

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN EUROPE – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EUROPEAN EDUCATORS, POLICYMAKERS AND INSTITUTIONS

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## OBRAZOVANJE ZA PODUZETNIŠTVO U EUROPI – IZAZOVI I PRILIKE ZA EUROPSKE NASTAVNIKE, ZAKONODAVCE I INSTITUCIJE

### Sažetak:

Ovaj se rad oslanja na europske publikacije o obrazovanju za poduzetništvo objavljene u posljednjih 7 godina (2006. – 2013.). Polazište je činjenica da Europska komisija (2006.) navodi „inicijativu i poduzetništvo“ kao dvije od osam ključnih kompetencija za cjeloživotno učenje. Čini se da je uključivanje poduzetništva u kompetencije potaknulo interes za obrazovanjem za poduzetništvo u cijeloj Europi. Ovaj rad istražuje implikacije predloženog dvojnog pristupa (EU, 2012) obrazovanju za poduzetništvo. Dvojni pristup priznaje dvije zasebne sastavnice – osobne kompetencije te poslovno znanje i vještine. Autor smatra da je obrazovanje za poduzetništvo od iznimne važnosti te da će imati značajniji utjecaj na školstvo i samim tim na društvo nego ranije. U zaključku se tvrdi da nositelji obrazovanja za poduzetništvo imaju nedvojbenu i dosad uglavnom neprepoznatu priliku da utječu na zakone, poučavanje i učenje kroz kurikulum i institucije te da na taj način mogu privući pažnju na sebe i poboljšati status vlastite profesije.

**Ključne riječi:** obrazovanje za poduzetništvo, ključne kompetencije za cjeloživotno učenje, smisao za inicijativu, poslovne vještine, partnerska suradnja

## Abstract

This conceptual paper draws upon European publications about entrepreneurship education published over the last 7 years (2006-2013). It takes as the starting point the inclusion of 'initiative and entrepreneurship' in the European Commission's (2006) eight key competences for lifelong learning. The inclusion of entrepreneurship in the competences appears to have stimulated a resurgence of interest in entrepreneurship education across Europe. This paper explores the implications of a proposed dual approach (EU, 2012) to entrepreneurship education. The dual approach acknowledges two separate strands—personal, generic competences and business knowledge and skills. The author argues that the impact and relevance of entrepreneurship education is now both broad and deep and there is potential for entrepreneurship education to have a more significant impact upon school education and thereby society, than it has previously. The paper concludes by suggesting that there is an unprecedented and largely unrecognized opportunity for entrepreneurship educators to influence and inform policy, teaching and learning across both the curriculum and institutions, as well as to raise the visibility and status of their own discipline.

**Key Words** Entrepreneurship Education; key competences for lifelong learning; sense of initiative; business skills, collaborative partnerships.

## Key Competences for Lifelong Learning

Entrepreneurship education is currently a much-debated topic throughout Europe. Many papers and reports are being published, conferences being held and funded projects being envisioned and undertaken. This interest in entrepreneurship education is in part a response to the current economic crisis. It is driven by a desire to make a useful contribution to improving the economic situation by enabling and empowering individuals and future generations to be more economically active, creative and innovative, and to generate sustainable income and wealth. Many economies see entrepreneurship as a key driver of sustained economic growth.

The debate surrounding entrepreneurship education is also a response to the publication in 2006 by the European Commission of eight key competencies for life long learning, and the inclusion in them of a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, (competence number 7; European Commission, 2006). The recommendation to develop key competences for lifelong learning (hereafter referred to as the recommendation) has broad and ambitious aims and objectives. These include,

- Improvement in educational performance particularly of low achievers,
- Promoting positivity towards cultural diversity,
- Developing learning organisations,
- Encouraging lifelong learning,
- Pro-active support for the unemployed and
- The promotion of gender equality.

The competences are promoted as a key measure in Europe's response to globalisation and to 'developing skills for the knowledge society and specific objectives for promoting language learning, developing entrepreneurship and the overall need to enhance the European dimension in education' (EU, 2006, p1). National reforms and the exchange of information between member states, will 'encourage the development of a common set of core skills' (EU, 2006, p2).

Since 2006, a significant number of reports have been published considering entrepreneurship education and the related concept of entrepreneurial learning (see the references list). Whether explicitly or not, these reports build upon and develop the expanded definition of 'sense of initiative and entrepreneurship' in the 2006 recommendation.

