers first asked the community for themes and then opened a call for actual sessions for anyone to participate ‘to ensure the variety, quality and freshness of the program’ (DtL27). However, it is not clear who belongs to the community and which interests are represented. In contrast, *XcitED* thematic choice seemed to emphasize the use of technology in education, highlighting its benefits and opportunities, and to finding solutions to perceived problems in education through private-public partnerships in education or simply the privatization of education. For instance, one of the speakers in *XcitED 2018* pointed out the ‘critical lack of investment in education that the world is facing’. This was followed by a ‘panel of top edtech investors’ sharing their vision on edtech market trends and opportunities (XEd7). The degree of mutual sharing of educational knowledge was minimized in both events, as the delivery of the messages was usually top-down (Player-Koro et al., 2018) and the interaction of the audience was rather limited to the exhibitors’ booths.

The websites of these edu-business events also reveal incompatible elements between education and business. The *Dare to Learn* website was more interactive, containing basic information about the organization behind the event and the event itself, but also counting with frequent blog posts about the event, people and ideas involved in the ‘learning festival’ atmosphere. Information shared there, however, were more based on opinion than on academic education knowledge. The *XcitED* website was leaner. It was boosted by photos and logos instead of content. Information about the program and registration were there, but most of the news and other content referred to *XEdu*, the organizer of *XcitED* and its activities, mostly related to edtech competitions, the accelerating programme it coordinates, the edtech ecosystem, and its partners, such as Samsung and the United Nations Technology Innovation Labs (UNTIL).

Foreign visitors participating in *Dare to Learn* seemed to be oriented towards learning about and from education in Finland – ‘Dare is an advocate of lifelong learning as a lifestyle and as well helps Finland to take its well-deserved place as a global “learning center”’ (DtL34), but were also looking for business opportunities in education. This interest was clearer among *XcitED* international participants, who seemed to be trying to make money from and in Finnish education: ‘there’s no better place than Finland to innovate in the education industry’ (XEd11). International journalists from Latin America and Asian countries were invited and had their expenses covered by *Dare to Learn* sponsors to participate in the event, expected to spread the news about the ‘miracle’ of Finnish education to the world. *XcitED* participants were already in the *Slush* vibe, looking for ‘unicorns’ and ‘angels’, to maximize return on investment and get the resources to scale-up their ideas:

Finland may be a relatively small nation but when it comes to edtech, it continues to rise to the top. Finland is not only home to Europe’s largest edtech accelerator but also home to dozens of fast-growing edtech startups. (XEd6)

Both events were immersed in the GEI through branding, advertising and disseminating Finnish education worldwide with the help of the international audience participating in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED*. These edu-business events constitute ‘local encounter[s] into the reproduction of an entire global industry’s network’ (Panitz and Glückler, 2017: 163).

Thus, a point of incompatibility consists of the themes and purposes of the events, which saw education as an investment for individuals and society, and for private companies. In the first case, the idea is to invest in education to prepare children for the future demands of the labour market (with emphasis on learning the 21st century skills and using different technologies to support innovation) and, to a minor degree, contribute as well-informed citizens to respect democracy, support the human rights and promote sustainability. *Dare to Learn*, especially, had a central focus on self-learning and organizational learning, as ways to build successful individual careers and workplaces, in an entrepreneurial fashion (Verger et al., 2016a). Education as an investment for private companies, however, treats education as a commodity (Appadurai, 1986; Parreira Do Amaral et al., 2019), which provides profit when using good managerial techniques, such as scaling up and standardizing learning solutions. While some edu-preneurs want to learn how to run successful edu-business, others wish to know which start-ups to invest to get fast and guaranteed return on investment. Events like *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* serve these multiple purposes, which are quite different than the main purposes of education conceptualized within the field of education, ranging from *Bildung* to Biesta's three domains of purpose of education: qualification, socialization and subjectification (see Biesta, 2020). Discursive formations are enacted around the concept of impact in the edu-business events, which is usually measured in numbers of start-ups, participants, countries participating, investments, return on investment, rather than actual learning. Although the commodification of education entails an exchange of values (Appadurai, 1986), the impact envisaged in and through the events and presented in economic terms implies the penetration of business practices and the emphasis of concepts that are relevant to the market in education, exemplifying not only an exchange of values between the fields of business and education, but the influence of an alternative doxa (Bourdieu, 2002) in education.

