

## *Aspects regarding Entrepreneurship Education in Europe*

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**Abstract:** *Entrepreneurship education has been discussed for decades. Changes in the economy, culture, society have led to a change in the way that entrepreneurship education is viewed. The European Commission sees entrepreneurship as acting upon opportunities and ideas and transforming them into value for others, which can be financial, cultural, or social. The European entrepreneurship policy aims to support companies, in particular SMEs, throughout their life cycle, promoting entrepreneurship education at all levels, as well as reaching out and encouraging specific groups with entrepreneurial potential.*

*This paper provides an overview of how entrepreneurship education in Europe is defined. At the same time, are presented the impact, aims, objectives and main forms of entrepreneurship education in Europe.*

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education*

### **Introduction**

Entrepreneurship has become one of the most important drivers of the global economy. In the last decades, policymakers worldwide started to realize the importance of stimulating entrepreneurship within the regional economy, pushing it high on their agendas, because of the aforementioned benefits. Wealth and a high majority of jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially minded individuals, many of whom go on to create big businesses. People exposed to entrepreneurship, frequently express that they have more opportunity to exercise creative freedoms, higher self-esteem, and an overall greater sense of control over their own lives. Many experienced business people, political leaders, economists, and educators believe that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on a local, national, and global scale.

The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan [1, accessed on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2020] states that it is entrepreneurship that makes the European economy more competitive and innovative - new companies and enterprises are seen as the most important source of new jobs and employment. In turn, entrepreneurship education is expected to support Europe in competing globally, returning to economic growth and creating high levels of employment. Including entrepreneurship education in education and training curricula is based on the assumption that education has a role to play in developing and supporting future entrepreneurs.

According to Fayolle [2,1] the interest in entrepreneurship ranges from macro-economic policy makers, who view entrepreneurship as a potential mechanism to create economic growth, to individuals who pursue entrepreneurial opportunities for their own purposes. Between these extremes, entrepreneurship is viewed as a way to increase the competitiveness of existing organizations (i.e. corporate innovation) (Miller, 1983; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996) as well as a potential method of addressing global social needs (Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011). In response to this growing demand, schools and universities worldwide have emerged with courses, programmes, and fields of study.

Entrepreneurship education is growing worldwide, but key educational and didactical issues remain. What are we talking about when we talk about entrepreneurship education? What are we really doing when we teach or educate people in entrepreneurship, in terms of the nature and the impact of our interventions? What do we know about the appropriateness, the relevancy, the coherency, the social usefulness and the efficiency of our initiatives and practices in entrepreneurship education? Addressing these issues and challenges, this paper suggests that at least two major evolutions might reinforce the future of entrepreneurship education. First, we need strong intellectual and conceptual foundations,

drawing from the fields of entrepreneurship and education, to strengthen our entrepreneurship courses. And finally, we also need to deeply reflect on our practices, as researchers and educators, taking a more critical stance toward a too often adopted ‘taken for granted’ position. [3, 692].

### **1. Defining Entrepreneurship Education**

The approaches to and objectives of entrepreneurship education can vary depending on each country's context and understanding of the concept. At one end of the spectrum is a narrow understanding focusing on developing the attitudes and skills that people need to set up and run their own businesses or to become self-employed. The other end puts emphasis on entrepreneurship as a key competence, which seeks to empower people and provide them with the transversal skills for active citizenship, employability and possibly, but not necessarily entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship.

By reviewing the existing literature, we found different sides of entrepreneurship schools of thoughts and an inherent lack of a common definition of entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurial education is the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognise commercial opportunities and the insight, self-esteem, knowledge and skills to act on them. It includes instruction in opportunity recognition, commercialising a concept, marshalling resources in the face of risk, and initiating a business venture. It also includes instruction in traditional business disciplines such as management, marketing, information systems and finance. [4, 416]

Previous research on entrepreneurship education has indicated that there are two main and distinctly different ways that entrepreneurship education is defined, a broad and a narrow definition (see e.g. Karlsson, 2009; Mahieu, 2006; Wallin, 2014). The narrow definition equates entrepreneurship education with a specific course aimed at training young people to start their own business, while the wider definition equates entrepreneurship education with general skills that all students should learn, and which are construed as helpful for preparation for life in general. [5, 554]