In the recommendation, emphasis is placed upon enabling individuals to turn ideas into action, to be creative and innovative, and to take risks. Being prepared to seize opportunities, at work, at home and in society, is seen as fundamental to taking initiative and to being entrepreneurial. Knowledge is needed including a broad understanding of the workings of the economy, of business and of the role and importance of social enterprise. Specific skills are required such as project management skills and the ability to work both autonomously and collaboratively. Motivation and determination are prerequisites as is self-knowledge and awareness of ethical behaviour (European Commission, 2006, pp 17,18).

In addition to defining entrepreneurship education, reports published since the recommendation describe and categorise approaches to entrepreneurship education in nation states across Europe (see Education, Audiovisual And Culture Executive Agency 2012, for a comprehensive review). This information is useful in locating and understanding different strategies, however, mapping practice whilst simultaneously conceptually defining what is being examined, is arguably premature. Before we can create a truly useful analysis we first need to have clarity and consensus regarding what we are examining. The process of clarifying what we mean by entrepreneurship education, has become increasingly more complex as thinking develops, however, greater clarity is emerging which is evident in more recent studies and publications. This paper is a contribution to this consensus-building regarding contemporary entrepreneurship education throughout Europe.

## The Dual Approach

Drawing upon previous work, the 2012 European Union publication 'Building Entrepreneurial Mindsets and Skills In The EU' sets out a dual approach to entrepreneurship education.

The first strand in this dual approach is the development of generic competences such as creativity, initiative and self-reliance. The development of these skills and capacities is not the responsibility or preserve of any single subject, curricular area or discipline.

The report suggests that these should be developed and fostered across the mainstream curriculum, often in an approach that is cross-curricular or inter-disciplinary. This strand is most evident in the early years of education - pre-school, primary school and early secondary or junior High School. This dimension is critical as it is the foundation upon which more specific, business related knowledge and skills are built.

The second strand is focused upon business skills and knowledge/understanding, including the skills and know-how of setting up and running a business. This is often a component of upper secondary education and beyond, although in primary education across Europe, what is most often termed 'Enterprise Education' also introduces and fosters business awareness and practices. This strand is often organised in the curriculum as a separate subject although this is not always the case and the development of business skills and knowledge also occurs through an inter-disciplinary or cross-curricular approach. The need for such an approach is exemplified in the OECD report in 2009 into innovation and entrepreneurship in universities, which highlights as a key element of an effective approach, not only a dedicated entrepreneurship education structure, but also 'viable cross-faculty collaboration' (OECD, 2009, p14).

'Building Entrepreneurial Mindsets and Skills in the EU' (2012) acknowledges that developing a dual, structured and systematic approach to entrepreneurship education, which is mainstreamed, is not going to be easy.

'Moving entrepreneurship education from being an extra-curricular 'add-on' with a 'traditional' focus on business practice to being an intrinsic part of the curriculum including a broad range of entrepreneurial capabilities and skills can mean nothing less than a paradigm shift in the education system. This is especially the case where it needs to be embedded in general/academic education tracks, and where more traditional teaching methods are currently in use.'

European Union, 2012, p16, (emphases in original).

In this 2012 document, the impact and outcomes of the two strands of the dual approach are illustrated at different levels in what is called 'An Entrepreneurship Education Intervention Logic' (EU, 2012, p17 - see figure 1 below). The two strands (or operations) develop embedded entrepreneurship competences *and* specific business management skills and knowledge. By embedded competences is meant those that are overtly and visibly integrated into subjects across the curriculum. Nothing is hidden or merely implied.

As well as developing skills, entrepreneurship education aims to result in a range of personal dispositions and capabilities such as enhanced self-confidence, motivation, adaptability, creativity and positive attitudes towards risk taking. At a societal or community level (labeled in the intervention logic as intermediate aspects), young people leaving formal education are more likely to be active citizens who are creative and adaptable entrants to the workforce and potential entrepreneurs. This results in enhanced social cohesion and a positive and significant economic impact at a global level.