Equivalences of incompatible elements in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* discursive formations

Here we present the *points of equivalence* between incompatible elements identified in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* discursive formations. The discursive formations seem to follow the same rules, they appear under the same conditions, they are situated in the same level, despite deriving from different *economies of the discursive constellation*: business and education. Equivalences were manifested in different elements in the events. Our analysis centred in the atmosphere of the events and their global approach to education through internationality and innovation in education.

Dare to Learn and *XcitED* were portrayed as 'cool' events, offering up-to-date information in a relaxed atmosphere at a hyped location, combining Finnish culture with an international welcoming approach. This was pictured in the *Dare to Learn* blog, written by its organizers:

The incoming people are not, however, only greeted by the red décor of the venue: there's buzzing and bubbling, people everywhere waving to one another, hugging, shaking hands. This definitely seems like a meeting place, for old and new friends and contacts alike. People are gathered around different stands that have everything from Moomins and berry products to simulations and robots on display. Many different languages can be heard and spotted. (DtL46)

Social media use was highly encouraged for creating a trendy atmosphere:

Please create your original tweets before *XcitED*, during and after the event promoting your business and *XcitED*. Please take photos, videos and share them with #XcitED18 hashtag. The minimum action from you is to LIKE and SHARE (RETWEET) what others are posting. Comment if it comes without breaking

a sweat. Why are we doing this? Because together we are strong and can create a big buzz around #edtech! (XEd5)

Moreover, both events were so similar that organizers and guests in *Dare to Learn* used the largest international start-up event in Finland, *Slush*, which holds *XcitED* as a side-event, as a reference to describe *Dare to Learn*:

People sitting next to me admire the modern, red carpet or catwalk like mainstage. It seems that especially the guests that have visited traditional education fairs before are not prepared for the visuality and the festive atmosphere of the event. Some seem blown away: "This is more like the Slush of the world of education!" (DtL46)

Finnish educational institutions have an emphasis on horizontal hierarchies and resemble similar patterns of informality (e.g. no uniforms, educational staff easily reachable), with an emphasis on modern furniture and architecture and on having digital technology as a key feature for both organizational and learning purposes (Saari, 2022). The extent to which these aspects derive from business concepts and practices is unclear, however.

The format of the events was very much alike, encompassing workshops, panels, edu-preneurs showcasing their educational products and services in individual booths in an exhibition area, dinner and keynotes with well-known people from the technology industry and start-up scene. Both *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* had a busy schedule, full of talks and debates, short speeches and keynotes, usually following a TED talk format in which performativity seemed more important than the content, and excitement, enjoyment and fun seemed to be the main goals when talking about education.

A massive conference with thousands of important people wearing suits and listening silently [to] tons of too long keynotes. . . Do you recognize the situation? Dare to Learn is nothing like that. We play music loud (. . .) and treat learning professionals like rockstars. Keynote speakers are welcomed standing up with huge applause. (. . .) The event on the main stage was exciting and so much fun, not too boring like many conferences. (DtL33)

The atmosphere of the events seems to be constructed to meet 'affective demands' based on emotional experiences created through visual aids, social connections, pitching ideas, persuasion, storytelling, personal and professional testimonies, which are part of the complex assemblages in edu-business events (Player-Koro et al., 2018). Excitement, curiosity, fascination, optimism, comfort and relief were perceived as feelings that the events intended to transmit not only through the designed atmosphere, but also about education. Conversely, the atmosphere of both *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* appears to suppress any possibility of boredom, exhaustion, stress, discomfort and uncertainty, which also seems to apply to the way the events wish to portray education. This affective governance, rather than trivial, tends to exert control over the public (Player-Koro et al., 2018) and to lead to some sort of 'rhetorical fantasy' (Pykett et al., 2017), which resembles the concept of '*illusio*' (Bourdieu, 1996). *Illusio* is an enchanted (and, thus, dissimulated) relationship with a phenomenon (Bourdieu uses the metaphor of a game to illustrate this) that attracts and attaches individuals, making them believe that it is relevant to take part, it is worth it, and there is no way out. The acceptance of the 'taken-for-granted' phenomenon through enchantment could imply the use of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 2012) to propose different ideas and paradigms in education.

The content and follow-up discussions were, however, superficial, even in the *Dare to Learn* keynotes presented by researchers, which might corroborate the dissimulation perpetrated through symbolic power (Bourdieu, 2012).

