

VISIBLE LEARNING – INSTRUMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING

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ABSTRACT: *The paper aims to identify the ways in which visible learning can be used in entrepreneurial education, both in universities and in secondary school. Thus, the first part of the paper presents a brief introduction on the concept of entrepreneurship and the necessity of entrepreneurial education in Romania. The second part of the paper highlights the concept of visible learning as a modern and effective tool of entrepreneurial education. At the end of the paper I emphasized the role of the four variables of the scholastic activity, namely the teacher, the student, the subject and the didactic management.*

KEY WORDS: *visible learning, entrepreneurial training, entrepreneurial education, scholastic activity.*

JELL CLASIFICATION: *L26, I25.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In Romania during the post-communist period, 1990-1995, the term entrepreneur was associated with the subcontractor, the individual or the legal entity, who agreed, on the basis of contractual conditions and clauses, to execute different works for the benefit of another firm in return for pre-established sums of money.

Subsequently, this term was attributed to the economic agent within the market economy that adopts an active and innovative behaviour specific to the economic systems based on competition, risk and private initiative. In this sense, the entrepreneur is synonymous with the enterpriser, that is, entrepreneurship as an innovative action, as a driver of solid economic development.

It is obvious that the concept of entrepreneurship differs according to the theoretical perspective of the various 'schools' studying this phenomenon and is

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influenced by the decision to start a business and the factors that affect this decision: personal characteristics of the individual; the presence of entrepreneurial examples within the social circle of some people; entrepreneurial education acquired from parents and school.

Today, the stunning development of TV and Internet communications has made it possible for the entrepreneurial phenomenon to be known at global level by more and more people, which has helped stimulate the desire to start up a business. All this has made people of different ages and professional categories, with or without financial resources or entrepreneurial training, dream about the opportunity of setting up their own business, and in this context overcome the classical definitions; Marius Ghenea defines the entrepreneur as follows: 'the person who looks at a problem and sees it as an opportunity is not necessarily a man with ideas but a man who acts on his ideas and turns them into business.

2. THE NEED OF ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION

In order to become competitive and to face on-going change, youngsters need activities, programs and projects that develop as many competences as possible. The process of education must start at a very young age and an early entrepreneurial education is a necessity. These personal skills do not develop through a single discipline, they must be cultivated starting with primary school and developed at upper levels, in high schools and universities. Study subjects in secondary and higher education should include presentations of the entrepreneurial environment and effective contributions to its support, thus adopting the best practice from developed economies. In general, entrepreneurial education should not be mistaken for general business or economic studies, and the role of the teacher is to facilitate the student - knowledge relation, helping him to find his own path.

This type of education gives them not only the entrepreneurial training needed to start up a business, but also young people can acquire the skills necessary to be an efficient entrepreneur or employee and, moreover, to manage their own resources and budgets, to set goals, to learn how to reach them and to evolve continuously. It provides support for every person in private and public life, increases employees' awareness of the context of their work, and increases their ability to seize opportunities, and provides a basis for entrepreneurs who run social and commercial activities.

Compared to other countries, Romanians show a reduced entrepreneurial spirit due to the lack of entrepreneurial education and of a stimulating entrepreneurial environment.

The causes that have led to such a situation are:

- unavailability of private property during communism, when there was no concept of entrepreneurship in the true sense of the word;
- the absence of the most elementary form of entrepreneurial education during communism and after 1990 for quite a long period, of the elements of entrepreneurial education;
- in many circumstances, entrepreneurial education was taught by people without specialized training and without teaching specific notions of practical activity, only

theoretical concepts without applicability and without arousing a favourable attitude towards entrepreneurship;

- the constantly changing legislative framework, which generates uncertainty among those interested in developing their own business;
- inability to elaborate entrepreneurial development strategies with effective tools in its favour;
- inherited cultural, religious or mentality aspects;
- businessmen are not involved in entrepreneurial education and practical elements are missing.

Obviously, whatever the above mentioned causes are, education is the most important reason for the lack of entrepreneurship. Any developed country invests in entrepreneurial education because innovation itself is clearly superior in these countries, and a business-friendly environment directly influences the level of development of a country.

Following the Oslo European Conference in October 2006, which presented a multitude of examples of good practice, the Committee published the 'Oslo agenda for entrepreneurial education in Europe'. At least nine countries (Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom) stated that between 90% and 100% of students were attending entrepreneurial programs at one point during their education.

