

## DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP – CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENT TOOLS. “DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR FUTURE JOBS” - CASE FINLAND

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### **ABSTRACT**

*High unemployment figures in Europe creates a need for innovation and focus on entrepreneurship as one way of meeting current challenges. There is an ongoing discussion on how to develop entrepreneurship education in European schools. In many places we have a situation where old models need to be exchanged for new ones that serve as a better interaction base with the outside business world and society. Pedagogical tools are being developed alongside with the changing economic structures in society and schools in order to better meet the changes and challenges in the global world. In many schools teaching methods and tools do not foster the students to face the business reality after graduation and these educational institutions are in danger of being left behind. Therefore many business schools and universities look for new solutions to current challenges internationally in the form of strategic networks. International networks and cooperation within education enable schools and universities to exchange best practices and ideas on a bigger scale. Educational networks within business education can include exchange within both pedagogical as well as cultural factors that affect and drive innovative business education. These areas of exchange are to be found in the results of the project “Developing Skills for Future jobs” that took place within the EU during year 2013 – 2014. This paper will highlight results and conclusions of the project and new ideas that the project resulted in.*

**Key words:** entrepreneurship; education; challenges; teaching methods

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In many countries change is on the agenda and politicians together with economists and the business world are planning together on what will be the solution to the challenges that markets and nations face. Suggestions for how to choose a successful way forward varies depending on who is discussing and new and old alternatives are on the agenda. New combinations of previous pieces combined with new knowledge are also alternatives and this is often a way forward. Education is a word that is often chosen as the solution in areas in crisis and innovative solutions are looked for. A focus on entrepreneurial education is also something that has received more and more attention in Europe as local business has received more and fierce global competition and therefore we have seen many business areas in great difficulties. A question that is often on the agenda is what kind of areas, business and competence should Europe represent tomorrow. The answer to these questions is often something that you need to look for a bit deeper – and often you find the answers in your network. Network research has actively been in focus for the last decades as one view of business reality where relationships and links connect actors, resources and activities (Håkansson and Johanson,1992). The solution and path for continuous development often lie in the exchange that takes place between actors, resources and activities in networks of organizations.

Our world is characterized by differences and similarities. Our regional and national differences create possibilities and trade has traditionally been built upon these possibilities (Pekkarinen and Sutela,1984). In today's world trade the goods are somewhat different than before and therefore we need to rethink what kind of business structure we want to create possibilities for within our countries or the borderless areas where we live and work. This is also what is on the agenda in Finland ([https://www.tem.fi/sv/arbete/tillgangen\\_pa\\_arbetskraft](https://www.tem.fi/sv/arbete/tillgangen_pa_arbetskraft)) and the rest of Europe. Today Finland is in need of more workforce for the upcoming years as well as new ideas for what to produce and work with the upcoming years in a fierce global competition. As a small country Finland has always relied on exports. The type of products exported has also varied through the years. One of the most known brands that has originally been born in Finland is the telecommunication company Nokia – an innovator of core technologies and the supplier networks that has been born in connection to these innovative areas ([http://www2.nokia.com/en\\_int](http://www2.nokia.com/en_int)). This company is also a good example of a company that grew from being a producer of different products than it is known for today (<http://company.nokia.com/en/about-us/our-company/our-story>). The company has also shaped the little country into what it is today because of its size and supplier network. The key words connected to this company also changed the Finnish economy. The education system was built up with a strong focus and determination. Today Finland has one of the best education systems in the world that has been ranked in the top year after year (Meyer and Benavot 2013). So during the last years Finland has been visited by representatives that are interested in learning the reasons behind the Pisa success and how this little country has built itself up from a poor country to a rich country with a great educational system. So, what is the key to it?

When you study the education system in Finland you also study a society that is currently quite equal. All children get an education and this is one of the top priorities in the society. The level of education is high, all children get the support they need with supporting extra teachers. And this last issue is one of the things that differentiates Finland from many other countries and is one of the keys to the successful results within the school system – the equality (Heinz-Dieter Meyer and Benavot, 2013). So education on a high level has been a high priority in Finland. And the teachers are respected in the classroom – this also gives a status to the work and it feeds the educational system with ambitious people that continues to see the work as important.

With education as the answer to change and development the Finnish education system has also been as open as the rest of this little country. The openness of a country can be measured by its cultural index (Minkov, Hofstede and Hofstede 2011) and this affects both education and business behavior.