The purpose of a keynote is not to share knowledge but to inspire learning throughout the event. A successful keynote makes the participant (. . .) act in a new way after the event. (DtL27)

Many of these activities present in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* are part of the routine of educational institutions. Vocational fairs, entrepreneurship since early school years, incentives for transforming scientific research into business, and pedagogical approaches that puts the teacher into the roles of coach, facilitator and chair permeate the contemporary field of education in Finland and elsewhere. Nevertheless, the multiple roles attached to teachers tend to amplify existing tensions in their profession and work conditions (Ball, 2003; Standing, 2015).

Such equivalences between education and business legitimize certain discourses and the approaches to refer and talk about education. The discourses were performative, but also very much rhetorical. They were organized around themes that were appreciated by educators and other people working with education, and they brought new paradigms to think about education by bridging different sectors and stakeholders, highlighting the challenges and issues of current education (often portrayed as outdated) and fascinating the audience with multiple possible solutions to tackle them. There was intense use of technology, social media and a trendy, hipster and modern concept in décor, layout and communication. These discursive formations deepen concerns in education, reinforced by (an excess) of accountability to cope with uncertainty (Candido, 2018, 2020). Prospects of a brighter future, which are presented in contrast to current practices of education, intend to reduce uncertainty and alleviate tensions: ‘we need better solutions, bigger visions and deeper learning in every area of life’ (DtL35). Different symbols are mobilized for this purpose to emphasize connectedness, networking, innovation and technology in a cosy, fun and joyful atmosphere, in spaces where people feel welcome and comfortable. Moreover, the format of the events, with many presenters, speakers and simultaneous sessions, resembled business events, which have become a practice in education as well: quick and momentary intervention versus a thorough process, short-term versus long-term solutions and expectations. Interestingly, such atmosphere is portrayed in contrast to education: ‘why learning outside of the school is more fun?’ (DtL30).

Another equivalence in both edu-business events was the prevailing presence of Finnish exhibitors, purposefully highlighting successful and innovative ideas concerning education that are made in Finland. Despite taking place in Finland and having a mainly Finnish audience, both events were held in English and also had international participants, speakers and guests, who received special attention.

Discursive formations in both *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* were quite similar in terms of styles, language, vocabulary, references, despite the variety of people attending the events. Business language was dominant in *XcitED*, and very much present in *Dare to Learn* as well, signalling an approximation of the field of business towards the field of education. The linguistic capital, a very distinctive aspect of each social field, derives from the vocabulary that is used, how it addresses and references certain discourses, its metaphors, euphemisms, and the representation(s) of the social world it conveys (Bourdieu, 2012). Yet linguistic capital does not act alone in the incorporation of business in the field of education. As stated earlier, both *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* discursive formations are permeated by symbolisms and even some sort of magical elements embedded in emotions such as surprise, enthusiasm, fun and excitement. The power of words, slogans, symbols, programmes, atmosphere, practices, emotions and discourses all together collaborate to subvert the social order because they are recognized as legitimate. Such legitimation process, however, operates through symbolic power, which is dissimulated and, thus, not necessarily perceived by individuals, who do not realize what is happening; they are immersed in the belief – or *illusio* – which is more unconditional when uninterested.

Despite the intense reliance on numbers in keynote speeches and exhibitions (e.g. to show the scope and coverage of education solutions, to present their impact, to demonstrate profitability and

return on investment), both events declared that ‘what really matters is people’. However, the discursive formations were more inclined towards standardization of education solutions than the recognition of the complex subjectivities surrounding education, digitalization and AI to re-think education, and commercial transactions to create impact.

Finnish education has been a global benchmark after the success of Finland in PISA and the country appropriated such brand for multiple interests, including business (education export) (Schatz, 2015). The demand for international programmes in both basic and higher education has increased, enlarging the offer of courses in English. Phenomenon- and project-based learning, common practices in teachers’ training (Lehto and Penttilä, 2013; Lonka, 2019) and which adopt business approaches, were institutionalized in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014, whereas gamification in education is a trend to operationalize these learning methods. Discourses of innovation in education, which are very much present in Finnish business scene, keep claiming for continuous reforms of the education system.

The edu-business events positioned start-ups as organizations that facilitate business: ‘our main target is to help the learning ecosystem grow and strengthen, and you as a startup are at the heart of that ecosystem’ (DtL41). Start-ups are newly established companies founded to meet a specific demand. They have a lean organization focused on innovation and modernization, responding quickly to market challenges and changes, and thus offering good advantage to the growth of the GEI. Start-ups often seemed to be considered the saviours to all education problems, because they are granted as the ‘most able [innovators] to take great ideas into scale quickly’ (DtL41).