In 2015, the conclusions of the EU Council on entrepreneurship as part of the education system and training show that both entrepreneurship and education are the priorities of Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and entrepreneurship can have considerable benefits for citizens both in their professional life and in their private lives. Entrepreneurship in education and training can boost employability, self-employment and active citizenship, as well as the development of adaptable and outward-oriented education and training institutions.

3. THE CONCEPT OF VISIBLE LEARNING

The times we have been going through in the field of education in general and especially in entrepreneurial education are aimed at linking effective teaching-learning-evaluation principles to a culture of learning to the educational objectives to be pursued in the formation of entrepreneurial skills. In this context, as the paper unfolds, we have highlighted the main elements characteristic to the use of visible learning in entrepreneurial education.

According to the practical research of John Hattie, director of the Melbourne Institute of Education Science, the concept of visible learning highlights how the learner's progress is clearly captured by the teaching-learning process which is pointed out periodically through an assessment of the impact of the subject on the students, while showing the challenges the student needs to achieve real learning outcomes.

Thus, the evaluation involves highlighting the level of competency acquired by students and what needs to be done in order to achieve performance by knowing their own impact within the learning process. The teacher does not reduce teaching to a mere

exposure in which students are more or less obedient to listening, but challenges them, according to their skills, to apply the notions in actual situations.

Starting from the above-mentioned arguments, I think that entrepreneurial education, by shaping up resources (e.g. active-participatory lesson plans designed to evaluate their own impact in teaching, intrinsically evaluating tests showing, percentage-wise how well competencies have been gained and what needs to be done in order to develop competences) within the Romanian education, can be oriented towards a visible learning of the entrepreneurial education where the teacher knows his impact of teaching on the student and the student knows what to do to reach performance through the feedback offered to the teacher.

4. THE DIDACTIC APPROACH IN ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION

The design of entrepreneurial education lessons can become visible from the point of view of learning by involving students in new learning experiences that connect the old information to the knowledge to be discovered by the students; thus, teachers can assess their impact within the teaching process through the students' feedback.

The teacher's attention should be directed to what the student understood as a new cognitive acquisition by engaging in the new learning experience, and should motivate them to ask questions so that learning impulses can turn into opportunities for the success of visible learning where the student gets to assess his/her own impact on learning also showing curiosity about the next cognitive approach of future entrepreneurial education lessons; thus, they have a real picture of what they know and what needs to be done for their own progress.

The challenge of intersecting 'what is planned in the entrepreneurial education lesson' with 'what is unplanned in the entrepreneurial education lesson' in order to bring forth the 'surprise element' implies highlighting the variables that interfere with the didactic process; through their activity teachers have a variable impact on students as per the below figure.

Regardless of the changes during the course, the teacher must be able to use a portfolio of active - participatory methods to transform a deadlock into success. It is not to be overlooked that many changes may occur during the course caused by various variables which the teacher must handle through creativity.

Being creative is not about seeing the same thing as everyone else, but thinking about something different relating to the business environment in our case. The meanings of creativity are: *productivity, efficiency, ingenuity, novelty, originality*.

