

**TRAINING TEACHERS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: CHALLENGE AND RESOURCE
OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM
LA FORMAZIONE DEGLI INSEGNANTI VERSO L'EDUCAZIONE ALL'IMPRENDITORIALITÀ:
SFIDA E RISORSA DEL TERZO MILLENNIO**

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ABSTRACT

In the era of Revolution 4.0, technological changes have brought about a major impact on the world of production and thus work. The skills that, in the knowledge society, are required of the worker are closely related to social and human capital development. Curiosity, initiative, adaptability, leadership, social and cultural awareness are just some of the life and career skills declined through EntreComp.

Nell'era della Rivoluzione 4.0, i cambiamenti tecnologici hanno comportato un importante impatto sul mondo produttivo e quindi lavorativo. Le competenze che, nella società della conoscenza, sono richieste al lavoratore sono strettamente correlate allo sviluppo sociale e del capitale umano. Curiosità, spirito di iniziativa, adattabilità, leadership, consapevolezza sociale e culturale sono solo alcune delle competenze per la vita e la carriera declinate attraverso l'EntreComp.

KEYWORDS

entrepreneurship education, teacher training, human capital
educazione all'imprenditorialità, formazione insegnanti, capitale
umano

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Introduction

Youth entrepreneurship, understood as a mix of individual or group entrepreneurial culture and the intragenerational ability to move within economic generative mechanisms, is a valid tool for curbing youth educational poverty and for raising the economic-relational skills within a given society in each historical moment. The globalization of economic and technological processes requires, nowadays, an increase in production quality especially in the most competitive contexts with a greater impact on employment. The educational orientation towards business, impressed to some extent in higher education (see the example of ITS, Higher Technical Institutes) and in youth professional training in general, can no longer disregard an increasingly specifically oriented entrepreneurial teaching. In this perspective it is possible to find a way of channeling and transferring skills within the young or innovative company. From this point of view, the stimulus to youth enterprise production becomes the result of a training period aimed at increasing the employment of young people through the acquisition of skills suitable for doing business.

1. The role of youth entrepreneurship in curbing educational poverty

Youth entrepreneurship represents one of the fields in which the imitative/innovative value qualities of the company are experienced (Gallino, Personality and industrialisation, 1968). It therefore requires a reflection on the training of young potential workers as possible entrepreneurs. Youth enterprise education intervenes on the internalization processes of employability understood no longer as the ability of the individual to respond to the demand for work - employability in the strict sense linked to a Fordist idea of a productive society - but to generate it through the construction of a business post-industrial post-Fordist oriented towards the production of work in more flexible forms and in keeping with the objective liquidity of the markets within liquid companies (Bauman, Liquid Modernity, 2000). The consequence of this generational strengthening of entrepreneurial aptitude/competence is the statistical growth of youth Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as a barrier to early school leaving and dropout, unemployment or underemployment, the phenomenon of NEETs, the entry of young people in the networks of the deviant economy, to black or gray forms of work in informal economies of scale. According to Indire (Entrepreneurship education at school in Europe, 2017) entrepreneurship education is considered by about half of the EU countries as a key competence for the development of the

