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**FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING IN TEACHER
EDUCATION**

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Abstract

The paper focuses on presenting *entrepreneurial education* as a possibility of today educational systems to address the challenges of the postmodern, post-industrial, the knowledge society. It is emphasized the necessity for education to develop awareness of entrepreneurship from an early age by revising the school curriculum to explicitly include entrepreneurship as an educational objective and to support teachers in incorporating entrepreneurial activities in their daily practices with students. The paper is also underlying the importance of the recently-redefined entrepreneurial competence by the European Commission and its conceptual framework that must be used in the development of curricula and learning activities. It is presented a new way of designing the educational activities and curriculum that fosters the *entrepreneurial learning* that will make the development of *entrepreneurship competence* possible. There are emphasized several approaches of designing innovative teaching and learning methods correlated with a new approach on curricular policies that should be implemented.

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial education must be considered nowadays an important instrument to address the challenges of the 21st Century. Defining entrepreneurship as an individual's ability to *turn ideas into action*, to be innovative, take the initiative, take risks, plan and manage projects with a view to achieving objectives, the European Commission is focusing on promoting the learning about entrepreneurship from primary school through to university and considers that the success of the European Union in meeting the challenges of competitiveness and economic growth to depend on *dynamic entrepreneurship*. In this

respect, education should develop awareness of entrepreneurship from an early age. Introducing young people to entrepreneurship develops their initiative and helps them to be more creative and self-confident in whatever they undertake and to act in a socially responsible way (EU, 2004).

Thus, the Commission recommendations include the necessity for Member States to develop more systematic strategies to promote entrepreneurship training through: a) a coherent framework; b) support for schools; c) fostering entrepreneurship in higher education; d) support for teachers; e) participation by external actors and businesses; f) practical experience.

Based on these recommendations, it is necessary to revise the curriculum to explicitly include entrepreneurship as an educational objective, to support teachers in incorporating entrepreneurial activities in curriculum, design new teaching materials, implement projects, partner with businesses on entrepreneurial training of teachers or setting up and running mini-companies.

Also, in 2006, and reinforced in 2012 in its *Rethinking Education Communication*, the European Commission included entrepreneurship as one of eight *key-competences* for lifelong learning in a modern knowledge-based society. It became an important objective at national level being included in the educational strategy of all Member States. The entrepreneurship key-competence is defined as *a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship*, being the ability to turn ideas into action through creativity, innovation and risk taking as well as ability to plan and manage projects (EU, 2006).

2. From Entrepreneurship Education to Entrepreneurial Learning

Based on this educational aim, in 2016, the EU developed the *EntreComp framework* that proposes a shared definition of entrepreneurship as a competence, with the aim to raise consensus among all stakeholders and to establish a bridge between the educational institutions and workplace. It is set to become a reference *de facto* for any initiative aiming to foster entrepreneurial capacity of European citizens. It consists of 3 interrelated and interconnected competence areas: *Ideas and opportunities*, *Resources* and *Into action*. Each of the areas is made up of 5 competences, which, together, constitute the building blocks of entrepreneurship as a competence. The framework develops the 15 competences along an 8-level progression model and proposes a comprehensive list of 442 learning outcomes.

It defines *entrepreneurship* as a *transversal competence*, which applies to all spheres of life: from nurturing personal development, to actively participating in society, to (re)entering the job market as an employee or as a self-employed person, and also to starting up ventures (cultural, social or commercial).

The framework can be used as a basis for the development of curricula and learning activities fostering entrepreneurship as a competence. Also, it can be used for the definition of parameters to assess learners' and citizens' entrepreneurial competences (Bacigalupo *et al.*, 2016).

Defining the entrepreneurship competence as the *capacity to capitalize the opportunities and ideas to create shared and added value for others*, we can make the shift from *entrepreneurship education*, that aims at developing individuals competence to start new businesses and initiatives, to *entrepreneurial education*, as the new approach of education and instruction that sets a new way of designing the educational activities and curriculum to foster a new generation of learning activities (e.g. *entrepreneurial learning*) that will make *entrepreneurship competence* possible throughout the entire curriculum.

We can hardly reduce entrepreneurial learning to fixed pre-specified statements of learning outcomes since it deals with the creation of value that does not exist, prior to the entrepreneurial learning process and cannot be foreseen in abstraction, but the framework of learning outcomes statements is important to be developed as a reference point for the formal education and training sector, for curricula design, for the non-formal learning context and to guide the definition of tailored pedagogies, assessment methods, and learning environments that foster effective entrepreneurial learning (Bacigalupo *et al.*, 2016, p.17).

In this context, the *entrepreneurial education* can be defined as an innovative way of designing, organizing and developing - into interdependence - the formal-non-formal-informal curriculum. It restructures the school curriculum, presenting itself as a new paradigm of education (Soare, 2008). This perspective overcomes the narrow approach of entrepreneurship education that is linked with developing the competences to start a new business, the entrepreneur being the results of such education (Soare, 2008, 11-15). It focusses on developing the key-competence of entrepreneurship in teacher education by restructuring the curriculum for pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes with effects on future teachers' development of competence profile.

It will foster the development of essential skills and attitudes like creativity, initiative, tenacity, teamwork, understanding of risks and opportunities, and thus, developing the sense of responsibility as a key competence mind-set that will help students transform their ideas into action and later, significantly increases their employability.