The start-ups, the core actors in the events, target global education markets. Organizers and participants in both edu-business events seemed to acknowledge the great demand for Finnish educational products and services. *Dare to Learn* organizers, however, questioned ‘why ideas are not spreading from Finland?’ (DtL21), as this appeared obvious because of Finland’s education branding and benchmark (Candido et al., forthcoming; Rönning and Candido, in press).

Dare to Learn denied it was ‘a commercial expo, nor a conference as usual’, and suggested a space wherein lies ‘inspiration and seeds for growth’ (DtL10). Even though the *Dare to Learn* discourses on marketization of education were a bit more disguised than the *XcitED* ones, organizers of the event supported the idea to target profits:

Of course, we should ask whether educational ideas should be turned into profitable products at all. Some argue that learning is too valuable to be turned into business. And I agree, learning is perhaps one of the most valuable things of all. But being so valuable, it should be made available everywhere, and this is done by spreading best practices. So if an idea is making learning happen in one country, everyone should get to make use of it. And this usually requires the idea to be formulated into a usable product or a replicable procedure. (DtL21)

Such discourses justified education profitmaking through the prism of innovation. To innovate in education, one needs resources. So, ‘the best way to help them [education innovations] spread [is] by productizing them’ (DtL21). For that, one needs ‘skills to design [education] into a user-friendly format’ and then ‘build sales channels, to market it and to create a stock’ (DtL21). Additionally, both events called for more investment in education, which was particularly emphasized in *XcitED*. *Dare to Learn* acknowledged *XEdu* as a ‘great example of this [productizing and gathering investments], but cannot by itself fix the whole issue’ (DtL21). Social impact and impact investment were discussed together in *XcitED 2018*, where corporate responsibility and strategic partnerships of large corporations aimed at ‘co-creating solutions’ with students, teachers and schools, when, in fact, they were mostly relying on ‘top edtech investors’. *Dare to Learn* positioned itself as one of the potential key-stakeholders to expand edu-business.

Perhaps we would need a government or corporation-backed investment program? The other way to help it is to provide ready channels for sales of the products and this way reduce the venture capitalists' anxieties related to the profit formula of the products. Dare to Learn can be one these international sales channels but of course others are needed, for example operating directly at the target markets. (DtL21)

Both events were attached to activities accelerating business in education. *XcitED* has *XEDu*, an education business accelerator as organizer, and the *Dare to Learn* operated under a non-profit organization called *Sivistyskiihdyttämö* (Education Accelerator, in English). The discursive formations in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* highlighted in this section, were simultaneously equivalent and incompatible to education, in a similar fashion as the premises that define, explain and justify the advantages of the GEI (Parreira Do Amaral et al., 2019; Verger et al., 2016b). Quality in education and innovation in pedagogies and methodologies were emphasized as much as scaling-up 'best-practices', successful business models, and bold edtech. However, this was done at the expense of inclusion and equality in education, once the 'products' and 'services' showcased in those events were mostly targeted to private schools, which are affordable only to a tiny parcel of students worldwide. This is a concern within the framework of GEI, as the shift of authority from the state to private actors may create market segmentation and the commodification of education may increase educational inequalities, undermining the democratic control of education and the professional autonomy and rights of teachers (Verger et al., 2016b).

The discursive formations manifested in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* refer to incompatible elements between education and business that limit the autonomy of the field of education, depreciate education systems (particularly public systems), which were called 'formal education' in those events and portrayed as leading to demotivation, disseminating the 'I can't attitude' among students (DtL30), and living 'in isolation' from the rest of society (DtL21). Such ideas are commonly propagated in the GEI discourses, which emphasize the role of the private sector to innovate and enhance (public) education systems (Parreira Do Amaral et al., 2019; Verger et al., 2016b, 2017). Conversely, the events emphasized non-formal education alternatives embedded in a marketized approach to education, 'a more networked school and (. . .) teaching design skills in teacher training' (DtL21), as teachers are expected to productize education in the GEI context.

Systematization: Equivalent and incompatible links between education and business

Finally, we identify *link points of systematization* in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* discursive formations, which connect the equivalent, yet incompatible objects, enunciations, themes and concepts employed in the events. They carry on rhetorical and metaphorical elements. Interestingly, both events were not portrayed as business fairs and edu-business events, but simply education (or learning) events. As part of *Slush* and embedded in the start-up 'ecosystem', *XcitEd* is more closely associated to business (technology and start-up settings) than *Dare to Learn*, but this is not explicit, as education and learning were the keywords in both events.