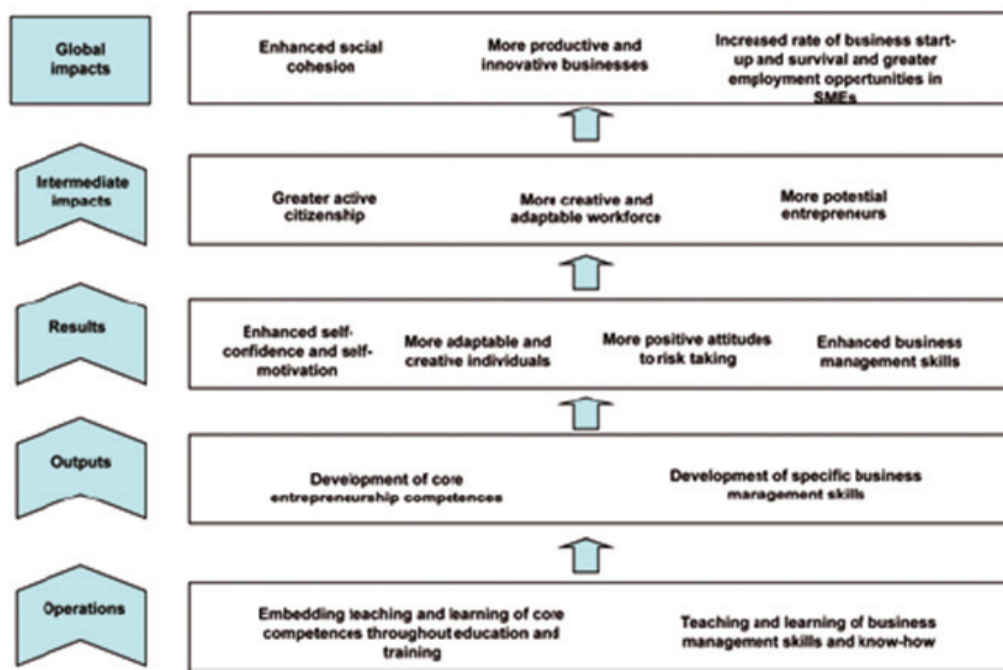


Figure 1.0

An Entrepreneurship Education Intervention Logic. Taken from European Union, 2012, Figure 2.2, p16

The embedded competences are developed throughout learning and the curriculum, including in entrepreneurship and enterprise education. In addition to those referenced above, there are other competences, which are desired outcomes of learning and education. These include, a sense of self-efficacy, communication and presentation skills, numeracy and literacy skills, intra- and inter- personal skills, resilience and critical/analytical thinking skills.

### The development of these competences

- is the concern of all subjects/disciplines, every learner and all educators,
- is often inter-disciplinary,
- is evident at all levels in formal education,
- occurs through informal as well as formal learning,
- is central to life long learning and continuous human growth and expansion and
- is critical to individual well being and the social, cultural and economic health of communities and societies at local, national and global levels.

The first strand of the dual approach enables and underpins, therefore, more than entrepreneurship education. The development of embedded, generic competences is not only fundamental to being an entrepreneur and to education for entrepreneurship, but to all learning and to all aspects of education and economic, cultural and social life. No curricular area or group of educators can make an exclusive claim to them, as they feature in every subject or discipline and are relevant across the curriculum, at all levels. Entrepreneurship education and educators have, potentially a very important role to play in the development of these competences, both outwith as well as within the/their subject. This is discussed in detail in the following section.

**So, to summarise, a dual approach to entrepreneurship education:**

- Makes a very important contribution to the development of embedded, generic competences that are fundamental to all learning, subjects or curricular areas, not just as a preparation for entrepreneurship or the world of work. These are generic core competences, as well as being core entrepreneurship competences. The overall goal of entrepreneurship education 'is seen as developing people who are entrepreneurial in all aspects of life' (European Commission, 2012, p27)
- Focuses upon the development of business skills, knowledge and practices.

The distinction being emphasised here may be seen as pedantic. But that is missing the point. We, the authors, are arguing that the contribution of entrepreneurship education and educators to educational policy, the curriculum and learning, is potentially much more significant and wider in scope than has been envisaged in the past or than many appreciate today. In addition to developing specific business knowledge and skills (strand two of the dual approach), entrepreneurship education has a very significant role to play in the development of competences that are embedded in all subjects/disciplines and are met *across* schools, colleges and universities (strand one of the dual approach). Entrepreneurship education and educators, are making (or have the potential to make) a very significant contribution to the learning and development of all learners, at all levels.

## **Entrepreneurship Education and Educators in a Broad Context**

In this paper the author has intentionally chosen to broaden the description of an entrepreneurship educator. By this is meant any educator who has the aim or goal of facilitating one or both of the strands of the dual approach to entrepreneurship education, at any level in formal education. It can be argued that this includes all formal educators! All teachers and lectures are in some way promoting and facilitating the embedded, generic competences.

Clearly however, some educators have a more significant role in overtly developing a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship than others. Probably based in High School, Further or Higher Education, these teachers and lecturers are significantly involved in education for entrepreneurship, including for some, teaching and facilitating business skills and knowledge. Being an educator for entrepreneurship is likely to be a valued aspect of their professional identity. But whilst roles regarding initiative and entrepreneurship vary, we argue that the recent developments being discussed are of relevance and significance to all educators.