This means a new way of looking at teachers' competence profile by including the development of entrepreneurial competence, resulting in a new type of teacher – the *entrepreneurial teacher*. It is the teacher that approaches teaching and learning from an entrepreneurial perspective, innovating, being creative, and developing educational projects in order to meet the professional and social challenges. This attitude towards teaching will determine a new focus on developing students' entrepreneurial approach of the activity e.g. the *entrepreneurial learning*.

3. Entrepreneurial Competence Framework

Furthermore, there is established the long-term framework when *The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan* was promoted in 2013. It identified three areas for immediate intervention: a) entrepreneurial education and training to support growth and business creation; b) removing existing administrative barriers and supporting entrepreneurs in crucial phases of the business lifecycle; c) reigniting the culture of entrepreneurship in Europe and nurturing the new generation of entrepreneurs (EU, 2013).

So, the policy context is set for implementing in teacher education new approaches on teaching and learning. Promoting entrepreneurship in teacher education programmes seeks to enable teachers and teacher students to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the personal, professional and social challenges they face by putting their ideas, initiatives, creativity into practice. This is the way entrepreneurial learning is making its way into curriculum field.

As Langa (2015) demonstrates in his study, the transversal competences acquired by students for the didactic profession is of a great importance. This aspect is all the more important so as persons with the same level and the same register of competences obtain different results in the activity, on the whole.

The factors explaining such differences are related to the general elements of transversal competences, among which: personal development, lifelong learning, autonomy and responsibility, critical thinking and reflexive practice, cooperation, observance of professional deontology principles, communication and social interaction.

In order to develop this competence, teachers can choose for the use of certain methods and teaching aids, and for certain forms of organization of student work, aiming at stimulating different intelligences in students, and taking into account the students' intelligence profile (Petruța, 2016).

It becomes clear that teachers need to become more entrepreneurial in their approach of teaching and learning and that will be possible by rethinking teacher education programmes to include more relevant activities and training towards the development of teachers entrepreneurial competence. It should start by setting relevant criteria for their selection and professional development, a more attention to linking theory with practice, guiding future teachers for the development of the specific professional competences and a more focus on reflection on their academic practice and behavior and that can contribute to the forging of the *professional identity* of teacher educators.

As foreseen by the European Commission (2013b, p. 13), there are several key steps that can be taken to put the profession of teacher educator onto a firmer footing: a) finding ways to achieve shared definitions of professional competences – reflecting agreement on the multi-faceted knowledge, experiences, skills and attitudes required for teacher educators to be effective in different contexts; b) improving provision of professional learning and development; c) promoting investigation and research about teacher educators; d) promoting active, committed professional communities and associations; and e) clarifying roles and responsibilities.

4. Teaching and Learning Methods

The methods that can be used in developing the entrepreneurship competence can be grouped into the following levels (EACEA, 2013): a) micro level – methods that can be introduced easily and immediately; b) meso level – methods that may need wider agreement/resources; c) macro level – methods that require changes to the curriculum.

The micro level refers to relevant initiatives that can take place in a classroom. It can include the use of the following teaching & learning methods: blending ICT with entrepreneurship (digital storytelling, blogging), real practice examples, group puzzles, action learning and self-oriented learning.

The meso level might require the involvement of the whole school, support from stakeholders or other additional resources. They refer to: debate clubs, exercising marketing and selling, interviews with entrepreneurs, creative idea generation and development, plan games, running of opinion surveys to develop students' ownership about their learning, use of simulation methods and the promotion of voluntary work.

The macro level represents the curricular policy implemented at local/regional/national level. They might include: practice firms in schools, mini/junior companies, outdoor training, whole school projects, project learning or introducing a *learning office* at school level to coordinate entrepreneurial activities.

Following Keramat (2015) conclusions, we can identify the following methods that can be used in entrepreneurial education: direct teaching-learning methods (inviting guest entrepreneurs, mentoring,

official speech-seminars, video watching and recording, training in extracurricular activities, training in specialized lessons, small businesses mentoring, entrepreneurship tutoring), interactive teaching-learning methods (process-oriented learning, learning from mistakes, interviewing entrepreneurs, bilateral learning, group discussion, networking, problem-oriented learning, active learning), practical-operational teaching-learning methods (role-playing, training workshops, site visiting, class practice, research projects, internship, business planning, starting business, studying nature, investment projects, practical experience).

5. Conclusions

Developing a common conceptual approach on teacher educator profession and promoting an entrepreneurial ecosystem in educational institutions will create a reference point for any initiative intending to foster entrepreneurial learning. A more focus on practical experiential learning experiences will be needed in the teachers training programs. Designing learning contexts by involving real-life entrepreneurs will make entrepreneurial learning more productive and efficient.

This can be possible only by developing a reference framework with learning outcome descriptors explicitly defined and mandatory throughout the curriculum from primary, secondary, vocational to higher and adult education contexts. Focusing curriculum on developing the entrepreneurship competence and specific levels of proficiency will be possible by implement entrepreneurial teaching and learning methods in the classrooms. Only by connecting entrepreneurship education policies with teachers practice we will promote the development of entrepreneurial learning as a pathway towards entrepreneurial competence of teachers and students in the educational context.

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