In our analysis, the first link of equivalent and incompatible elements between education and business refers to the interface of the public and the private sectors. The discourses in the events stressed that '. . .in the search for new learning solutions, we should unite our [public and private sectors] mutual interests' (DtL13). Besides showcasing education products and services for commercial purposes, the events legitimize business discourses of education through the collaboration between business and public education providers:

We believe solutions for tomorrow's learning challenges can be solved the best by bridging gaps between different experts and practitioners. (DtL3)

Participants have an opportunity to find out what companies and formal educational learning institutes could learn from each other when it comes to designing new blended learning environments, where also the digital tools and applications are taken into account. (DtL13)

This kind of partnership or collaboration is envisioned by the GEI, which encourages the use of private resources in public education, often portrayed as a sector lacking funding and management skills, approaches and tools (Verger et al., 2016b). According to the supporters of the GEI, the private sector (corporations, start-ups, philanthropies, etc.) can help the 'failed' and 'outdated' public education systems or replace them with more innovative education systems which rely on technology and modern education concepts.

The interface of the private and public sectors in education was one of the main thematic discussions in *XcitED*. The discourses implied that the public sector has not been investing enough in education, due to limited resources, bureaucratic structure that takes time to respond to the current challenges, and lack of political willingness. One particular discussion, prompted by a representative of a private international investment firm, revolved around the definition of the market landscape of education for the penetration of edtech start-ups in public and private education. The main argument was to legitimize the relevance of the intervention of the private sector for the 'benefit' of public schools, de-regulate education systems and open opportunities for capital gains, because the 'great ideas' are seen as originating from the private sector. For instance, some edu-businesses were perceived as helping teachers with concrete solutions they were unable to create, like 'emotionally optimal learning environments' (DtL43).

In another panel in *XcitED*, three edu-preneurs and one politician continued discussing the relationship between public and private sectors, framed as 'supporting each other' and focused on the 'price of quality in education'. The discussion raised by the edu-preneurs implied that private schools offer more quality than the public ones, through diversified and differentiated curriculum, aligned to global trends in education, top-notch innovation and renowned research. The politician, a representative of the Left Alliance, was alone on the stage to defend the advantages of public schooling, which is quite innovative and of high quality in Finland. Not surprisingly, the emergence of the GEI has been associated to the delegitimization of public education and how it is organized, and this discourse is echoed universally, without making appropriate contextual reflections (Parreira Do Amaral et al., 2019).

Such encounters, rhetoric and legitimation are enabled by the performativity of individual agents, particularly those positioned as 'experts', in actively shaping models and their audiences' understandings (Cook and Ward, 2012). They are represented by the events' speakers, who give legitimacy to the edu-business events and the ideas (meaning-making) circulating in those spaces. Selecting the speakers and panellists follow certain preferences and giving voice to private stakeholders instead of representatives from public organizations is a choice, which is, again, dissimulated by symbolic power (Bourdieu, 2012). *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* choices corroborated the approximation of the field of business to education.

The second link of equivalent and incompatible elements we observed in both events were related to time. Edu-business events have been considered to combine the past, present and potential futures of education (McCann and Ward, 2012). The *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* discursive formations sustain the idea that the present in education resides in the past and big changes are urgently needed to create a brighter future for education. Discourses of 'modern' and 'future' education were rather connected to standardization, marketization and privatization in education, rather than to critical topics, such as sustainability and climate change, giving corporations the role

and responsibility in defining the future of education (XEd1). Ideas of reconstruction, refreshment, re-shaping and re-thinking were closely associated to education and learning throughout the events: ‘a central agenda was to create a “positive buzz” around the concept of learning and education and to refresh the image of lifelong learning’ (DtL1).

The depreciation of present education and the appeal of change serve to support the intervention of the private sector in public education, which goes in parallel with the delegitimization of the ‘public’ in education (Parreira Do Amaral et al., 2019). It is a well-thought discourse with strategic goals to foment the GEI. The discursive formations mobilized in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* disorientate the logic of public education. There are so many amazing solutions presented and demonstrated in the events, there are so much passion in the discourses, and so many excellent speakers that it is hard not to be absorbed (and convinced) by such ideas. How the private sector (e.g. edupreneurs, start-ups, edtech, investors, for-profit corporations) is depicted in the discursive formations resembles a saviour showing up to solve all educational problems, or a superhero coming to rescue the ‘young lady’ (education put in a vulnerable position) from the ‘thug’ (the formal and public education system). It is a shallow discourse, with references to ‘impact’ in general terms, closely connected to financial outcomes and disconnected from social impact, but purposeful, objective, direct and persuasive. Again, the discourse formations are operationalized with symbolic power in a dissimulated way which creates an enchanted vision of education, or *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1996).

