

Entrepreneurship Education between economic educational philosophy and key competence for lifelong learning

Abstract

The essay broaches the issue of Entrepreneurship Education as economic educational philosophy for business administration courses and as a key competence across all school subjects, based on the development work in business didactics as the author of the workbook series “Wirtschaft verstehen – Zukunft gestalten”, the founding of the “Initiative for Teaching Entrepreneurship” (IFTE) and the Impulse Centre for Entrepreneurship Education (eesi) of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (bm:ukk).



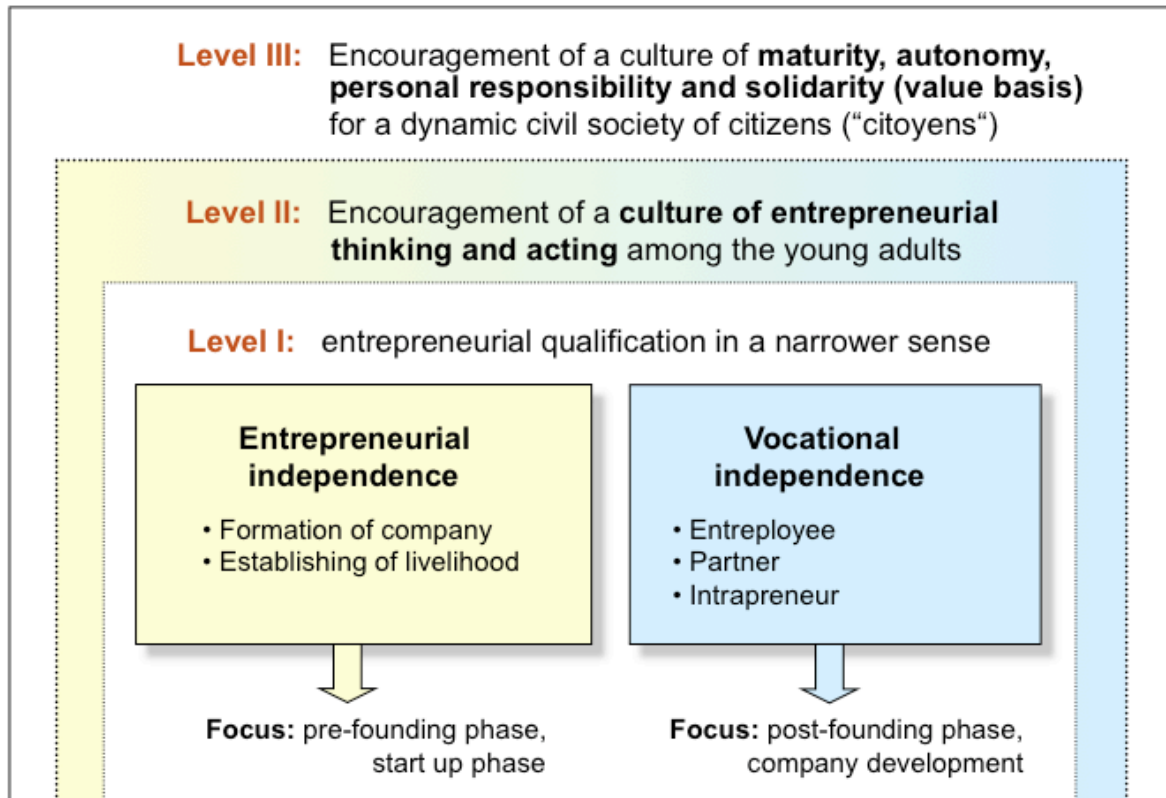
III. 1: Implementation of own ideas and lifelong learning

1 Initial situation

Many people reach a point in life where they feel that their previous path has been incomplete – and at that point are especially open to impulses which present new perspectives. In my case, such a point was my activity of many years in Southeast Europe. As a relatively young trainer I had already stood before teachers and university employees - and knew that the knowledge transfer of business administration and complex methods of business didactics was expected from me. At the time, especially one idea was essential to my work: Paulo Freire (cf. 1973, p. 12) says that education can never be neutral. It is either an instrument for the liberation of humans or it is an instrument of adaption. In his research, he especially focuses on the question of “Why?”