Education *for* entrepreneurship can be extended to include developing an entrepreneurial mindset. By this is meant that the learner is developing some or all of the characteristics or dispositions of an entrepreneur, examples of which are commitment and determination, tolerance of risk, creativity, self-reliance, adaptability and motivation (Timmins, J, 1994). These characteristics are very similar to the generic competences of strand one of the dual approach. In developing the embedded generic competences across learning, we are, therefore, also supporting the development of an entrepreneurial mindset, as these competences are essential to being entrepreneurially effective. Equally, having an entrepreneurial mindset is an important aspect of being creative and innovative and being a successful learner.

The links between generic competences that are embedded across all learning at all levels, and entrepreneurship education, means that specialist entrepreneurship educators share the goal of fostering and realising embedded competences with all other educators - class teachers in primary schools, enterprise educators, teachers of employability skills, High School teachers of all subjects and all College and University teachers and lecturers. The goal of achieving competences is accepted to be of fundamental importance to lifelong learning (EU, 2006) and is the responsibility of all educators. With this synergy between generic competencies and entrepreneurial effectiveness, comes both the need and opportunity for collaboration and co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). The dual approach and the learning and teaching that it will encompass, sets Entrepreneurship Education in a broad, cross-sectoral, multi-level context. As we see it, there is an unprecedented opportunity for Entrepreneurship Educators to directly influence and inform education policy, teaching and learning across the curriculum and institutions.

In responding to the recommendations on key competences, the dual approach and/or other policy advice, entrepreneurship educators in collaboration with colleagues across formal education, can apply their skills, knowledge, expertise, insight and commitment to the development of embedded, generic competences in a range of curricular areas, subjects, contexts and settings, at all and any level within education. Educators will have to proactively seek collaboration, often on a project basis. The possibilities for collaboration are numerous. For example,

- Entrepreneurship educators, primary and High School teachers might work collaboratively to develop core competences through cross-curricular projects or to develop attributes which are actively developed through the levels of a specific discipline.

- Entrepreneurship educators in universities might work with colleagues, from a number of faculties, to enhance graduate attribute specification.
- Teachers and lecturers, from different levels and sectors, might collaborate to develop pedagogical practices in delivering core competences involving authentic, active and experiential learning.
- Teachers alongside college and university-based entrepreneurship educators might develop transition-learning experiences to enhance High School pupils' entrepreneurship skills.
- Experienced entrepreneurship educators (including Professors) might act in advisory capacities to education authorities in developing policy in response to the European Commission's recommendations on key competences. They might also lead professional development for teachers.

Effective and successful collaborations must also, we would argue, involve partners from business and voluntary organisations, communities, parents and of course, pupils or students. This opportunity is enhanced because of the renewed interest in entrepreneurship and education for entrepreneurship, brought about by the current economic situation. It is further supported, by the inclusion of 'sense of initiative and entrepreneurship' by the European Commission in the key competences (EU, 2006). This interest and opportunity is still further heightened by the research and policy documentation published since the 2006 recommendation.

Through direct engagement in developments to policy, learning and/or teaching Entrepreneurship Educators will also have an indirect influence upon the people they interact with and upon aspects of school or institutional life. This paper cannot explore these aspects, however they are worth mentioning here. We would include in these areas of influence the curriculum, assessment, teacher/lecturer professional identity (to what extent do/should teachers have an entrepreneurial mindset?), leadership and school/college culture and climate. Andrew McCoshan et al (2010), authors of 'Towards Greater Cooperation and Coherence in Entrepreneurship Education' believe that there is currently

'...the potential for entrepreneurship education to transform many aspects of teaching and learning, to empower students through the development of autonomy in learning, to reduce hierarchical relationships within schools and to open up educational establishments to the outside influences of the business world.'

European Commission, 2010, pages 28/29.



## Creating Collaborative Partnerships

There are certain prerequisites to realising this opportunity for collaboration and to developing partnerships. All those involved, (but particularly Entrepreneurship Educators as in most cases we see them leading collaborations), must have a broad vision and understanding of Education *for* Entrepreneurship. There has to be consensus that Education *for* Entrepreneurship is concerned with both the development of knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship and the development by all learners of generic competences, which are embedded across the curriculum. For entrepreneurship educators, this may require a paradigm shift in how they view their interests and roles, leading for some, to a shift in their professional identity. We acknowledge that given the realities of workload some entrepreneurship educators will wish to remain focused upon their current practice. Nevertheless, as a consequence of the factors discussed, the opportunity exists for those entrepreneurship educators to lead or take part in initiatives involving broader collaborations than they might have previously considered. Even where there is no change to current roles, we believe it is important that all entrepreneurship educators recognise and fully acknowledge the increasing scope and relevance of entrepreneurship education which is evident in recent policy at European and national levels and in subsequent developments.

