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16 Teaching for entrepreneurial Bildung in school

Nina Mård and Karolina Wägar

Introduction

Teaching and learning entrepreneurship has become a central goal of education in many countries in recent years. This trend is promoted by transnational organizations such as the European Union and OECD, the ambitions of which are to improve the entrepreneurial capacity of citizens and organizations. Entrepreneurship is conceived of as a valuable competence that students need in order to tackle complex and contemporary issues in life, by finding creative and innovative solutions (EU, 2022). As for entrepreneurship education, it is promoted by stakeholders to enhance global citizenship as the current globalization and marketization of societies require flexible, mobile, and internationally employable citizens. In a rapidly changing world, creativity and innovative thinking is needed in contributing to economic and sustainable growth both locally, nationally, and globally (Lackéus, 2015).

The introduction of entrepreneurship education in schools has brought forth a number of challenges. From an educational perspective, entrepreneurship is a policy-driven concept derived from economic research with strong business connotations (Dal et al., 2016). This has led to uncertainty among teachers and scholars about the pedagogical aims and means of entrepreneurship education. In a narrow view, entrepreneurship education can be understood as specific courses with the aim of training students to start and run their own business. In a wider view, entrepreneurship education is not necessarily about starting new companies, but rather to equip students with general life skills such as creativity, flexibility, innovation, and collaboration. The wider understanding of entrepreneurship education, and its potential of providing students with desirable skills and mindsets, is promoted by many educationalists. This is also reflected in curriculum documents, as the aims of entrepreneurship education often are defined in terms of helping students to find their own potential regarding the desirable skills of entrepreneurship, no matter if they are about to run their own businesses or not (Fejes et al., 2019; Neck et al., 2014).

The curricular aims of entrepreneurship education are, however, not easy to transform into classroom practice. Several studies have reported teacher

confusion and sometimes even unwillingness to adopt the entrepreneurial educational standards (Fejes et al., 2019; Haara et al., 2016). Besides being considered having a heavy bias toward entrepreneurship rather than education (Fellnhofer, 2019), entrepreneurship education has been described as ambiguous; it is unclear what it actually is and what distinguishes it from other educational practices due to its broad aim of developing general life skills (Fejes et al., 2019; Haara et al., 2016). Compared to many other subject areas, it lacks a solid socially and historically accepted knowledge base due to its contemporary and crosscurricular nature (cf. Nylund et al., 2017). In the absence of common epistemological starting points and a theoretical foundation, it is considered fragmented (Dal et al., 2016).

Consequently, entrepreneurship education has an identity problem as being foreign to education and educational theory. Through its focus on students acquiring desirable skills and mindsets, it has been linked to learning theories in an attempt of pedagogization. For example, Gibb (2005; see also, e.g., Middleton & Donnellon, 2014) posits that entrepreneurship education is about practicing entrepreneurial behaviors, attributes, and skills, which is done by students learning *about*, *for*, and *through* entrepreneurship. Learning about entrepreneurship denotes students learning phenomena and concepts linked to entrepreneurship. Learning for entrepreneurship implies students preparing for becoming entrepreneurs, being a pragmatic approach with the aim of sharing practical knowledge and skills with students wanting to become entrepreneurs. Learning through entrepreneurship is the process of engaging in an actual entrepreneurial experience. It implies an experiential method, in which students engage in entrepreneurial activities and processes with the aim of strengthening general skills such as creativity, innovation, and collaboration.

In a wider view, the “learnification” of entrepreneurship (cf. Biesta, 2019) suggests that it is strongly compatible with the competence-oriented approach to education that is influencing contemporary curricula. Accordingly, the entrepreneurship competence framework EntreComp (2022) presents 15 competences, each including a number of different skills, that describe what it means to be entrepreneurial. This is the case both when applying the narrow perspective to entrepreneurship education, that is, as the development of competences linked to starting and running one’s own business, and when applying the broad perspective, that is, as general competences needed in life and especially working life (Neck et al., 2014).

Competence-oriented education has an outward focus, defining desirable competences and skills needed in contemporary and future society. Similarly to entrepreneurship education, it has been debated whether it is compatible with educational theories or not, especially regarding students’ Bildung processes (Willbergh, 2015; see also Chapter 3). The educational dilemma of entrepreneurship is enhanced by the fact that it has not been framed through Bildung-oriented didactic theories. This holds both for a discussion on how to *teach* entrepreneurship, not only how it is learnt by students, and how it

may or may not promote students' overall *Bildung*, especially regarding the emphasis on marketization and employment, and the competence discourse.

Hence, the challenges experienced by teachers in carrying out entrepreneurship education are related to didactic and pedagogical concerns. This implies not only core didactic questions about content and methods, but also how to define and understand entrepreneurship in terms of contributing to students' *Bildung* processes. In this chapter, we intend to discuss entrepreneurship education through the lens of teaching and what it implies for teachers. Leaning on *Bildung*-oriented didactic theory (see Chapter 3), we suggest a concept of *entrepreneurial Bildung* to serve as a didactic concept supporting teachers. Entrepreneurial *Bildung* signifies entrepreneurship as a pervasive aspect of *Bildung* in its focus on creating both individual and collective value, thus trying to overcome the dichotomic confusion that traditionally characterizes the field.