It is difficult to inspire young adults in an environment where “whateverism” and the “fun factor” are key words. Therefore, the encouragement of the individual and the illustration of the individual advantage for the learner are crucial in our work: “The things that are happening here affect me and are important to me”.

This essay is to be understood as a plea for the strengthening of Entrepreneurship Education for young adults.



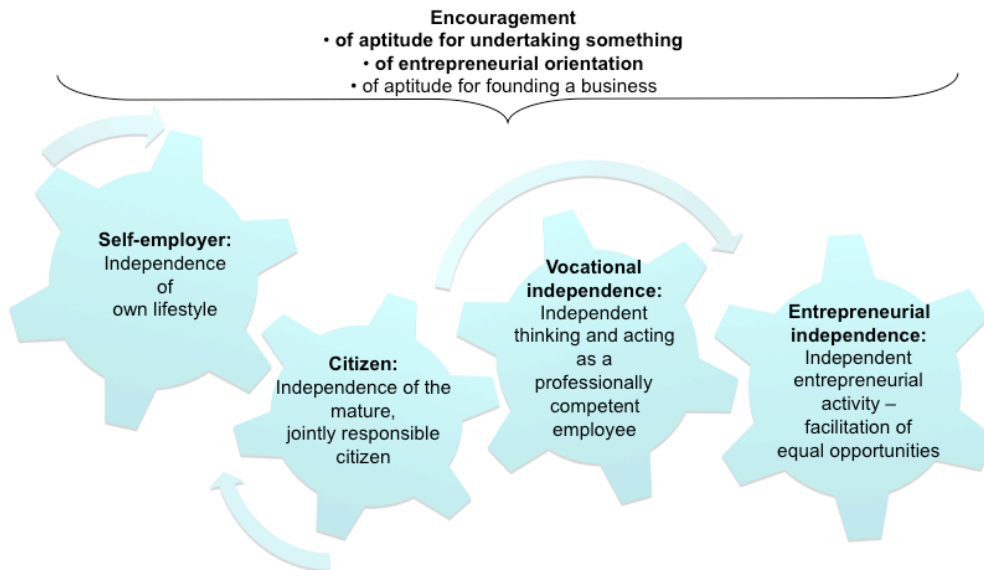
III. 2: Entrepreneurship Education between entrepreneurial/vocational independence and the education of citizens (Aff/Lindner 2005, p. 100)

2 Entrepreneurship Education – levels and goals

Entrepreneurship Education is a process-based approach which focuses on the encouragement and expectation of the entrepreneurial spirit and initiative, especially of young adults (cf. Lindner 2005). Its core is the strengthening of entrepreneurial competencies, i.e. the ability to put ideas into practice (opportunity-based learning). This requires the potential to recognise chances, develop ideas and a controlled readiness to assume risk as well as the ability to plan projects and carry them out, to acquire new knowledge and to reach certain goals (cf. EU Commission 2005, p. 21 and Ashmore 2006, p. 2).

Entrepreneurship Education reaches from the entrepreneurial level in a narrower sense to the characteristics of the responsible citizen (cf. Aff/Lindner 2005, p. 100). This understanding of Entrepreneurship Education contains three levels (s. III. 2). On level I, the knowledge transfer of core competencies of entrepreneurial and vocational independence takes place. This level especially addresses the business administration subjects at school. The levels II and III embed Entrepreneurship Education as a didactical category of objectives and key competence across all school subjects, including extracurricular activities and the development of an according school culture (s. ch. 4).

