

Innovative Approach to Entrepreneurship Education: Creating an Opportunity for Students

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Abstract—Politis (2005) describes entrepreneurial learning as a process that facilitates the development of necessary knowledge for being effective in starting up and managing new ventures. His study highlights entrepreneurial learning as an experiential process where enterprising individuals continuously develop their entrepreneurial knowledge throughout their professional lives (Politis 2005). Gibb (2002) expounds a view that questions traditional educational methods in the context of developing entrepreneurship. He argues that “entrepreneurship can play a significant role in a range of very different environments in societies across the world, within and between countries and cultures”. However, he suggests that the traditional ‘paradigm’ of entrepreneurship education would need to change. The recent report from the European Union (2006) on entrepreneurship in Higher Education highlights the importance of education in the promotion of more entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors and refers to the challenge of stimulating entrepreneurial mindsets in young people. What important role has to play in developing entrepreneurship? The report (2006) emphasizes the need to use experience based teaching methods in order develop entrepreneurial thinking traditional educational methods (lectures) do not correlate well with the development of entrepreneurial thinking. What is it about entrepreneurship education in particular that helps students become leaders, innovators and creative problem-solvers? This paper seeks to explore the fundamental challenges involved in entrepreneurial teaching, learning and to provide an entrepreneurship education framework.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, learning, history, method, tools, game, simulation, facilitator, teacher, trainer, heritage, knowledge management, competence, heritage interpretation, history interpretation, key competences, lifelong learning

1. INTRODUCTION

According to a recent publication from the World Bank (2002:1), tertiary education is central to the creation of the intellectual capacity in which knowledge production and utilization depend and the promotion of lifelong learning practices necessary for updating knowledge and skills. In addition, the report (2002:26) argues that human capital formation is a critical requirement for any knowledge based economy. Equally, the World Bank (2002:27) notes the short shelf life of knowledge, skills and occupations as a consequence, the growing importance of continuing education.

In the UK the recent report by the Learning and Skills council (March 2005) proclaims that “Skills matter”: for individuals, organizations and society generally. Without the requisite skills including entrepreneurship, innovation, managerial effectiveness and technical capability, the goal of achieving a high value added high productivity economy will remain elusive. What role if any do educators have to play in developing entrepreneurship? The recent report from the EU(2006) on entrepreneurship in Higher Education highlights the importance of education in the promotion of more entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors and refers to the challenge of stimulating entrepreneurial mindsets in young people. In particular it notes that at third level the primary purpose of entrepreneurship education should be to develop entrepreneurial capacities and mindsets and advocates action learning approach.

The knowledge management embraces the issue of historic knowledge as a source for entrepreneurial learning. The knowledge about history can be utilized as a source of inspirations for teachers and adult trainers providing entrepreneurship education. It has potential for catalyzing the process of history based entrepreneurial learning. This process is a practice of knowledge management that transforms and develops knowledge about history into learning tools and actions inspired by selected and interpreted history.

2. ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

New challenge for entrepreneurship education is that it needs to address a number of personal, organizational and societal capacities. This in turns challenges educators to develop modes of teaching and learning that support the development of these capacities. Existing models of entrepreneurship education fall somewhat short in developing these capacities. The Harvard view of teaching entrepreneurship is highly case focused (Harvard Business School 2005).

Innovative approach to entrepreneurship education is creating an opportunity for students to feel entrepreneurial and this requires a teaching methodology which creates opportunities for Students to “learn by doing”. It recognizes

that knowledge is not learning until it is in some way internalized either by application or thinking. Very often, this internalizing is achieved by “doing”. This approach creates very real challenges for higher educational institutes as entrepreneurial learning can be seen as a process of trial and error and incremental improvements, something that can be hard to accommodate within traditional academic curriculum. Innovation is the specific instrument of entrepreneurship as mentioned by Peter F. Drucker (1993) as below; 548 “Innovation is the specific tool of entrepreneurs, the means by which they exploit change as an opportunity for a different business or a different service. It is capable of being presented as a discipline, capable of being learned, capable of being practiced. Entrepreneurs need to search purposefully for the sources of innovation, the changes and their symptoms that indicate opportunities for successful innovation. And then they need to know and apply the principles of successful innovation.”

Entrepreneurship Education can help to develop transversal skills in a broad sense—it is about how to develop a general set of competences applicable to life and work; not simply about learning how to run a business. Being entrepreneurial may mean 1) being 'intrapreneurial' as an employee, 2) being socially entrepreneurial to create social change or find solutions to social problems, or to be entrepreneurial in the sense of 3) starting a new venture or business (for social aims or for personal profit). It is relevant to all forms of learning, education and training to support the development of entrepreneurial attitudes, knowledge and behaviours—with or without a commercial objective.

The future of learning might require re-discovering traditional values and qualities of education—like dedicating attention to the individual needs of every child; and providing an educational setting that values a culture of appreciation. However, this should go together with using modern teaching methods and ICT-based tools. The Future of Learning and Curriculum development—children are ‘born entrepreneurs’. Therefore, in primary and lower-secondary school entrepreneurship education is a lot about encouraging the students’ playfulness and spontaneity, whilst in secondary and higher education, stimulating entrepreneurship can be seen as an attempt to regain students’ lost identities as entrepreneurs. This can be done by organizing projects where the students work in teams and cross boundaries. On the next level, in higher education, a supportive structure should be provided that helps the students to launch commercial, social or cultural ventures, building bridges between the academic and other communities in society. Social entrepreneurship was seen as key to ‘sell’ entrepreneurship to Teacher Colleges, especially for teachers that don’t teach business. Digital/ICT-based learning was also stressed as a way to promote entrepreneurial learning. Given that younger learners belong to the digital generation, ICT has to be integrated into the learning environment. Digital learning also allows for collaboration outside of the school.