Clearly such developments require commitment beyond that of the professionals involved - the necessary resourcing and infrastructure have to be put in place. Support from leaders in education is also essential. Much research has been done since 2006, on building the infrastructure required for effective entrepreneurship education at each level within the system, and helpful advice and guidance is available in several recently published reports (OECD, 2009, 2012; World Economic Forum, 2009; European Commission, 2006, 2010, 2011).

## The Window of Opportunity

It is not an exaggeration to state that the opportunity currently exists not only to re-contextualise Entrepreneurship Education but also for Entrepreneurship Educators, working in collaboration and partnership with colleagues in schools and beyond, to have a significant and highly valued role in bringing about educational change.

It has been argued that education is overly politicised and too often used to achieve political gains (Oakley, quoted by MacLure, 2005; Cochrane-Smith and Fries, 2001; Day and Sachs, 2004). It is not believed that this is the case here. Nor that interest in entrepreneurship education is short-term. The European Commission has a long-term strategy for the implementation of each of the key competences for life-long learning. This commitment was reaffirmed by the establishment in 2012 of a network to drive the implementation of key competences within schools (call for proposals EAC/13/2011. 'European Policy Network on Key Competences in School Education').

Furthermore, the prioritisation of vocational education and training (VET) in Europe can be tracked back to the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1950s (Ertl, 2006). The importance of VET is evident today in initiatives across Europe to develop entrepreneurship and skills for work and employability.

Nevertheless, it is several years since the publication of the recommendation on key competences for life-long learning (in 2006) and we believe that the window of opportunity for entrepreneurship education/educators to realize these opportunities and to embrace and inform change, is now. Following a period of advice and policy development by several EC funded groups (2006-2012), the next phase is the implementation of recommended approaches. We would suggest this phase is from 2014-2020. That this is so, is reflected in EC directives and the availability of funds to support initiatives such as those under discussion. In April 2012 the EU Directorate for Enterprise and Industry made a call for project proposals in Entrepreneurship Education, totaling €2.5 million. Anticipated projects included those 'for primary and secondary school teachers to support the development of their skills and methods in applying entrepreneurial learning to different teaching subjects and to different contexts' (EU, 2012). The 'Erasmus for All' Programme, aims to involve up to 5 million people in education and training opportunities between 2014 and 2020 and a budget of €14.6 billion was agreed in February 2013.

## Conclusion

There is a currently a resurgence of interest throughout Europe in education for entrepreneurship at school, college and university levels. This is in part in response to the current economic situation in Europe and, in part, to the inclusion by the EU of 'sense of initiative and entrepreneurship' in the key competences for lifelong learning (EU, 2006). Several European publications over the last seven years have categorised current practice and clarified what contemporary entrepreneurship education encompasses and involves. Most recently a dual approach to entrepreneurship education has been proposed (EU, 2012) which involves a) the achievement by learners of generic competences, which are embedded across all learning, and b) the development of business skills and knowledge. This broadens the scope and redefines the rationale of entrepreneurship education. It also raises its visibility and status and creates opportunities for collaboration and co-creation between entrepreneurship educators and colleagues across every sector of education, at all levels. It is our view that currently there is an unprecedented opportunity for entrepreneurship educators to influence and inform education policy, teaching and learning across both the curriculum and institutions. Entrepreneurship Education and Educators can and arguably should play a direct and significant role in the development of key competences at all levels in formal education. This will also have an indirect influence on collaborators and upon a wide range of aspects of education and institutions. Entrepreneurship Educators will make an even greater contribution to economic regeneration whilst increasing awareness and appreciation of their work and specialist knowledge and skills.

Given its dynamic nature, there are always new policies, practices and priorities in education. Fostering a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship through specific knowledge and skills and generic competences, is currently a key recommendation and priority across Europe. Achieving the unprecedented opportunities that exist to broaden the scope and context of entrepreneurship education will require interest, willingness, action, the disposition to look outward, engagement in radical thinking and the forging of new partnerships. I have no doubt that many talented educators will meet this challenge and in doing so will exemplify the entrepreneurial mindset .

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