European economy and citizenship within multi or cross-disciplinary educational approaches. However, the member countries have not intervened, if not sporadically, to integrate this method of education within the national training offer. Nevertheless, young Europeans undergoing entrepreneurship education develop a tendency to do business that is three to six times higher than those who do not receive this specific education or those who receive it as an orientation towards developing a generic and unspecified 'spirit of enterprise' (Ibidem, p. 29). Being subjected to entrepreneurial education certainly does not guarantee the success of the company on the market, but it increases the spectrum of employability opportunities, strengthens the knowledge of the economic and social dynamics underlying the success or failure of entrepreneurial investments, favors the placement of the individual on the labor market, it brings the young person closer to a new business subculture in terms of demographic and anthropological characteristics (Hebdige, *Subculture-The Meaning of style*, 1979). In other words, young people recognize the social role of business and increase familiarity with the individual/community/cooperative dimension of risk with the practice of business risk after having learned economic techniques and skills from a team of experts and teachers, and after having assimilated a certain level of technical business culture. The teaching in support of these generative-entrepreneurial skills must be oriented towards the development of individual skills in group contexts (cooperative learning) conveyed by experts (mentors) from different sectors of the economic world. This approach represents the tool that can facilitate youth entrepreneurship as a contrast to the initial educational poverty because it would stimulate the entrepreneur's individual acquisition skills, traced over a century ago by Sombart (*Modern capitalism*, Munich, 1916). A century later, the European Union has amply demonstrated that these skills are transferable within a formal and lengthy learning path, lifelong and lifewide learning, (Redecker et alii, *The future of learning: preparing for change*, in Publications Office of the European Union, 2011). These capacities would emerge, again according to Sombart, even where there are no favorable material conditions. Therefore, entrepreneurship education stimulates a series of individual actions: 1) approximation of values to the organizational complexity of companies as a mirror of the social complexity of the reference context; 2) acquisition of skills and abilities within complex educational processes (learning by doing, group planning, mentoring) connected to pre-productive paths such as school-work alternation; 3) individual and group gratification in simulated economic and business planning; 4) development of a positive and responsible attitude towards lifelong learning as a requirement for business success; 5) Positive attitudes towards continuing cultural and professional development. Such actions presuppose an institutionally articulated planning of the entrepreneurial-oriented training offer, agreed with the territorial economic agencies in an organized form (employers' associations, management groups, professional orders, entrepreneurs'

clubs, business associations), with the economics schools , with the institutions connected to the business system (banks and other financial bodies), with the political decision-makers responsible for investing in the training offer plans in a way that responds to the needs of the training system and its connections with the local social and economic system. This perspective, if adequately developed, introduces a stronger responsibility of the school institution towards the social inclusion or re-inclusion (the borderline case of minors detained or in external penal execution) of the students, refocusing the educational role of the school around the culling of youth educational poverty understood as a problematic phenomenon that compresses or breaks down the generative capacity of a territory. Consequently, the reduction of educational poverty through entrepreneurial teaching can be socially recognized by the reference context as a guarantee of success for the school and for any businesses resulting from the training courses activated and, consequently, as a guarantee of economic and employment growth territorial.

2. Training and guiding teachers in entrepreneurship education

In trying to define entrepreneurship, in the current landscape of reference, we go through the concept of the generativity of enterprise, or that transformative action that aims at sustainability and innovation through the concept of value (Michelotti, 2021).

It is interesting to try to distinguish what are the declinations of entrepreneurship education and enterprise education (Baschier & Tessaro, 2015; Morselli, 2019). Entrepreneurship education - or entrepreneurship - refers to the purely work context and is declined through the development of objectives of an economic nature; enterprise education - or entrepreneurship - pertains to the world of education and training and its aims are educational in nature (Vinci, 2020). Entrepreneurship aims to promote expendable skills in places of lifelong learning and active citizenship and does so through the use of related teaching methodologies (cooperative learning, challenge-based learning, problem-based learning, experiential learning in general).

In the school context, however, we often run into resistance from teachers, who diffuse the culture of entrepreneurial education with difficulty because it is believed that the concept of entrepreneurship is purely related to the economic and production components of society (Baschiera & Tessaro, 2015).