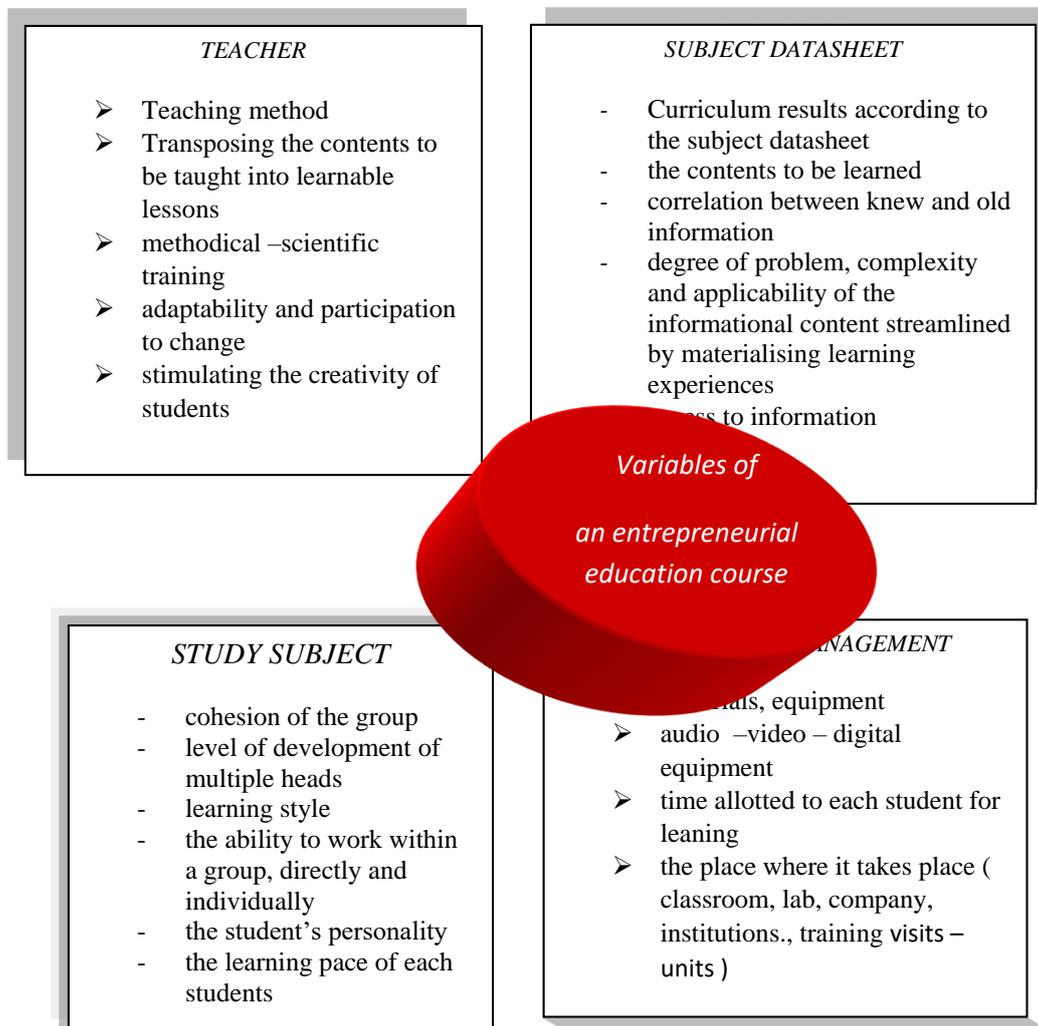


Figure 1. Variables of an entrepreneurial education course

The student's creativity is conditioned by the creativity of the teacher. This is known and can be verified when the teacher wishes to assess his/her impact on the student. More important than practical applications are the psychological conditions created to stimulate creativity, the exciting and positive environment in which the teacher has expectations from each student according to their own learning rhythm. The efficiency of the teaching process in entrepreneurial education is influenced by several factors: the teaching method of the teacher should be active; the attitude towards the student's reaction should be determined by the forms of communication used in the teaching process that reveals a qualitative development, the real knowledge of entrepreneurship.

In this case, teachers and students are active participants in the lesson where learning experiences are meaningful challenges where abstract concepts turn into real experiences to meet their specific needs.

Entrepreneurial education aims to train students to put their ideas into practice through innovation, creativity and risk-taking; this cannot be not possible without the ability to plan and manage different projects on order to meet purposes. Figure 2 is a conceptual framework highlighting inter entrepreneurial education, intention or entrepreneurial action.

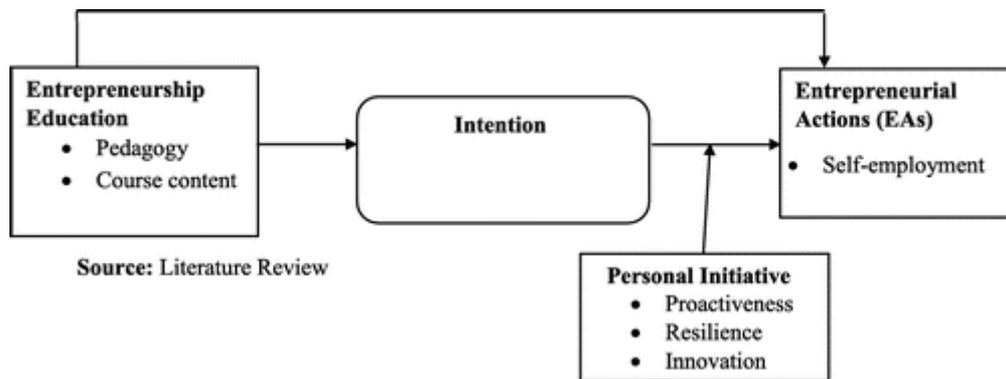


Figure 2. Entrepreneurship education- Intention_ Entrepreneurial Actions

Moreover, entrepreneurial education will have to result in shaping competences that will help every person in both private and public life, by raising awareness among future employed students regarding the context of their professional and personal activity, by developing the ability to choose effective opportunities, providing a basis for future entrepreneurs.