In the following, we outline entrepreneurship education as a crosscurricular phenomenon, which goes both across and beyond different school subjects through its overarching potential of promoting entrepreneurial *Bildung*. We subsequently discuss entrepreneurship education as value creation, and how the concept of entrepreneurial *Bildung* may support teachers in apprehending entrepreneurship teaching as promoting different forms of values in students' thinking and doing. Finally, we provide some practical implications of teaching for entrepreneurial *Bildung* in schools.

The term entrepreneurship education is perhaps the most commonly used concept for linking entrepreneurship and pedagogical practice (Fellnhöfer, 2019; Wilms Boysen et al., 2020). In this chapter, we accordingly use the concepts of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship teaching to address such approaches. However, we acknowledge that there are also other concepts frequently used, such as entrepreneurial learning (Hietanen & Järvi, 2015), pedagogical entrepreneurship (Dal et al., 2016; Haara et al., 2016), enterprise education (Elo & Kurtén, 2020), and entrepreneurial education (Lackéus, 2018).

Entrepreneurship education across and beyond the curriculum

Entrepreneurship is an interdisciplinary field of research influenced by economics, political science, sociology, psychology, and organizational theory. It encompasses several perspectives on what constitutes entrepreneurship; from a view of entrepreneurship being new venture creation and business growth (Gibb, 2005), innovation (Schumpeter, 1934), and the identification and use of business opportunities (Shane, 2000), to understanding entrepreneurial traits and competences (McLelland, 1961, 1987).

Entrepreneurship education is similarly crosscurricular in its nature and not established as an independent subject area in most curricula. In many cases, teaching entrepreneurship is an overarching goal of education for both younger and older students. Launched by the European Commission in 2016,

the European entrepreneurship competence framework, EntreComp (2022), is widely used as a guideline for developing entrepreneurship education at all levels of society – from primary education, to universities, and to workplaces. Its aim is to create a common language of entrepreneurship education between different levels of education and its focus is on supporting the development of an entrepreneurial mindset. Thus, at an European level, entrepreneurship education has gained ground and the European Commission has set out to promote entrepreneurship education in all EU countries. However, how entrepreneurship education should be implemented in different countries and curricula is not specified (European Commission, 2023).

Referring to the mentioned academic disciplines, entrepreneurship education is often viewed as closely related to the school subject of social sciences. Many curricula place the traditional content related to entrepreneurship education, such as economics and employability, within the subject content of social sciences (cf. Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014). Nevertheless, when relating to the broader goals of fostering general life skills, scholars have in recent years explored the possibilities of developing entrepreneurial skills and abilities in a wide range of school subjects, such as science (Elo & Kurtén, 2020), foreign languages (Weicht et al., 2020), mathematics (Palmér & Johansson, 2018), and environmental studies (Komodiki et al., 2021).

The discussion of how entrepreneurship education can be promoted within different subjects applies to crosscurricular thinking, especially through interdisciplinary approaches on how specific content, methods, and skills within different subjects contribute to students' entrepreneurial learning (cf. Chapter 2). Often though, entrepreneurship is taught through crosscurricular efforts that include several subjects (cf. Fejes et al., 2019; Mård, 2020). However, in its overarching aims of developing life skills, entrepreneurship education can also be viewed as going beyond existing subjects and calling for new, transcurricular approaches to teaching that include authentic and unpredictable activities (cf. Chapters 2 and 10). Our suggestion of thinking in terms of entrepreneurial Bildung is one way of challenging dominant practices.

Entrepreneurship education as value creation: laying the ground for entrepreneurial Bildung

According to Dahlstedt and Fejes (2017), there has been a notable shift in the discourse on entrepreneurship education, related to the discussion about its aims. From seeing entrepreneurial skills, such as problem-solving and responsibility, as abilities needed for the good of society and solidarity, entrepreneurship education today is often seen as promoting entrepreneurial skills as means for making individual life choices. This current focus is derived primarily from a logic of “market relevance” and the abilities are weaved into specific activities, such as starting and running one's own business (Fejes et al., 2019). Seen from this perspective, entrepreneurship education becomes a vehicle for educating employable, flexible, and “market relevant” individuals who can be

productive and competitive in a global labor market. In the same vein, Wilms Boysen et al. (2020) state:

The different aspects of entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity produce a pedagogical dilemma in education, in the sense that individual achievement and competitiveness might represent a contrast to collectivism and collaboration. Accordingly, this dilemma can also be found in the design of entrepreneurship education.