The national and European regulatory framework encourages the culture of entrepreneurial skills and provides guidelines to propose the planning and delivery of educational and life paths related to the development of entrepreneurship. In particular, in the national panorama, MIUR Note No. 4244 of 13/03/2018 identifies the promotion of "a pathway of entrepreneurship education oriented in particular to the acquisition by female students of an entrepreneurial mindset." In this direction, the very definition of "entrepreneurial *forma mentis*" refers to the ability to make ideas concrete and tangible through certain skills and competencies. Note No. 4244 of 2018 focuses on "creativity, innovation, risk assessment and risk-taking, and the ability to plan and manage entrepreneurial projects." In order for these qualities to be pursuable, however, it is necessary to ensure that students are able to recognize and develop those knowledge, skills and abilities that are useful for embarking on pathways that are expendable in not only work but life contexts. The "Syllabus for Entrepreneurship Education in Secondary School" is a tool that was created to provide guidance for structuring innovative school curricula (Vinci, 2020) was introduced with the same note and was drafted based on the European EntreComp Framework (2016). The Syllabus is an example of good practice and a guide for teachers called to educate skills that no longer focus exclusively on so-called hard skills, but consider soft skills as central to the development of the individual and society. Specifically, the Syllabus "Education for Entrepreneurship" includes 5 macro-areas each of which is successively distinguished into contributions of a theoretical nature, indicating goals and objectives, and examples of practical activities. The areas identified are as follows:

1. Forms and opportunities of doing business.
2. Idea generation, context and social needs.
3. From idea to enterprise: resources and skills.
4. The enterprise in action: confronting the market.
5. Economic citizenship.

The suggestions for activities turn out to be interesting: for each selected category there are, in fact, a series of proposals and initiatives that can be implemented directly in the school context (coaching, personal model canvas, use of ICT, Innovation & Creativity Camp or Startup bootcamps, hackathons and co-creation meetings, brainstorming of ideas, role-plays, simulations). The question that arises, however, refers to the actual feasibility of such educational and training paths, as one wonders whether teachers are actually ready and trained about teaching methodologies related to the concepts of entrepreneurial development and innovation.

Teachers often experience difficulties in identifying content and methodologies aimed at implementing entrepreneurship education (Ruskovaara & Pihkala 2013). The latter is, in fact, not an established part of courses for teachers in training and teachers in continuing professional development. For this reason, it appears necessary to implement curricula and develop new teaching and learning methods to provide the appropriate skills for entrepreneurship education (Seikkula-Leino et al., 2010). As the European Commission (2021) points out, it is necessary for teachers to receive training on both experiential pedagogy and business content to enable students to think independently and have the opportunity to learn through "mistakes." It is also crucial to take into account two particular factors when delivering programs: the age of the learners and the level of previously acquired skills; in that it is good to start entrepreneurship education with "field play" activities and then continue through "field projects" (Miço & Cungu, 2023), so that the developmental path can be linear and increasing. Another pivotal aspect emphasized by Peura and Hytti (2022) highlights the need for educators to be able to grasp the "connection between their disciplinary teaching and the teaching of entrepreneurship," and to head in this direction a key role is, once again, taken on by innovative teaching methodologies that can promote the development of creative thinking, effective communication, problem solving, cooperation, initiative, and independent thinking in both formal and nonformal educational settings (Falk Lundqvist et al, 2011) and that they can connect not so much the content of the discipline itself but how that discipline is taught.

3. The skills involved in the development of entrepreneurship

It has been pointed out that teaching students entrepreneurial skills encapsulates difficulties that place at the center the need to understand what direction to take in entrepreneurship education. With this in mind, in the European landscape, the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (2016) aims to establish a bridge between the professional and educational contexts so that learning entrepreneurship can prove to be a viable path. The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp) presents 3 areas that are interconnected and together decline the 15 competencies of an 8-level progression model. Each area is, in fact, composed of 5 competencies that aim to develop the concept of entrepreneurship competence, defined by the framework as "as the ability to transform ideas and opportunities into action through the mobilization of resources."

Specifically, the 3 areas identified by the European Council are declined as follows (Fig. 1):

1. Ideas and opportunities: recognizing opportunities, creativity, vision, value ideas, ethical and sustainable ideas.
2. Resources: self-awareness and self-efficacy, motivation and perseverance, mobilizing resources, economic/financial knowledge, mobilizing others.
3. In action: taking initiative, planning and managing, coping with uncertainty and risk, working with others, learning from experience.