5. VISIBLE LEARNING ORIENTED TOWARDS A GOAL WITHIN ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION

Visible learning is aimed at the efficiency of the learning - teaching – evaluation process carried out by the teacher. Through the teachers' interrelation on the didactic design, on educational objectives, on success criteria, learning can really become valuable, the individual progress of learning and what it means to be good at a particular field of study.

Visible learning has three major objectives:

- The learning process focuses on the impact this activity has on the student, so that he can be aware of his own learning rhythm and progress.
- Educational institutions cannot help students learn if teachers isolate themselves and there is no effective collaboration of teachers to develop an organizational culture of assessing their own impact upon society by promoting educational activities.
- The school will know if teachers are continually trained only when the necessary visible learning goals are set that relate to what students need to learn, to collect

evidence of this learning that aims to use this data in order to respond effectively to educational needs of students through systematic training, thus improving the collective professional and individual experience of teachers.

The expanded visible learning cycle is divided into seven types of distinct learning actions, presented in a very simplified order: questioning predominant practices; analysis of prevailing practices; modelling (designing) a new solution; studying the new model; introduction of the new model; evaluation of the process; stabilization and the development of the new practice (Engeström 2004).

By implementing the concept of visible learning, we aim to optimize and assess the positive impact that all teachers have on student education, but it takes time and a stable emotional climate to initiate and promote these changes. 'If the teacher could see the learning process through the student's eyes, it would be an excellent start' (Hattie, 2014). As Hattie states, teachers would want to assess their own mentalities (outlooks) relating to the analysis of the nature and quality of educational goals and of the success criteria of visible learning in order to see if they are shared by other teachers too, to a certain extent. In a broad sense, visible learning aims to fit into effective educational objectives according to the needs of students so that the criteria for success are met. Relating to entrepreneurial education, visible learning implies **targeting the purpose of the impact of entrepreneurial education upon students** through the coherence between the training of pupils as future entrepreneurs and their lifelong learning skills in conjunction with the supply and demand existing on the labour market through relevance, accessibility and real applicability at social- economic and cultural level.

The general objectives of visible learning regarding entrepreneurial education can be materialized gradually according to the individual learning pace of students:

- developing the applicable personal skills of students by identifying the entrepreneurial spirit;
- knowing the cognitive – relational - rateable dimensions of the entrepreneurial behaviour;
- raising the awareness of students about the stages of organizing independent activities, events and entrepreneurial experiences as a potential in the future choice of the profession;
- initiating, developing, disseminating and sustaining entrepreneurial activities and projects by simulating sample firms;
- shaping specific business skills and knowing how to start and successfully run a business.

Organizing entrepreneurial activities and projects by designing sample firms gives students the opportunity to meet the criteria of success in entrepreneurial education by creating divergent – creative thinking, gradually preparing for the possibility to solve the problems in an optimal way, to analyse a business idea in an objective way, to make decisions and to communicate effectively, to establish relations within the business environment, to manage and evaluate business plans. Students are much more encouraged when they are thinking about setting up their own business, or when testing their own ideas in a developing entrepreneurial environment.

The successful criteria of entrepreneurial education are not only highlighted by the simulation of sample firms but also by the innovative business ideas and the creation

of future jobs. Entrepreneurship has become a necessary competence encouraging all students to manage their personal and professional live creatively.

In this respect, we can highlight strategic documents at the level of the European Union that capture the importance of entrepreneurial education within the European community:

- *The Oslo Agenda for Entrepreneurial Education in Europe* - 2006 – its objective “is to accelerate the promotion of an entrepreneurial mentality within the society in a systematic and effective way”.
- *'Think Small First': Priority for SMEs. A 'Small Business Act' for Europe* - 2008 - 'Principle 1: Creating an environment in which entrepreneurs and family businesses can prosper and where entrepreneurship is rewarded.'
- *Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprises* - 2008 - 'General knowledge of entrepreneurial skills must be taught at all levels of education'
- *European Strategy 2020* – “A Union for Innovation” to improve framework conditions and access to research and innovation funding so as to guarantee the possibility of transforming innovative ideas into products and services that generate growth and jobs.

6. CONCLUSIONS

From the standpoint of the European Union, entrepreneurial education has become a priority where the European society dynamically and openly develops the innovative business environment that needs future entrepreneurs trained in a challenging educational system with meaningful, motivating and clear educational objectives which meet the criteria for success adapting to the learning pace of each student and evaluating their own progress. In conclusion 'Education must promote entrepreneurship by cultivating a right way of thinking, by enhancing entrepreneurial skills and by making entrepreneurs aware of career alternatives.’’

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