However, the engagement of teachers may be a challenge: Teachers often do not feel comfortable with “new” materials, or older teachers may be not familiar with technological learning tools. Appropriate training of the teachers is therefore mandatory. However, teachers interested in entrepreneurship education come from all fields/subjects. Projects can also engage IT and foreign language teachers, since trading with foreign virtual companies makes a proficient use of English necessary.

How can students develop entrepreneurial competences and attitudes?

Use of practical projects to challenge young people, working with schools to advise them how innovative approaches could be implemented within current curriculum structures. Young people have ‘magic moments’ where learning became relevant to their lives outside education or helped them realize their own future potential, stating that these were very likely to be based within environments where learners feel safe and the teacher-learner relationship was based on trust—since ‘fear is not a good companion for learning’. Students that participate in the model concept that described, learn through three types of projects/activities

- **Challenge:** For three weeks, students, 13-14 years old, freely choose a challenge that they will undertake, having to live with a specific amount of money. Accompanied by an adult they go sailing, hiking etc. Through this experience, students are taught how to combine an activity with managing resources and finding ways to satisfy even their basic needs, such as accommodation;
- **Responsibility:** Students are asked to pick a community work. For example, work as “language r”, i.e. teaching English to unprivileged children that are usually of immigrant background. This project lasts for 6 months and it develops a “can do” attitude to students, while developing a sense of community;
- **Sustainable classroom:** In the participating schools, one week is completely dedicated to a project on making each classroom sustainable, by using a small budget. Through this project, students are taught how to effectively use the specific budget, but also create links with research. Students learn to use advanced science tools (Demonstration, workshop, 3D printing, nano-experiments, etc.) The results of this project are encouraging, given that it has led students.

Entrepreneurship Education is seen as an integral part of lifelong learning strategy.

It tackles several levels of education and is supported by a variety of actions approach to entrepreneurship education. When looking at their educational system, India experts identified it as a weakness that students and young graduates are not sufficiently prepared for self-employment, business and social entrepreneurship. Instead, they are rather

encouraged to follow the tradition of job-seeking. This analysis formed the main driver in India to implement entrepreneurship education on several levels of education.

The rationale is that entrepreneurial can-do attitude does not only develop in business life, but should be encouraged early on –and education is in the position to trigger and support these processes.

Entrepreneurship is seen as a broad concept. It aims at supporting

- Self-employment (independence of own lifestyle)
- An individuals' sense of citizenship (independence of the mature, jointly responsible citizen);
- Vocational independence (independent thinking and acting as a professionally competent employee), and
- Entrepreneurial independence (independent entrepreneurial activity –facilitation of equal opportunities).

Entrepreneurial learning methods

Teaching methods: These were divided into the following levels: Micro and Meso level. Micro level –methods that can be introduced easily and immediately. Meso level –methods that may need wider agreement/resources. Micro level for teacher methods, micro level refers to relevant initiatives that can take place in a classroom. Those methods do not necessarily require the engagement of the whole school or regulatory reforms from local/regional/national authorities. Such short interventions that can easily be included in existing lessons or subjects were suggested. For example: Combination of ICT with entrepreneurship: A more intensive use of ICT, e.g.–digital story-telling;–blogging; Real practice examples; Group puzzles Action learning; Self-oriented learning. Their adoption from teachers depends on the age group, the type of subject and other parameters. Meso level going one scale up, meso level teaching methods are methods that could require more the involvement of the whole discipline, support from stakeholders or other additional resources. Such approaches were identified the need to promote students' curiosity and eliminate fear. More specifically: debate clubs, exercises involving marketing and selling, interviews with entrepreneurs, creative idea generation and development plan games run opinion surveys to develop student's ownership about their learning, use simulation methods, promote voluntary work For assessment, it was stated that it should be possible to use unusual methods –e.g. direct observation of the teacher –but that it should be possible to assess against milestones and objectives already set in the curriculum. Some of the ideas and methods suggested referred to the macro level. Their implementation requires curriculum frameworks that allow for this to be made part of the curriculum on a local/regional/national policy level. The teaching methods identified included: practice firms in schools, mini/junior companies, outdoor training, whole school approaches such as

COOL (see case study section above), project learning, introducing a “learning office” at school level to coordinate entrepreneurial activities

3. CONCLUSION

Teachers are living through the overall aims of entrepreneurship education into increased future entrepreneurial activities in the society as they are transforming the aims of entrepreneurship education into teaching activities and into learning outcomes. Entrepreneurship education is taken as a crucial task at several levels in societies, and it is publicly guided and founded, it is natural that the results achieved are taken into consideration in the targeting and shaping of future aims and actions - this is important both for the policy makers and for individual teachers. The adoption of the appropriate pedagogy throughout the curriculum will help these higher institutions of learning to produce competent graduates who can use their knowledge and skills to create and manage enterprises in their own local communities, leading to personal growth, greater development, economic growth and social renewal of their nations. Innovative approaches to the learning and teaching of entrepreneurship focusing on context and involvement of entrepreneurs and activities will be more beneficial to students and their nations. Future research in the area will help bring insight and enhance understanding of the impact of the entrepreneurial education on the local communities and the number of alumni start-ups.

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