Figure 1 (EntreComp Competencies)

Other frameworks were analyzed in order to understand the skills strongly involved in the entrepreneurial process. Blass (2018) identified the following factors:

- Understanding who you are and what you want to achieve: being able to explain the whys behind entrepreneurial choices as support for the goals set;
- Risk tolerance: ability to overcome challenges and manage times of uncertainty;
- emotional intelligence: success in entrepreneurial activities understood as related to recognizing and managing one's own and others' emotions;
- survival beyond launch: ability to adapt to the environment and its changes;
- resilience development: balance between risk and success.

Blass (2018) thus focuses on the relationship between theory and practice, alternating concepts of personal reflexivity with the concreteness and pragmatism

of entrepreneurial action. The author aims to seek a balance between the two dimensions and elaborates these 5 concepts to do so.

Another framework that places global entrepreneurial competencies under analysis is that theorized by Jardim (2021) who identifies 3 groups of competencies: concentration and openness to novelty, value creation, and effective communication.

The first group of competencies "Competencies to be focused and open to novelty" refers to the fact that the entrepreneurial culture works to seek and identify opportunities, promote innovation and creative work (Dornelas, 2007) and does so through the following characteristics: creativity and innovation, initiative, self-efficacy and resilience.

"Value-creating competencies" identify all those abilities to make ideas concrete and create value at the same time. Individuals with value competence are able to solve problems, implement plans and projects, and are able to focus on actions useful for their completion (Jardin, 2020). Therefore, the related elements turn out to be: strategic planning and evaluation, problem solving, and transformational leadership. Alongside these competencies, another key aspect is related to the ability to communicate effectively both directly and through the use of media and digital platforms (McCollough et al., 2016; Jardim & Silva, 2019). In this sense, in order to promote entrepreneurship from the very beginning of schooling, it is crucial to develop the following skills: clear and visual communication, teamwork and networking, and digital communication.

Thus, numerous skills emerge that are in demand in the world of entrepreneurship and professional success, but alongside what are the skills considered, by the authors analyzed, to be primarily effective, what is the view of employers? A much-cited study by Jones, Baldi, Phillips and Waikar, in 2017, found that recruiters value: "positive attitude, respectful of others, trustworthy, takes initiative, takes responsibility, team player, good communicator, ambitious, confident, critical thinker, appearance, leadership skills, good sense of humor, good writing skills, knowledge of the major field, computer skills, work experience, math skills, high grades, active in student organizations profession, and knowledge of global business." At the same time, there is a gap between new graduate students' own perceptions and employers' perceptions of young workers' skills: a study by Hart Research Associates (2015) found that 59 percent of graduates perceive that they can apply their knowledge and skills in a real-life context, while only 23 percent of employers agree.

All this underscores the need to work and educate on skills not only through theoretical but also practical approaches. It seems crucial to thin the gap between

the educational and working worlds, as they are two sides of the same coin. There is no knowledge without practice and practice without knowledge in the professional world: it is time for the world of soft skills and hard skills to merge into a single dimension, aimed at developing an innovative, ethical and productive world.

4. The use of new technologies in entrepreneurship education

The world of work has undergone considerable changes over the last few decades, thanks to the advent of increasingly advanced technologies, which have obscured 'old' professions and given space to new figures on the market, with the automation of various tasks.

The use of technology, no longer being confined to a pool of professions, has inevitably led to a recalibration of skills and job opportunities, but also to a rethinking of the possibilities of carrying out effective and up-to-date teaching.

Although the school is the place where culture and values are shared, it is useful to remember that among the priority aims of a conscious educational action is the promotion of entrepreneurial, social and civic skills, which are important to ensure resilience and the ability to adapt to change¹.

The set of skills required of the young digital native today, compared to the past, is certainly denser and more complex, and the role of the teacher is just as articulated.

In this frame of reference, the need for a synthesis between digital skills and entrepreneurial skills is evident, since knowing how to use technologies properly promotes the "ability to act on ideas and opportunities and to transform them into values for others. It is based on creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, initiative and perseverance, and the ability to work collaboratively in order to plan and manage projects that have cultural, social or financial value"².

