



FAMILIA Y EDUCACIÓN EN UN MUNDO EN CAMBIO

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A BRAZILIAN WAY TO TEACHABILITY**

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*Fecha de recepción: 7 de enero de 2012*

*Fecha de admisión: 15 de marzo de 2012*

**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose** - The aim of this paper is to analyse whether and how entrepreneurial competencies can be effectively taught and learned, specifically when young students are involved. More specifically, the research aims at identifying the best teaching method to teach entrepreneurship to school students, by showing the activities and results of a didactic program carried out in Brazil.

**Design/methodology/approach** - The methodology is based on a case study approach and is qualitative in nature, because it involves gathering data from statements made by individuals and the researchers' own description of their observations.

**Findings** - The paper shows that an effective way to entrepreneurship education can be represented by a method that carefully blends thinking and acting, and is based on a set of assumptions that goes beyond understanding, knowing, and talking and requires using, applying, and acting. At the core of the method is the ability for students to practice entrepreneurship and we introduce a portfolio of practice-based pedagogies.

**Practical implications** - The paper highlights how the adoption of a mainly experience-based didactic approach can greatly improve the teachability of entrepreneurial skills.

**Originality/value** - The paper presents a valuable approach to entrepreneurship education for school students, a conceptual perspective that scholars could adopt to study this topic in greater depth and a didactic project that other trainers could apply effectively.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship education, teachability, competences



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### INTRODUCTION

The importance of entrepreneurship for economic development has been widely acknowledged in recent years. Entrepreneurship is assumed to be a major source of innovation, job creation and growth (Carree, Van Stel, Thurik and Wennekers, 2001; Audretsch, Carree, Van Stel and Thurik, 2002). However, it has been proved difficult to fully capture the concept of entrepreneurship since there is no generally accepted definition. In the empirical growth literature education is positively related to the level of economic growth (Krueger and Lindahl, 2001). In particular, the empirical studies specify growth as a function of the initial level of education. Hence, from a societal perspective, both entrepreneurship and the educational system are important for economic growth. However, the importance of education for entrepreneurship has been acknowledged only recently. Entrepreneurship education involves, together with multidisciplinary, many skills and strong technical factors. Moreover, it must be considered that the teachers' knowledge and experience about entrepreneurship education largely affects the entrepreneurship education effectiveness and that the contradiction between higher requirements for teachers' comprehensive quality and a weaker faculty force is often a main issue. It restricts the quality improvement of entrepreneurial education (Hou, Baogui, 2004). Regardless of the discussions on the teachability of entrepreneurship, several researchers have attempted to capture and measure the impact of entrepreneurship education programs and courses. Measurement means defining commonly agreed or standard success indicators, but due to the lack of alignment about what educators wish to achieve with the applied pedagogical approaches (Mwasalwiba, 2010), a huge variety of measures exist. In the discussion about the teachability of entrepreneurship, Henry et al. (2005) state that at least some aspects of entrepreneurship can successfully be taught. More concretely, Rae and Carswell (2001) admit that there are some relatively easy teachable (e.g., business and management functional knowledge, business plan) and not easily teachable (e.g. creativity and innovativeness) components of entrepreneurship. For such reasons, entrepreneurship education is often not sufficiently recognized and is not based on solid didactic frameworks. But the previous statement does not fully describe the real weak links of the entrepreneurial education. In fact, traditionally, the educational system has inhibited the development of entrepreneurial qualities because it taught young people to obey, reproduce facts and to engage in wage employment after finishing their education. In contrast, entrepreneurs tend to rely on their own judgement, learn through the process of trial-and-error and create and facilitate their own job-environment. The focus in the educational system is on analytical thinking rather than on creative thinking (Kourilsky, 1990).

Nonetheless, the inclusion of 'know-how' building elements in entrepreneurship education programs is still not widespread. Chen et al. (1998) confirm that European education tends to focus rather on the technical aspects of entrepreneurship, and according to Kirby (2004), the focus on developing entrepreneurial skills, attributes, and behavior remains scarce. Blenker et al. (2008) dispute that the present educational system is capable of developing students' motivation, competences, and skills concerning entrepreneurship. As a consequence, a 'Teachability Dilemma.' (Haase & Lautenschläger, 2010) in entrepreneurship education exists. On the one hand, tacit and experience-based elements are highly relevant for successful business venturing, and their appropriate conveyance is what among all things differentiates and contrasts entrepreneurship education from traditional business management education. On the other hand, those qualifications are difficult to convey through entrepreneurship education; they must rather be experienced. In other words, whatever set of qualifications entrepreneurship education is able to provide, it encounters its limitations when transmitting the core value of entrepreneurship.