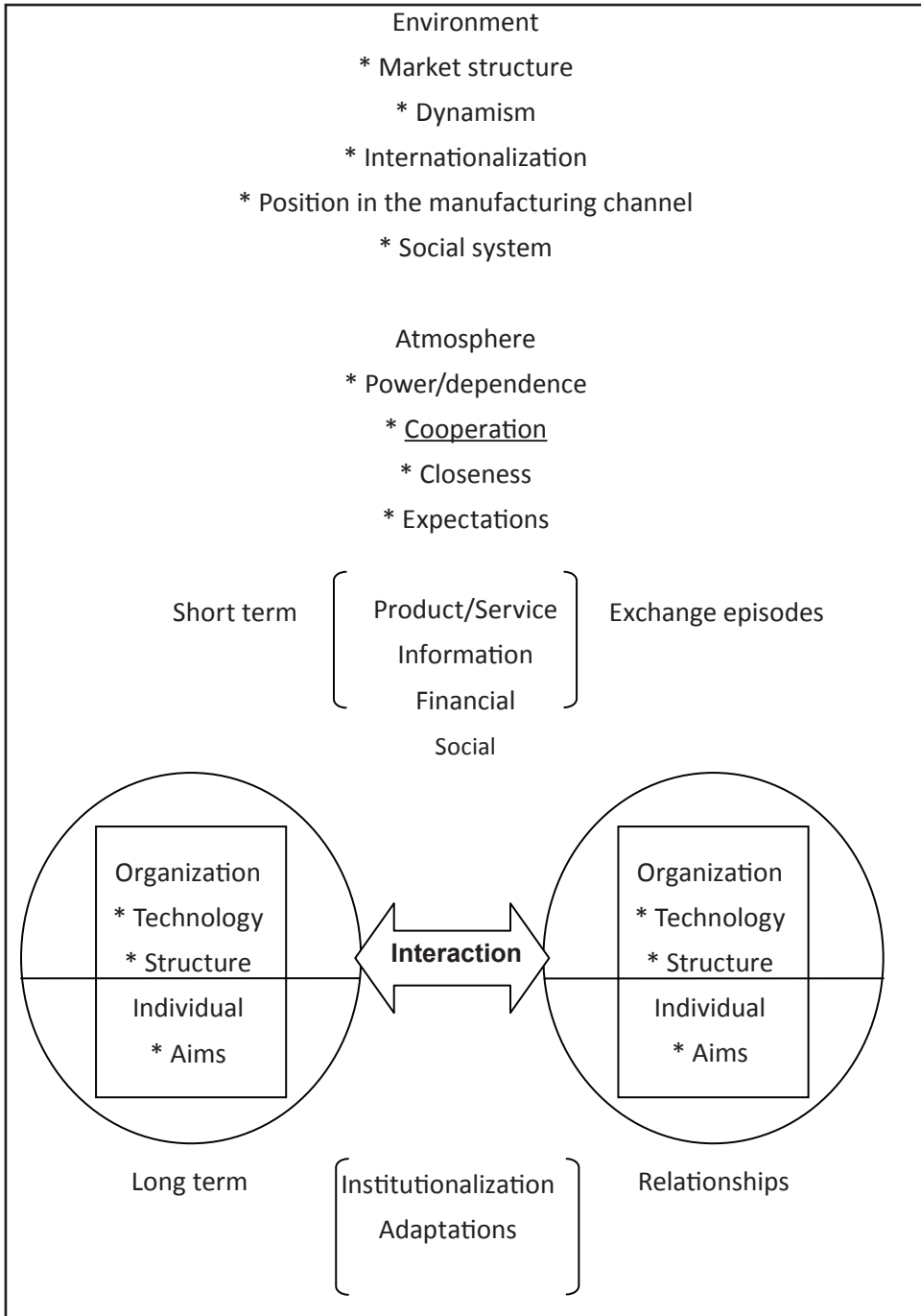
Finland has built its wealth to a great deal upon exports and good education of people for this workforce. According to the resource view you act according to the resources and the possibilities (Grant, 2013). The Finnish educational network is also characterized by this openness and the low power distance. This can be seen in the democratic foundation when it comes to access to education – to reach everyone. A base for life-long learning has also been built up for many years in order for the education system to feed the society and business life with knowledge. The openness in the education system also opens up and connects with business life in cross border projects, guest lecturers and visits and thesis work that benefits all parties involved. One example of these cross border projects is presented further on in this paper. The project is called “Developing Skills for Future Jobs”.