Despite a few mentions about inclusiveness in *Dare to Learn* material, both events did not include social themes in their programmes. Also absent were discussions related to equity, equality, autonomy and trust, core pillars of the Finnish education system, but they, obviously, cannot be easily productized and sold in Finland or elsewhere. This shows that the field of business has found ways to pervade the field of education without manifested permission, without incorporating educational concepts, ideas and values, and without learning what is relevant for education. The field of business simply found ways of penetrating the ‘pore space’ of education, which is an inclusive and quite open field, willing to learn from different experiences and innovations. This was enabled by the mobilizations of the relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it (Bourdieu, 2012). The latter are not ignorant, but complicit and complacent with their own subjection to the symbolic power, which is misrecognized as arbitrary (Bourdieu, 2012). The penetration of business in the field of education is not new, but rather dynamic, in which values are produced and reproduced overtime and across space, knowledge and policies expand and circulate globally, constituting what is now known as GEI. Such process was indeed rapid. In 2015, Helsinki (Finland) hosted the first Global Education Industry Summit,¹³ organized by the OECD and 3 years later, *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* open the doors and minds for naturalizing new trends and paradigms, coming from the field of business, in education and, thus, sustaining the GEI and contributing to establishing a new doxa in the field of education.

This new doxa reformulates the field of education, starting by its name. Education is a rhetorical term in the *Dare to Learn* and *XcitEd* discursive formations. It is a term that enables many possibilities, a concept that requires change, and such transformation is already taking place. The joint actions in *Dare to Learn* are targeted to ‘change’ education:

We need to get truly shaken every once in a while so that we don’t fall into stagnation, personal or professional! (. . .) To put it simply: our event is all about shaking your thinking of learning and human development with other wild minds, in an engaging environment. (DtL10)

In fact, *Dare to Learn* rarely referred to the term ‘education’, but focused on the concept of ‘learning’, that seems to be a more versatile and dynamic concept, and a ‘global megatrend’ (DtL22). Even when the organizers referred to the Helsinki Education Week, they called it ‘Helsinki Learning

Week' (DtL58) instead; also, they suggest using 'LearnTech' rather than edtech (DtL58). This choice, which is not only linguistic, but epistemological, as argued by Biesta (2005), is manifested throughout the event and shared by participants, speakers and guests. Here we can see again the role of the linguistic capital, which does not represent only a mean of communicating, but it is a recognized symbol of authority, in activating the symbolic power (Bourdieu, 2012).

It is really exciting to go to an event that is actually focused on learning, rather than solely education. When we were creating Kahoot, I talked about this all the time – we were focused on the human behaviours of learning, rather than trying to fit into the established system of education. I think trying to fit into the pre-existing, big system is actually one of the reasons why we don't innovate or push things forward all the time. If you design for human behaviours of learning, you actually got more chance of creating real impact." (DtL46)

Such high emphasis on learning and a rather minor focus on education sustains some sort of depreciation on formal education and highlights informal education. For instance, the calls for open positions to work at *Dare to Learn* had as a requirement 'possibly studies in higher education' (DtL53; DtL54) and the theme of *Dare to Learn 2019* was 'learning beyond degrees', focusing on learning strategies, organizations and individuals, and not necessarily on formal education. This enlarges the possibilities of intervention and scope of the GEI, which is guided by the market-making (Verger et al., 2017).

XcitED employed the terms education and learning interchangeably, as both are relevant to edtech and start-up 'ecosystems', as they target both formal and informal education settings and operate in an industry (GEI) called 'education'. However, the term 'edtech' seems more central in *XcitED* than 'education' itself. The balance between education (Ed) and technology (tech) (XEd3), and successful start-up stories in which education (Ed) came before technology (tech) (XEd12) were highlighted in the event to enforce their combination (ed+tech).