In the new declinations of didactics we find the need to combine the functionalities of digital tools with the development of cognitive functions; this contamination of knowledge crosses the school and academic curricula in a transdisciplinary manner (Piaget, 1982) (Mele, Passiante & Secundo, 2021), touching transversally on the

¹ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604\(01\)&from=](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&from=)

² Ibidem

nerve centres that characterise educational practice and creating network connections between the world of enterprise and the world of school.

The use of technologies in the educational context, if planned and designed systematically, considering the needs of students and the expectations of growth as well as future prospects, are a profitable tool for the application of innovative frameworks, on the other hand, the technological transformation that we are going through is part of a larger transformation, which is the social one, affecting not only the types of work format, but also the types of specific and technical skills, transforming the structure of the economy, but also investing the challenges on the methodological and organisational level of teaching (Savonardo, 2020).

An example of an innovative teaching methodology involving the use of narrative strategies and digital environments for learning entrepreneurial skills is Digital Storytelling, a technique consolidated in the 1990s with the birth of the Center for Digital Storytelling, founded by Joe Lambert (Limone & Toto, 2022). Most of the authors (Nair & Yunus, 2021; De Marco, 2020) of these research papers have provided empirical evidence confirming the advantages of using digital storytelling in the classroom to help students communicate and speak more effectively, as the use of multimedia tools gives students the opportunity to participate and interact, giving form and substance to creative, original ideas and projects that are useful to the community and acted upon through critical and constructive reflection. This innovative didactic methodology, which makes use of the usual communication tools among young students, represents a new way of understanding didactics, promoting through a transmedia narrative two soft skills: digital and entrepreneurial.

In this regard, the task of the Third Mission³ concerns precisely the blending of the aforementioned skills, contemplating not only the productive transformation of knowledge, but also a more fluid interaction between the university and the economic fabric, propelled by the digitalisation of the media and tools at the service of education.

Although entrepreneurial competences are to be understood as lifelong, their development imparts a mental mapping capable of encouraging self-awareness and guiding behaviour in different contexts of use, beyond the traditional learning setting; in this sense, technologies become a tool to easily orient oneself within the complex social, cultural and economic network, contaminating even the traditional formulation of the competence construct (Morselli, 2020; Felini, 2021).

³ <https://www.anvur.it/attivita/temi/>

Conclusions

The European reference framework analysed in the previous paragraphs provides an overview of the state of the art of entrepreneurship education in the European and Italian context. The Covid-19 pandemic marks the watershed moment between the educational practices of the past and those that can, potentially, be realised in the future.

Conceiving soft skills as a peculiarity of the learning process and not as a collateral result of traditional teaching methods, a spontaneous push for innovation and change arises, planning curricula adhering to the European Community Guidelines, which envisage teacher action centred on the student, which means paying attention not only to the transmission of contents and knowledge of a disciplinary nature, but above all dedicating oneself to the development of the whole person, imprinting educational action in a dimension of transferability of skills in the social context of reference.

The reform of secondary schools and the introduction of alternance school-to-work represents an initial educational experience that combines knowledge and know-how⁴, making teaching operational in the outside world. Although this impetus towards the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills is corroborated by years of PCTO and compulsory with L.107/2015, the challenge of cultural change in the Italian context is still open, where, according to the latest ISTAT report⁵, the Net tool is still used almost predominantly for communication and instant messaging services, marginalising a whole slice of digital skills that are fundamental for the realisation of one's life project within society. Therefore, it is important, after a methodological reflection on the cross-fertilisation of teaching, to implement concrete measures to modernise school infrastructures, to reduce the gaps in digital access on a territorial basis, and to train the teaching class in digital-entrepreneurial syncretism, so that they can be effective promoters of culture and technology.

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⁴ <https://alternanza.miur.gov.it/>

⁵ https://www.istat.it/it/files//2023/03/REPORT_CITTADINIEICT_2022.pdf

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