## 2. NETWORKS FOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Working in networks means possibilities of exchanging experiences, sharing knowledge and extending your network. (Håkansson, 1982) This is important in today's entrepreneurship education. Education of today means a challenge in getting access to resources like knowledge bases and actors, innovations and network hubs (Gadde and Håkansson, 2001). Getting these resources in right time also means a lot in the process of being a more successful business education. Awareness is important and the key to success.

Nowadays networks compete against each other where actors, resources and activities are used and created and knowledge exchanged (Möller and Halinen, 1999; Ghauri, Tarnovskaya and Elg, 2008). Being part of a good network also affects one's competitive advantage. Relationships in networks can be seen as channels to resources (Hammarkvist, Håkansson and Mattsson, 1982) as well as knowledge (Möller and Svahn 2006) and development of competitiveness in the market (Ghauri, Tarnovskaya and Elg, 2008). In the relationships lies internationalization opportunities (Ghauri and Holstius, 1996) and the network itself provides opportunities for quality improvements (Hagberg-Andersson, 2006) as well as an opportunity to access the resources available elsewhere in the network. Working together in different kind of networks gives the cooperation partners the opportunity to cover and gather information opportunities and how to improve the competitive advantage of the involved actors. All of these relationships are filled with unique opportunities, complex interactions and adaptations made (Brennan and Turnbull, 1999; Brennan, Turnbull and Wilson, 2003; Hagberg-Andersson, 2007, Hagberg-Andersson and Grønhaug, 2009) and depending on how these are handled the actors become stronger or not on the market. Uncertainty can be avoided by working closely together with carefully selected partners. The focal actor carefully selects partners for closer cooperation and the actors choose vice versa the most suitable network partners for closer and more long-term cooperation.

**Figure 1. The network interaction model**



(Håkansson, 1982)

### 3. CASE THE PROJECT “DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR FUTURE JOBS”

The project “Developing Skills for Future Jobs” was financed by the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and it happened during the years 2013 – 2014. Cooperation partners in this entrepreneurial project were: University College of Economics, Entrepreneurship and Management Nikola Subic Zrinski – Croatia; ISMAI – University Institute of Maia – Portugal; Faculty for Commercial and Business Sciences – Slovenia; and Novia University of Applied Sciences in Finland.

The base and motive for this project was a need for updating the entrepreneurial education in Europe. The reality for the entrepreneurs is global competition and a need to prepare the new generation of a global competitiveness in business.

The teaching methods were video lectures with entrepreneurs, job shadowing, creating of a web portal for knowledge transfer and communication and a facebook group for creating international networks for the business students. The video lectures with entrepreneurs in another country was a new experience to the business students and this extended their views on entrepreneurship in another country. They also had the possibility to ask questions from the entrepreneur. During the project a portal was also created on the internet. There useful information for students and others was put in order to create an international platform for knowledge creation and exchange. The platform lives on after the project ended in the end of 2014 and it is possible to further develop it. A Facebook group for the students was also created in order to activate the students from the beginning of the project with a working tool they already mastered and could develop themselves. In the Facebook group they could gather participants for activities in the project, keep contact and also post results from their own activities performed during the project time. The Facebook group was also something that left as an active tool after the project ended and the students could continue to have contact with each other after the project ended, they stop their studies and hopefully start their own business after the studies in business end. In the Facebook group they can still keep contact with other students/entrepreneurs in the other countries – Croatia, Slovenia, Portugal and Finland. This also means that it is possible to even find business possibilities with the tools that the project made possible. The students and teachers can also still exchange information and experience during the time to come with other persons that they know from before. In these more long term exchange networks it is possible to create value for all involved.

In global business and a cross cultural work you also need to understand what is said and not said if you are to meet the finishing line you set up as your goal (Guridham, 2005). During the project the partners also exchanged experiences and information about cultural differences in entrepreneurship. For example whether there are differences in terms of the view on failure and entrepreneurship in different countries. In some countries is the view on entrepreneurs that start up a successful business that it requires its trials and errors. This means that in some countries you do not lose your face if you go bankrupt a few times – this is in some cultures just a way of learning. And as you continue in the learning curve (Grant 2013) you move closer to success.

In some languages the word entrepreneur can mean different things. In Finland the word “Yrittäjä” is used in Finnish and that means someone that tries. The country is bilingual and the name for entrepreneur in Swedish is “företagare”. This means someone who owns a business. During the project period the “Failure day” was celebrated as a national “Failure day” that wanted to raise a discussion about our views on failure and entrepreneurship. The view on failure is very negative in Finland – both the view on individuals failing (for example students) and entrepreneurs.