The complexity of our modern world imposes an education process that stimulates new skills, knowledge and values which can further promote the development of the entrepreneurial potential



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of every human being regardless of his/her social condition; an education especially aimed at fostering learner autonomy of thinking, feeling, valuing, undertaking and acting in order to carry out his/her own life.

Entrepreneurship can be developed in schools as another set of complementary activities with opportunities to broaden learning possibilities to students beyond school walls. Therefore, it is necessary to provide methodologies encouraging school communities to dream, plan and build their own way. Entrepreneurship is not a new theme or fad: it exists since man took his first big steps toward development and survival. Historical periods were marked by discoveries, inventions and techniques that increased the chances of success of dominant groups. The discovery of fire, for example, clearly demonstrated the ability of human evolution. We also call it an innovative action performed by man. Man used fire to scare away wild animals, to cook, light homes and, finally, this discovery led to *results* for the community.

The arrival of the twelfth century seems to break away definitively from an instructional and domesticating education, proclaiming education as a liberating force and focused on autonomy. The education guidelines of several countries seem to adopt the same principles: democratic and participatory; autonomous and responsible; flexible and committed; updated and innovative; human and holistic. These guidelines and the guidelines of UNESCO's *Education for the 21st Century*: Learning to know; Learning how to do; Learning to live; Learning to be; agree with the guiding principles of entrepreneurship.

As shown below, a didactic program on entrepreneurship education carried out in Brazil for school students, provides useful hints on effective ways to educate young students on entrepreneurial competencies.

### THE CASE STUDY

**Objectives:** To develop and enhance entrepreneurial competencies and skills of students from public education in the city of Juazeiro (BA) developing their protagonism, working notions of leadership, strategies, financial resources, social economy, family budget, planning, dreams and partnerships.

The entrepreneurship education requires specific methodologies so that students have substantial exposure and experience with the world of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, which means that practice is an important element in this process. Students have the opportunity to experience a teaching framework with the presence of real and concrete elements, in interaction with the program content.

Therefore, it is necessary that entrepreneurship in school practice is composed of teaching tools and methodologies that permeate the educational system. However, cognitive and social skills are to be developed by preparing the individual for problem solving and preparation of results. In the process, learning expands beyond the boundaries of the classroom and textbooks. Students are to learn not only by theory but also by practice and mainly in interaction with environment and contact with realities. The project was conceived with the purpose to meet National Curriculum Parameters (PCNs), which encourages the systematic introduction and discussion of problems of society by addressing the issues of economy and the world of work, in their cross-cutting themes.

**Tools:** The project Entrepreneurship Education was used as a tool for developing the training ability of teachers of municipal schools of Juazeiro (BA), since they are the major links to spread entrepreneurial culture, along with teaching coordinators and managers.

The content adopted by the project was passed on to teachers through workshops, group dynamics, debates, drama and preparation of materials constantly adjusted as needed by the actors involved explicit. In the training workshops, were handled content, concepts and methodological issues related to a topic that the teacher could work in the classroom with their students. At this



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time, teachers play a key role in learning, representing the bridge that enables learning methods to develop new skills. The school visits are also part of the methodology and were conducted by graduate students and faculty of the University project. This action was important to ensure trust and confidence in the project. Another positive aspect of the methodology was the Entrepreneurship Fair at schools and at the end of the year was held the Young Entrepreneur Fair - FEJEM with awards at the university's School Entrepreneur of the year. The support of the teaching methodology was developed in four themes, one for each year of elementary school.

### 6<sup>th</sup> Grade - Life Project

The main theme of this teaching strategy is based on two questions: what is your dream? How will you accomplish it? These two questions serve as a trigger to the whole process of teaching and learning entrepreneurship. Students are motivated to build a kind of roadmap, describing their dreams and how they will turn them into reality. It is a very special moment where the teacher needs to give this opportunity and create conditions for teaching students that through great creativity you can design your own dream.

#### Workshop 1: Dream Design

**Workshop 2:** Self-knowledge. Students are forced to make a self-assessment and discover their personal characteristics, preferences and desires. A special moment for students to make a matching top and at the same time an adaptation of a dream conceived with their vocations.

**Workshop 3:** Network Relations. The student must answer questions like: How to convince others of my dream? How to get help to realize my dream?

**Workshop 4:** Dream Environment. To gain confidence the dreamer must realize the dream requires a deep and detailed knowledge of the environment and its conditions. Focus on finding information.

**Workshop 5:** Feasibility of the dream. Focus on decision making. It is expected that the student already has the most important information to decide about the dream.