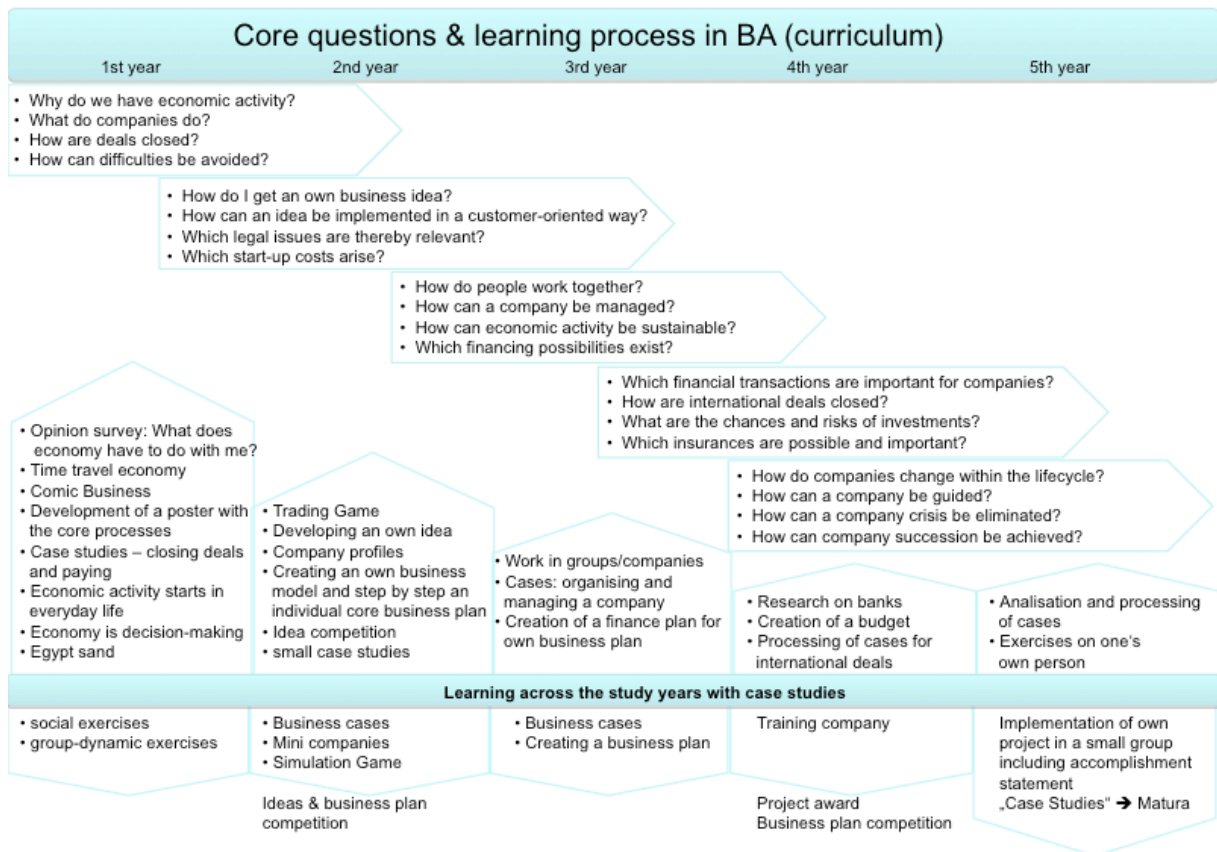
Goals of Entrepreneurship Education for young adults



III. 3: Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education for young adults

The interest in Entrepreneurship Education for young adults should be awakened by the five following considerations:

- Entrepreneurship Education offers a **socio-pedagogical perspective**. It is an approach which can act as an opener of chances for disadvantaged groups of society. Entrepreneurship helps to learn how to participate in society – it shows various outlooks on life (cf. Faltin/Zimmer 1995).
- Entrepreneurship Education links **“learning”** with **“wanting”**. Due to working on the own idea, knowledge is developed together with the teachers. The role of the teacher varies between that of an expert and that of an advisor. The implementation of the own idea offers an interesting system of the economic educational content based on the company lifecycle.
- Entrepreneurship **bridges the gap** between vocational education and general education, for a classic goal of pedagogical practice is the encouragement of responsibility and self-determination (s. III. 3). Immanuel Kant’s quote (1783) could also be the slogan for today’s school education across all subjects: “Sapere aude! Dare to know.”
- Today’s students as the workforce of the future will find themselves among different **styles of employment**. Thus, their preparation is important. In the discussion on vocational education, the terms “entreplooyee” (cf. Pongratz/Voß 2004) and “self-entrepreneur” (cf. Gonon 2008) are used in this context.
- The question if the future will bring a **sustainable economy** is also decided in the schools – as all employees and entrepreneurs of tomorrow are at school level today.