The buzz created by *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* encouraged and supported the foundation of the Finnish Educational Technology Association - Edtech Finland, 'an industry association that brings together Finnish educational technology companies' (XEd7), in 2019. Edtech Finland 'looks at the education sector from the entrepreneurs' point of view and helps its member companies through lobbying, influencing and collaborating with other actors in the industry, as well as acting as a platform for mutual cooperation between the members' (XEd7). In 2021, the European Edtech Alliance was founded with the membership of Edtech Finland. As expressed by one of the founding members of the Finnish EdTech association, 'bridges have been built between different players in education field in general, and it seems that the time is ripe for education technology companies to get stronger together as well' (XEd7). This appears to suit well to a global industry that is still in its initial stages and such developments provide evidence not only on the influence of business, but also on the increasing intertwining of the field of technology in the field of education.

Conclusion

This study investigated the intertwining of business and education in Finland, where marketization in education is very modest and recent when compared to other countries. In this article, rather than comparing the empirical cases, we explored the *points of diffraction* manifested in the discursive formations in both edu-business events we analysed — *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* — to examine the incorporation of business mindset, concepts and practices in education and the promotion of the GEI in Finland and elsewhere. We question whether the autonomy of the field of education might have been reduced by the transformations put in place by the emerging GEI and if its doxa

has changed. We identified some *points of incompatibility* among those discursive formations, primarily related to the background and interest of people organizing and participating in the events, which range from education to business, and the themes and purposes of the events, which presents a contrasting depiction of education and business. Then, we discussed some *points of equivalence* between incompatible elements in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* discursive formations, such as the ones related to the atmosphere and structure of the events, and the events' emphasis in internationality and innovation in education. Finally, we distinguished some *link points of systematization* in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* discursive formations, manifested in the dichotomies of public versus private, present versus future, as well as in the use of different terms to refer to education and to the field of education.

Through this analysis, we were able to demonstrate that objects, concepts and types of enunciation embedded in the discursive constellation of business have increasingly occupied the discursive formations of the edu-business events, which were originally rooted in the discursive constellation of education. More than populating the discursive formations, business is incorporated into educational practices. This allows us to observe a transversal movement from the field of business to the field of education, which has been operationalized by symbolic power. The linguistic capital seems to sustain such transversal movement. The *points of equivalence* and *link points of systematization* across the *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* discursive formations contribute to approximate the fields and legitimate the incorporation of business rhetoric and attitude in education in a dissimulated manner that disguise the incompatible elements between business and education.

Even though the symbolic power is dissimulated, the external demands (business interests) become more visible in the field of education, which can no longer disguise its dependence on the economic and value systems. This alters the field of education and its doxa. The *ortodoxa* of the field of business, lying in the hegemonic discourses of the globalized knowledge economy, enters the field of education as *heterodoxa*, an alternative view on education. According to our analysis, the discursive formations in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* are embedded in business language, principles and practices. They challenge some taken-for-granted assumptions in education, such as the idea of public and formal education, and question education as a terminology, eventually replacing it by something else: edtech in certain contexts, learning in others. As this *heterodoxa* gains terrain, through different layers of legitimation, it may re-frame the doxa of the field of education. Human capital, investment, products, clients, results, targets, impact, scale have become quite trendy and frequent in educational discursive formations, suggesting hybridity in the field of education.

This supports our first hypothesis, that business influences have contributed to the reformulation of the doxa in education: business ideas have been gaining space within the field of education and capitalizing on education through different possibilities of marketization in education. The *habitus* of the field of education changes with the incorporation of attitudes, logic, time and space considerations, performances and enactments that resemble business practices. Thus, the autonomy of the field of education is challenged; while the double social function of education remains dissimulated, its economic function becomes more naturalized and legitimized.

Our second hypothesis is also validated by our study, as such processes are enabled by the performativity of 'transfer agents', that is, socially constructed 'experts' or 'experts of truth' (Cook and Ward, 2012). These actors have legitimacy to transmit knowledge and do so through the interactions of consumers and producers of education under the influence of business principles, as illustrated in the discursive formations in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED*.

Metaphors and rhetoric support the transversal movement between the fields, limiting perceived tensions between the frames of education and the frames of business, especially in Finland, where forms of exogenous and endogenous privatization (Ball and Youdell, 2008) emerge alongside the predominant public education. This renders fascinating possibilities of research, as the two fields

(education and business) and the two sectors (public and private) have increasingly overlapped and shared similar types of capital and *habitus*, their borders have become blurred and loose, corroborating the use of one frame to explain the other, which was very common in the discursive formations in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED*. The problem of such equivalence is that, at times, the metaphoric and rhetoric truth overcomes the actual truth, creating different lenses to interpret the reality (Casassus, 2013). The business frame may emphasize a unidimensional and objective approach to education, replacing its complexity and subjectivity.

