



Fostering Entrepreneurial Mind-sets - The Key Role Teachers Play

"We all know that a good leader must be resourceful, intuitive, creative, self-motivated but he/she also needs to be supported by an efficient and cohesive team. The school represents one of the best places to develop this important attitude. That's why we have to teach students to work together and to become the entrepreneur of their own future" (Teacher from Italy)

Education has its role to play in building a more entrepreneurial culture where young people bring energy, ideas and innovation to the labour market. Getting the education system to give more concerted attention to entrepreneurship - at all levels - is high on the policy agenda in Europe. Good practices already exist across countries but a systematic approach and a greater focus on teachers is needed to achieve scale and impact.

Different findings show the positive impact of entrepreneurship education, but students' participation in those programmes is still low: it is currently estimated that only 1 in 10 students has access to an in-school practical entrepreneurial experience before leaving compulsory education. More needs to be done to develop young people's entrepreneurial skills. This starts by providing better initial and in-service training for teachers and ensuring they have the teaching resources they need.

Too often, teachers implementing entrepreneurship education programmes are 'lonely souls' as their school community does not always understand the benefits of using entrepreneurial methods and bringing entrepreneurship, in all its different forms, into the classroom. Entrepreneurship education is fundamentally project-based and student-centred. The methodology uses practical real world experiences and learning-by-doing approaches. Networking among teachers helps pass on good practices and improve learning outcomes. Technology plays an increasingly important role, both inside the classroom and for professional development.

How to make sure teachers step out of their comfort zone and start re-shaping their activities? How can we stimulate them to become 'educational entrepreneurs'? Clearly, the first condition is to provide them with the right training. Secondly, we need to make sure they work in an environment where they can actually create changes.

More entrepreneurial learning methods need to be included in teacher training, and that includes more collaborative activities. If we do not provide teachers with the tools and resources needed, and if we do not, at the same time, expose them while in training to the importance of partnerships (with other actors in the community such as businesses, civil society and employers in general) teachers will be less aware of what makes entrepreneurship education different. The way teachers are trained is the first thing to be changed if we want to achieve the goal of having more entrepreneurial teachers. All teachers should learn about entrepreneurship in an entrepreneurial way: by trying and experiencing it. Less lecturing and less theory, more engagement, active collaboration and learning by doing. Starting with initial teacher training programmes, teachers need to be trained with problem-solving skills and develop a mind-set enabling them to overcome educational challenges coming on their way.

After that, during the course of their career, a focus on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial methods needs to be included in their continuous professional development with specific workshops and general trainings where teachers can share good practices, experience new things and decide what to bring back to their classroom. This will also give a chance for those who did not experience entrepreneurship education during their initial training to catch up with the latest developments.

If guidelines are needed especially at the beginning of the activities in a school, a support structure becomes key later on to ensure teachers can network, share and access to new content and tools. That is why initiatives like the [Virtual Guide to Entrepreneurial Learning](#) or the practices identified in the [Innovation Cluster for Entrepreneurship Education](#) are crucial to stimulate this culture, connect entrepreneurial teachers across Europe and motivate them to share resources and initiatives that can be easily adapted and implemented in a new environment.

Developing the competences of school leaders and teaching staff must be a priority. Implementing entrepreneurship education and making it a daily practice in schools takes time but it pays back. Everything starts with the teachers and, supporting them, with the headmasters as they are the first one able to make a difference in fostering an entrepreneurial mind-set in our future generations.

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