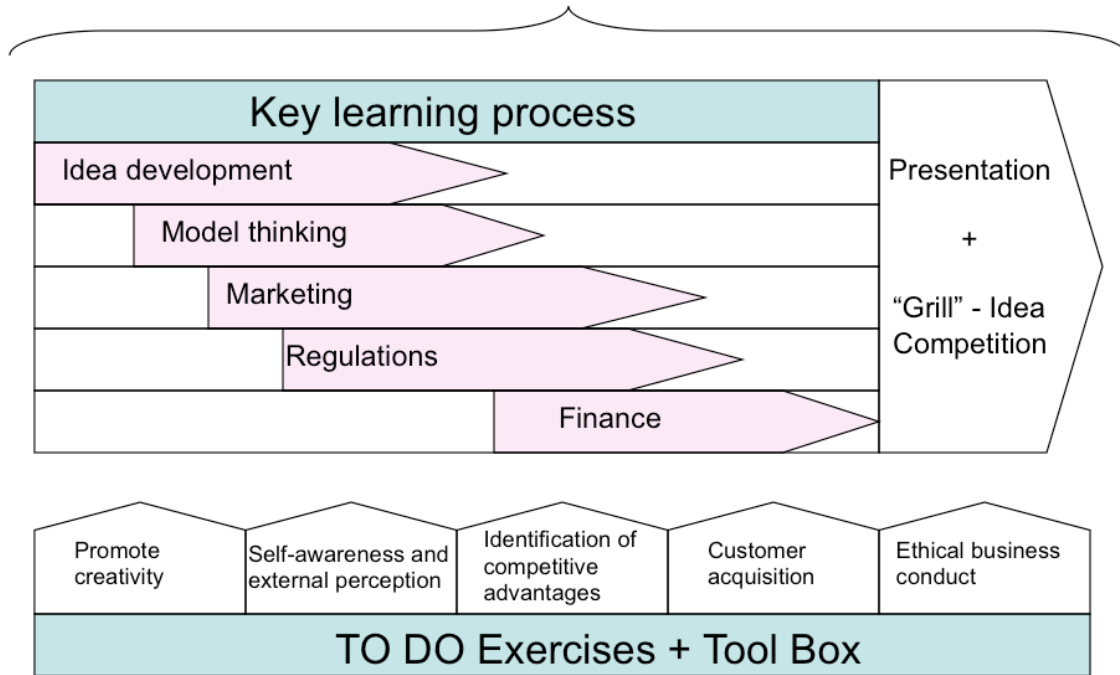
III. 4: School subject Business Administration at the HAK, interpreted as an entrepreneurial learning process

3 Entrepreneurship Education as economic educational philosophy

Entrepreneurial thinking and acting must be developed in a long-term process. The school subject economy (s. III. 4 with the example of the subject Business Administration, including business administration practices, training firm and the project in small groups in the 4th/5th year of the Business Schools HAK) offers a good framework – concerning the curriculum as well as the temporal possibilities – to awaken, strengthen and deepen the entrepreneurial competencies within a process (according to the age of the students). This interpretation of the curriculum is emphasised by the educational standards for the economic subjects at the Business Schools HAK which are called “Entrepreneurship and Management” (cf. Kempel 2010a). The workbook series “Wirtschaft verstehen – Zukunft gestalten” (cf. Lindner et al. 2011) and Case Studies (cf. Lindner et al. 2009 and 2002) offers teaching material that especially supports this subject-didactic orientation and provides a good basis for everyday teaching in business classes. The workbook series “Entrepreneurship & Management” (cf. Kempel et al. 2010b) are the teaching materials for the special subject “Entrepreneurship & Management”, which is offered from more than 40 Business Schools HAK (cf. bm:ukk 2004).