The discourses enacted by the formations observed in *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* mobilized terms like impact, development and growth, and created a space of connections, discussions and negotiations that have not existed before. The constant reference to novelty, modernization and innovation, and the fact that both events portray themselves as pioneers, as mindblowers, and as unique opportunities to discuss education and learning, suggests these edu-business events are spreading the seeds of the GEI in Finland and abroad. For instance, the popularity and internationality of *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* likely played a role in redefining EDUCA,¹⁴ the domestic annual education fair organized by the Trade Union of Teachers (OAJ). EDUCA became more international: English has penetrated the previously predominant Finnish language-event, and an increasing number of international visitors and edu-preneurs participate nowadays at EDUCA.

In this context, educators are pushed to innovate, to learn new skills and to update themselves to be part of the 'new game' established by the penetration of business in education and due to the quite often precarious situation of their profession (Ball, 2003; Standing, 2015). They are required to familiarize with the new approaches in learning, novel technologies, and modern thoughts about the purposes of education. Individuals are bound to the forces structuring the field (Bourdieu, 1984). They occupy relative positions in the field, depending on the type and volume of capital they possess, but only participate in the 'game' if they hold the specific capital(s) required for that field and incorporate the *habitus* of such field (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, educators are encouraged to borrow business concepts and practices to seek belonging and distinction in the field of education ruled by its 'new doxa' based on business in a way that supports our third hypothesis.

The field of education in Finland has been disrupted and the transformations in education that make it more alike to business have been undermining the relationship between education and democracy. The new range of stakeholders with multiple interests incorporated to the field of education through edu-business events does not seem concerned with the most critical issues in education, such as accessibility, equity, inclusiveness and equality. *Dare to Learn* and *XcitED* focus on education as learning, as acquiring skills and competences for performing well in society from the prisms of success and employability. The events do not discuss democracy and civic engagement, and rather superficially tackle the topic of sustainability. The scope of those events is as limited as the neoliberal agenda they are embedded in. They reinforce and reproduce these values in the social space.

Change is inevitable and dynamic. Both fields of education and business are constantly changing, motivated by internal and external pressures. We acknowledge hybridity as a possible feature of social fields, which may help to cope with current global challenges, and we hope for a 'space of possibles' within the fields that creates possibilities of agency in which the interactions generate 'cognitive and generative structures' that may override the entrenched dispositions of agents, pushing them to unexpected nonconformist types of action (Bourdieu, 2000: 234; McNay, 2008: 185). However, we expect changes to be naturalized only after critical reflection, to avoid dissimulation and non-arbitrary choices triggered by symbolic power. Is the intertwining of education and business offering such possibility? What shift is most relevant for education now?

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Notes

1. We refer to ‘edu-business events’ because they seem to pertain to the field of education while they emphasize a business approach to education.
2. Retrieved from <http://www.daretolearn.fi/> on 24 June 2019.
3. Retrieved from <https://www.xcited.org/> on 24 June 2019.
4. Foucault (1989) refers to *points of diffraction* to explain when two incompatible objects, concepts, or types of enunciation (business and education, in our study) emerge and try to occupy the same discursive formation.
5. We understand that markets do not result from unilateral, linear, or static movements and decisions, but from market-making processes. This implies that markets are continuously made and remade, as products, services, spaces, societies, networks, cognitive frames, institutions, policies and practices are imagined, created, implemented, regulated, changed and discontinued (Verger et al., 2017).
6. Individuals acting as entrepreneurs in education, creating new demands, developing and trading educational products, services and solutions, expanding the education market and often profiting from their supplies.
7. See <https://www.helsinkieducationweek.com/>.
8. The exact translation of the Finnish name is ‘Night school of education export’. Night school (*iltakoulu*) is an established term since the 1930s in Finland for informal discussion among ministers and few top politicians before significant decisions in the government plenary session on the following day (<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/government/informal-government-meetings-and-ministerial-working-groups>).
9. Retrieved from <https://www.xedu.co/> on 6 February 2022.
10. Retrieved from <https://www.slush.org/> on 6 February 2022.
11. Retrieved from XcitEd Facebook event (<https://www.facebook.com/events/otaniemen-lukio/xcited-2019/869885466729716/>) on 17 May 2021.
12. Deriving from the Danish and Norwegian life-style concept *hygge*, that is, creating a welcoming and cosy atmosphere to relax and improve one’s wellbeing.
13. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/education-industry-summit/> on 9 June 2022.
14. See <https://educa.messukeskus.com/?lang=en>.

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