**Workshop 6:** Strategies to be adopted in order to organize and use resources. How to acquire the resources that are missing? How to manage the resources to realize the dream?

#### Workshop 7: Dream Narrative

### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade - Social Entrepreneurship

The methodological procedures proposed are synthesized in seven steps to converge to a path: the development of entrepreneurial skills in students, through planning, organization and implementation of a solidarity action.

**Workshop 1:** Initial Idea. It is based on a *diagnostic* of school and or community. The identification of problems in the school community is transformed into opportunities and exciting challenges for creative and innovative attitudes.

**Workshop 2:** Validation of the idea. Once diagnosed the situation, there is a validation of ideas, according to the intended goals. In this case the environment for the development of skills mainly favors the attitude of *seeking information*.

**Workshop 3:** How to Do It. Develop an *action plan* for implementation of actions related to the objectives established in the previous workshop. The how to select appropriate solutions, assembles a list of all available resources and non-existent ones, and prepare a construction schedule.

**Workshop 4:** Partnerships. The group will seek partnerships in which the requirement for success is proportional to the development of the *ability to negotiate* (persuasion).

**Workshop 5:** Execution. The implementation requires among others the ability of quick and consistent *decision making*.





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**Workshop 6:** Evaluation. Although it only appears here, evaluation is done at every step of the trajectory.

**Workshop 7:** Restart. It indicates that the process is endless, or the end of a social enterprise is characterized by the perception of opportunities for new challenges.

### 8<sup>th</sup> Grade – Personal economy

In the thematic focus on personal economy, the purpose is to connect personal interests and abilities of young people to professions they will exercise in the future. Furthermore, this didactic area involves working the planning of investments and spending wisely.

**Workshop 1:** Interest Inventory

**Workshop 2:** Work Deck of Cards

**Workshop 3:** Personal Budget

**Workshop 4:** Spending Wisely

**Workshop 5:** Narrative

### 9<sup>th</sup> Grade - Business Entrepreneurship

Some challenges are incorporated into this main theme, such as ***business competitiveness; pursuit of competitive differentials; winning the competition; and achieving profitability productivity necessary for the maintenance of an enterprise.***

For teaching purposes related to the main theme, students will create a fictitious micro enterprise where the concepts of entrepreneurship may be used.

**Workshop 1:** Importance of business entrepreneurial business in the development of the country. Understanding what is business entrepreneurship.

**Workshop 2:** Identification of “opportunities”. The workshop is aimed at enabling students to identify their customers, their needs and how they can be satisfied by selling a product or service.

**Workshop 3:** Identification of your market supplier. Location of the resources needed for production. The competitive environment is also evaluated.

**Workshop 4:** Production: Introducing the concept of production system, and its different ways.

**Workshop 5:** Design of the company's finances. To know in detail the numbers and finance concepts that will help in managing your organization providing some management tools.

**Workshop 6:** Presentation of evaluation methods results, as well as the ideal way to implement it.

**Workshop 7:** The narrative. Students presentation referring of how was the development of their entrepreneurial activities during the school year.

**Evaluation:** The Project was implemented in 2008 in partnership with Secretaria de Educação of the Municipality and with the participation of teachers and students of UNIVASF entrepreneurship.

**Results:** As to the impact on Entrepreneurship Education, in the period from 2008 to 2011 the project held: training of more than 150 teachers, coordinators and managers from 29 public schools in addition to more than five thousand students from 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> year. Local seminars on Entrepreneurial Education; 3 Editions of Young Entrepreneur Fair (FEJEM) in partnership with Secretaria da Educação, SEBRAE, SENAC and other public and private institutions. Edition of the book: *Entrepreneurial Education: developing the role of children and adolescents through social entrepreneurship*. Book Collection of the Program “More Education” of Ministério da Educação (MEC). *Economic Education and Entrepreneurship in public education: promoting the role of children and adolescents*. 3 Editions of the comic book “Young Entrepreneurs” addressed to school students network. Academic articles published and presented at various conferences, seminars, forums and annals especially those related to university extension.



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### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Since the first year of the project, the methodology was changed at the request of teachers and students of the school network and of their own team of University teachers and students, on the basis of intuitively perceived weaknesses in the process because of their familiarity with the methodology and positive and negative experiences.

Among the most recent and at the same time most important changes was the creation of a comic book to support the understanding of concepts by students. The magazine seeks to internalize all the concepts worked during the workshops, in a playful manner and with an appropriate language for children. Among the contributions of the project, the implementation of the discipline of entrepreneurship in the curriculum of basic education has been the most important, including motivating other cities to do the same. However, to prove efficacy, if we can talk about efficacy in education, the project still needs evaluation mechanisms in the entire school community.

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