Business as an entrepreneurial learning process

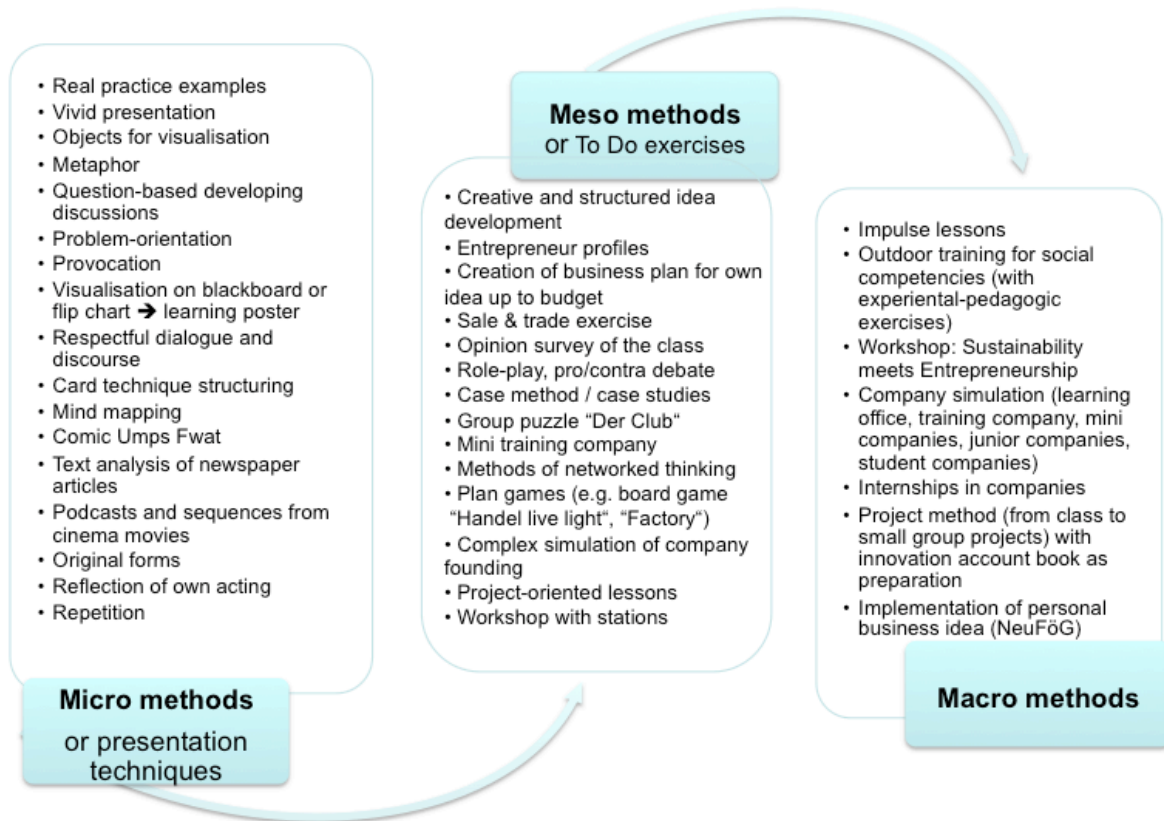
From the individual idea to the core business plan



III. 5: School subject Business Administration at the 2nd year of the HAK, interpreted as Entrepreneurial Learning process

Entrepreneurship Education as economic educational philosophy is based on a dialogic communication between teachers and students which offers a respectful and encouraging exchange for the acquisition of skills. Freire (cf. 1973) formulates this a little more provocative by saying that, to him, teaching is not the “*devouring*” of other people’s knowledge, but shared interaction and reflection. Teaching is the discussion of problems by raising questions and finding answers through shared methodic and content-based response. It is the unreasonable demand of self-determination.

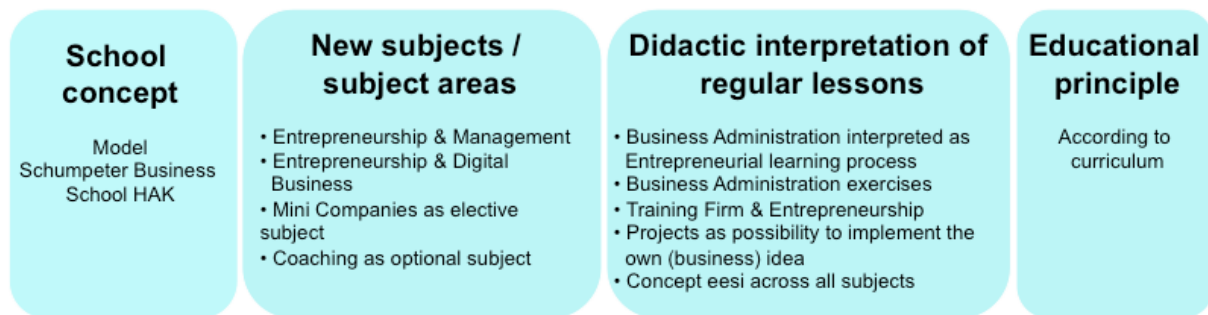
If entrepreneurial activity is characterized by the unity of knowledge, realization and action, this has consequences on the learning/teaching arrangements which have to be chosen. The simple transfer of dull knowledge for the target group of young adults is not enough in order to get across entrepreneurial mindsets.