A debate was noticed in the application of terms like entrepreneurship education versus enterprise education (Hynes, 1996; Garavan and O'Connell, 1994a, b.) also a substitution of entrepreneurship education with entrepreneurial education (Jones and English, 2004. Garavan and O'Connell (1994a, b) argue that there is a conceptual difference between entrepreneurship education and enterprise education: the former has to do with creating an attitude of self-reliance and the latter is for creating opportunity-seeking individuals. But to others, like Gibb (1993) as cited in Fank et al. (2005), the two terms are conceptually the same, but contextually different. According to Gibb (1993) as cited in Fank et al. (2005) entrepreneurship education is a term mainly used in America and Canada, and enterprise education in the UK and Ireland. [6, 22-23]

The 2006 Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning identified a “sense of initiative and entrepreneurship” as one of eight key competences.

This conceptualisation of entrepreneurship as a key competence has since been further developed by the European Commission Thematic Working Group on Entrepreneurship Education and its definition is used in this report [7, 9]: “Entrepreneurship education is about learners developing the skills and mindset to be able to turn creative ideas into entrepreneurial action. This is a key competence for all learners, supporting personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability. It is relevant across the lifelong learning process, in all disciplines of learning and to all forms of education and training (formal, non-formal and informal) which contribute to an entrepreneurial spirit or behaviour, with or without a commercial objective”. (This is based on a framework definition agreed by an international working group on entrepreneurial learning in Geneva on 18 January 2012).

With this policy guidance document, the European Commission aims to support improvements in the quality and prevalence of entrepreneurship education across the EU Member States, providing direction for the next steps in the entrepreneurship education policy agenda at EU and national level.

In order to establish how entrepreneurship education is understood and defined in different European countries, a specific survey on this has shown two main approaches [8, 22]. The first one involves a broad understanding of entrepreneurship, similar to that defined in the European key competence; thus emphasising learning outcomes related to employability, active citizenship and entrepreneurial skills for life and work. The second one is narrower in scope and focuses on learning outcomes directly linked to entrepreneurial and business activity, i.e. how to set up a company and run it.

## **2. The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education**

In “Entrepreneurship Education: A Road to Success - A compilation of evidence on the impact of entrepreneurship education strategies and measures” [9, 7] DG Enterprise and Industry commissioned ICF International conduct a mapping exercise of examples of research on the impact of Entrepreneurial Education. This report presents the outcome of the mapping exercise: 91 studies from 23 countries were identified. Eighty-four studies addressed initiatives and actions taken at national level, and seven examples researched the effects of transnational projects operating in several countries.

According to this report, a summary of key findings related to entrepreneurship education impact, is presented below:

### Impact on the individual:

- Entrepreneurship education helps to boost career ambitions;
- Entrepreneurship education leads to higher employability;
- Entrepreneurship education leads to improved entrepreneurial skills and attitudes;
- Entrepreneurship education leads to behavioural change towards higher entrepreneurial intentions;
- Enhanced intentions to start a business can already be proven at secondary education level;

### Impact on the institution:

- Institutions implementing entrepreneurship education develop a stronger entrepreneurial culture;
- Institutions implementing entrepreneurship education notice a higher engagement of teachers;
- Institutions implementing entrepreneurship education intensify the engagement of stakeholders;

### Impact on the economy:

- Entrepreneurship education supports a higher rate of start-ups and helps creating successful ventures;
- Entrepreneurship education leads to economic impact;

### Impact on the society:

- Entrepreneurship education can help to protect an individual against social exclusion;
- High annual return on investment for measures and activities in entrepreneurship education.

Introducing modules and activities on entrepreneurship at various levels of education can help ensure that children and youth are exposed to entrepreneurship in different ways. This would be expected to deepen young people’s understanding about what entrepreneurship is and its role in society. It can also help nurture students’ entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and motivations [10, accessed on September 22<sup>th</sup> 2020] and enhance an individual’s level of self-efficacy.

Students participating in entrepreneurship education are more likely to start their own business, and those who have taken some entrepreneurship education are less likely to be unemployed. For an economy, these students would be expected to help stimulate innovation [11, accessed on September 22<sup>th</sup> 2020].