This view was discussed and compared to the view on failure in cultures that ranks higher on Hofstede’s list on individuality - for example USA and entrepreneurship (Minkov, Hofstede and Hofstede 2013) and why there are differences. At the same time as the theme of “Failure day” was discussed in Finland the Finnish ambassador was lecturing in Croatia about the reasons for failure day and the long journey that Finland had taken from being a really poor country to the developed country it is today. But, the focus this year is still on the fact that this journey is still just as hard to travel today – just new kinds of challenges that lie in front of us. And on the road in front of us lie stones that represent our own attitudes and fears of taking wrong decisions and being afraid of putting on the wrong shoes on our journey forward. Therefore, it is a good thing to discuss with other partners what kind of shoes we put on in order to continue to travel with some comfort on the rocky way forward.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The teaching methods in this included video lectures with entrepreneurs in one country, job shadowing, creating of a web portal for knowledge transfer and communication and a face book group for creating international networks for the business students. These new methods had not been used before in the business schools. Job shadowing of other teachers and colleagues was very rewarding for the participating persons. Being a teacher often means that you work alone and seldom have other professionals that function as a shadow in your work. This also means that in a project like this you have the possibility to develop professionally with the help of colleagues in the same profession: colleagues that work within the same areas, face the same challenges and problems. If you also – in addition to these teachers – have entrepreneurs in other countries that you can connect with when needed – this means that you have a much bigger business network that cover the reality each day. This is extremely valuable for a teacher within business – a knowledge area that changes every minute as we speak in our classrooms – and very valuable as a practical application from a project like this.

From a cultural perspective the results of a project like this is also very valuable. When we work cross borders and cultures we learn to understand better who we are through other glasses. From a clearer identity we understand better the platform we stand on and how we, from these resources, can produce value, and not only something empty of no value to anyone. From this platform we can also start our innovative journey toward something that the world is waiting for. And in this awareness we can create more value for tomorrow's world. Because we have more examples in Europe of old ways that need to be exchanged by something new. By connecting areas we also enable innovative thinking – by for example connecting the business world of entrepreneurs and universities. In the best of worlds we have confrontation as a result – where ideas and real world collide and interact with better solutions as a result. In strategic educational business networks with projects this is possible – creating interaction platforms with enough oxygen for new ideas to live further on.

These kind of projects are very valuable – they were before, but especially now when economic times are hard. In these exchange networks we can create more focused value than alone. One university can cover less of the world – together we can interpret more of the world and understand which changes take place around us. The world changes and we need to change with it. But in order to understand what to do we need to interpret it first and in the best of worlds create value that we can build further on as the history continues. For that we need projects that support and boost innovative thinking and a more open world around us – and resources that enable this: For instance, a project such as "Developing Skills for Future Jobs".



## RAZVOJ OBRAZOVANJA ZA PODUZETNIŠTVO – IZAZOVI I RAZVOJNI ALATI „RAZVIJANJE VJEŠTINA ZA BUDUĆE POSLOVE” – PRIMJER FINSKE

### SAŽETAK

*Visoki broj nezaposlenih u Europi stvara potrebu za inovacijama i usredotočenost na poduzetništvo kao jedan od načina suočavanja s trenutnim izazovima. U tijeku je rasprava kako razviti obrazovanje za poduzetništvo u europskim školama. U mnogim mjestima imamo situaciju u kojoj stari modeli trebaju biti zamjenjeni novim modelima koji bi poslužili kao bolja interakcijska osnova s vanjskim poslovnim svijetom i društvom. Pedagoški se alati razvijaju zajedno s promjenom ekonomskih struktura u društvu i školama kako bi se lakše suočili s promjenama i izazovima u globalnom svijetu. U mnogim školama nastavne metode i alati ne potiču učenike na suočavanje s poslovnim svijetom nakon završetka škole. Stoga mnoge poslovne škole i sveučilišta traže nova rješenja na međunarodnoj razini za trenutne izazove u obliku strateških mreža. Međunarodne mreže i suradnja između obrazovnih institucija omogućuju školama i sveučilištima razmjenu najboljih ideja i praksi na višem stupnju. Obrazovne mreže unutar poslovnog obrazovanja mogu uključivati razmjenu kako pedagoških tako i kulturnih čimbenika koji utječu na inovativnu poslovnu edukaciju. Ta područja razmjene nalaze se u rezultatima projekta „Razvijanje vještina za buduće poslove” koji se održao unutar EU u razdoblju od 2013 do 2014. Ovaj rad ističe rezultate i zaključke projekta te nove ideje koje je on potaknuo.*

**Ključne riječi:** poduzetništvo; obrazovanje; izazovi; metode poučavanja

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