III. 6: Methods of Entrepreneurship Education for economy courses

In order to realize Entrepreneurship Education in economy classes, student-activating methods are needed (s. III. 5), based on enactment techniques for frontal teaching phases, team work and individual business plans for own business ideas as well as learning in real-life situations in projects and case studies (cf. Lindner/Tötterström 2009, Aff et al. 2004, Kellner/Lindner 2002). "Reality" follows its own movements, its management often requires a process of research-based learning in a close connection of theory and practice. Young adults should learn early to take things into their own hands (cf. Faltin/Zimmer 1995, pp. 136).

Entrepreneurship Education stands for method pluralism with a strong focus on experience-based learning; not a new method monism!



III. 7: Approaches of Entrepreneurship Education for young adults in the school context

4 Entrepreneurship Education as key competence for lifelong learning

The encouragement of the entrepreneurial spirit of young adults is not only a task for the economy subject, but also touches the fundamental personal and social questions of individual personal responsibility and maturity as well as a culture of independence and solidarity within society – which is also anchored as an educational principle in the curriculum of the BMHS (cf. III. 6). The educational principle of Entrepreneurship Education emphasises this general value across all subjects.

The European Parliament and the Council have therefore recommended Entrepreneurship as one of eight key competencies for lifelong learning (cf. EU Commission 2005). Key competencies are individual fundamentals – based on knowledge, abilities and contextual settings - every EU citizen needs for their employability and the personal development in a knowledge society.

Eight key competencies were defined:

- (1) communication in mother tongue,
- (2) communication in foreign languages,
- (3) mathematical competence and basic competencies in science and technology,
- (4) digital competence,
- (5) learning to learn,
- (6) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship,
- (7) cultural awareness and cultural expression,
- (8) social and civic competence.

Many of the competencies overlap or interlock: essential aspects that are important in one area support the attainment of competencies in another area.

Summarising conclusion on Entrepreneurship Education for young adults:

- Society needs a culture of independence and responsibility, of which the root lies in schooling and education. Entrepreneurship is the elementary spirit for a dynamic market economy. It is dynamic persons, “creative destructors”, who keep market economy and society going.
- “Entrepreneurial virtues” such as personal responsibility, initiative, innovation drive, readiness to assume risk and confidence are not only essential for a functioning market economy but also for a spirited civil society.
- Entrepreneurship Education for young adults does not limit itself to a concept of a “talent hotbed for young entrepreneurs”, but stands for an economic educational philosophy that encourages economic creativity, personal responsibility and decision-making ability as well as insight into the significance of entrepreneurial decisions for the social and economic dynamics as well as for the social balance.
- Entrepreneurial mindsets do not develop in professional life, but already do so in the early phases of socialisation. Therefore, education is in a process-enhancing or process-triggering position. Entrepreneurial thinking and acting must be developed in a long-term process.
- Entrepreneurship Education needs method pluralism with a strong focus on experience-based learning, not new method monism. It is strongly linked with economic education, but is an interdisciplinary task for various subjects and additional personality-based offers (e.g. coaching, extra-curricular working groups, portfolio folder).
- Entrepreneurship Education stands for dialogic communication between teachers and students which is characterised by respect and encouragement.
- Entrepreneurship Education is an approach which can be a opener of chances for disadvantaged groups within society. Entrepreneurship shows young adults how they can participate in society – therefore, it shows various outlooks on life.
- Entrepreneurship is one of eight key competencies for lifelong learning which every EU citizen needs for their employability and personal development in a knowledge society.

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