## **3. The Aims, Objectives and main Forms of Entrepreneurship Education**

As a key competence for life, entrepreneurship is prominent on the agenda of the European Commission. DG Education and Culture’s (DG EAC) “Rethinking Education” [12, accessed on November 18<sup>th</sup> 2020] communication states that all young people should benefit from entrepreneurship education, including “at least one practical entrepreneurial experience before leaving compulsory education”. The Europe 2020 strategy provides the supporting framework for this, and the 2013 Country Specific Recommendations highlight the importance of the Entrepreneurship Agenda.

Entrepreneurship and education are priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Taking into account the definition of entrepreneurship used in the 2006 recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (“an individual’s ability to turn ideas into action”), the Council Conclusions underline that developing an entrepreneurial mind-set can have considerable benefits for citizens in both their professional and private lives.

Consequently, Member States are invited to encourage the development of a coordinated approach to entrepreneurship education throughout the education and training system.

Entrepreneurship education has been promoted to EU Member States through several EU-level strategies and initiatives, including Education & Training 2020, The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, and Rethinking Education.

Entrepreneurship education most often takes place in higher education, but also increasingly at the secondary level of education. There are fewer activities at the primary and lower secondary levels. However, research suggests that entrepreneurship education may be particularly important at a young age [13,220].

The implementation of entrepreneurship education is uneven across EU Member States. Many countries have partial or specific strategies and approaches for entrepreneurship education. But the lack of common goals and approaches, coupled with fragmented education systems, presents a barrier to the development of a more systematic approach across the EU.

Table no. 1 provides an overview of the approaches to entrepreneurship education used in EU Member States.

*Table no. 1. Overview of Member States’ strategic approach to entrepreneurship education*

Scope	Specific comprehensive strategy	Embedded in broader strategies	Single programmes and initiatives
Member State	Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Wales (UK)	Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Northern Ireland (UK), Poland, Romania, Scotland (UK), Slovakia, Slovenia	Czech Republic, England (UK), Germany, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain

Source: [14, 18, accessed on November 18<sup>th</sup> 2020]

Entrepreneurship education is implemented through different types of input and at varying scales. The main types of input and activities are:

- **National/regional strategies:** Countries and regions draft strategies or Action Plans formulating specific goals and objectives related to entrepreneurship education. These are complemented and implemented through a range of funded programmes and activities.
- **Institutional changes:** Educational institutions prioritise content and methods related to entrepreneurship education in teaching and learning (e.g. the ‘whole-school approach’). In some cases, this goes together with a changed vision and mission of the institution.
- **Courses and classes:** Schools and universities introduce entrepreneurship education in the form of individual courses and classes. These can take different forms and can be offered either by the institution or by external providers.

### Conclusions

The development of the entrepreneurial capacity of European citizens and organisations has been one of the key policy objectives for the EU and Member States for many years. There is a growing awareness that entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and attitudes can be learned and in turn lead to the widespread development of entrepreneurial mind-sets and culture, which benefit individuals and society as a whole.

Despite the vibrant interest in entrepreneurial capacity building, almost fifteen years after the 2006 Recommendation on “Key competences for lifelong learning”, there is still no consensus on what the distinctive elements of entrepreneurship as a competence are. As highlighted in the 2016 edition of the Eurydice Report on Entrepreneurship Education at School, about half the countries in Europe make use of the European Key Competence definition of entrepreneurship. A third of the countries use their own national definition and almost 10 countries have no commonly agreed definition at national level. Further-more, the lack of comprehensive learning outcomes for entrepreneurship education is identified by Eurydice as one of the main hindrances to the development of entrepreneurial learning in Europe.

A changing world creates many new jobs and the challenges that the near future presents can be transformed through entrepreneurship education into opportunities and drivers of growth. New jobs, however, can only arise when there are enough skilled people capable of adapting to a rapidly changing environment. The necessary tools to do this already exists, but what is missing is the mind-set – the way we look at education. What needs to change in education is the “learn first, act in the world later” attitude. This logic must be changed. Entrepreneurship education needs to be far more connected and real than in the past.

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