(p. 212)

A traditional view of entrepreneurship holds that economic profit is the main driver of all entrepreneurship and economic activity in society. However, economic profit is just one dimension of the *value* entrepreneurship brings. When understanding entrepreneurship as a process of generating value for both oneself and society as a whole (Bruyat & Julien, 2001) and as a process of transforming business opportunities and ideas into different forms of value (Vestergaard et al., 2012), the seemingly dichotomous nature of entrepreneurship education evaporates. In fact, many contributions within entrepreneurship education are grounded on a value-based, multi-stakeholder perspective of entrepreneurship (e.g., Sarasvathy & Venkataraman, 2011; Neck & Greene, 2011). Lackéus et al. (2016, p. 790) put forward the concept of “learning-by-creating-value-for-others” and define it as letting the students learn by “applying their existing and future competences to create something preferably novel of value to at least one external stakeholder outside their group, class or school.”

The concept of value is further explored in Lackéus (2018), who propose five kinds of value creation relevant for entrepreneurship education. *Economic value creation* is about reaching benefits by delivering what others need and want; *enjoyment value creation* is about the pursuit of joy and fun; *social value creation* is focused on helping others; *harmony value creation* is oriented toward collective values such as fairness, ecology, equality, and the common good; and *influence value creation* is about increasing influence or power. All five dimensions can be seen from the perspective of both the individual value and collective (altruistic) value. For example, economic value creation is often seen as a self-oriented process of creating wealth for oneself, however, it can also be seen in terms of creating value for others as their needs and wants are met. Similarly, harmony value creation is commonly regarded as being collective and altruistic in nature – on the other hand, through harmony value creation, the individual also seeks individual value such as personal meaning and fulfillment.

A value-based perspective of entrepreneurship education challenges the view of it as struggling with the opposites of individual versus collective, and altruism versus competition. The value-based perspective emanates from the idea that students learn entrepreneurship by creating something of value to an external stakeholder – thus, the boundaries between individual and collective,

collaboration and competition, the common good and individual gain are blurred. It also meets this dichotomous either–or thinking by acknowledging its validity and by formulating a position beyond it, a position that includes both dimensions. It suggests that both dimensions are meaningful and valuable in their own sense when teaching entrepreneurship: individualism as the process of self-cultivation and development of an autonomous personality, and collectivism as the individual connecting to other people and taking part in the promotion of the common good. Both aspects should be developed in parallel and never as competing with each other (cf. Uljens & Nordin, 2022).

Our suggested concept of entrepreneurial Bildung builds on this conciliatory, value-based understanding of entrepreneurship education. At its core lies the principle of value creation for both oneself and others, thus signifying the interplay between individuals and society emphasized in classic Bildung-oriented theory (see Chapter 3). Entrepreneurial Bildung considers the needs of today’s and future generations to get acquainted with the marketized and global structures dominating contemporary society. This implies knowledge of structures on both micro- and macro-levels, as globalization makes the connections between individual, local, national, and global interdependent. Without such knowledge, sometimes referred to as financial literacy (Amagir et al., 2018), it is hard to understand the contemporary world or one’s own relation to it. However, entrepreneurial Bildung does not only assume well-informed individuals but individuals who have the tools to critically examine existing structures in relation to other dimensions of human life, and who are willing and ready to act responsibly (see Chapter 4). This draws on the different values proposed by Lackéus (2018) in how to consider values of, for example, fairness, ecology, equality, joy, and solidarity, in order to promote altruism and a better future for all people and the planet while concurrently striving for sustainable economic development.

Toward teaching for entrepreneurial Bildung in school

The concept of entrepreneurial Bildung can serve as a didactic concept of how to teach entrepreneurship in school. In our understanding, a didactic concept provides guidelines for teacher reflections on defining aims and content for teaching (cf. Künzli, 2000). Thus, in this context, a didactic concept should provide structure and clarity to what entrepreneurship education is in the context of a classroom and in the practice of teaching. Accordingly, entrepreneurial Bildung as a didactic concept can support teachers by suggesting relevant aims and content areas for entrepreneurship education, providing a coherent knowledge base embedded in pedagogy and educational theory rather than economy or policy-driven concepts.

Drawing on Bildung-didactic theory, the concept of entrepreneurial Bildung acknowledges the many skills and competences suggested for entrepreneurship education. These can serve as central aims and goals of teaching, no matter if entrepreneurship is taught through crosscurricular or transcurricular

approaches (see Chapter 2). However, it challenges the idea of defining teaching only through competences and skills, and raises questions of appropriate teaching content for entrepreneurship education (cf. Ryen & Jøsok, 2021). The question of content has been a hot potato in entrepreneurship education, relating to its narrow and wider understandings (Lackéus, 2017). Recently, there has been a rising interest in exploring how entrepreneurial skills can be developed in subjects not primarily related to economics and social sciences, as previously indicated. Nevertheless, the efforts to shift focus away from the core of entrepreneurship to general life skills are part of the identity dilemma of entrepreneurship education. This raises the question of whether it introduces anything other than new words for abilities that have long been central in education, such as problem-solving, creativity, responsibility, and flexibility (Fejes et al., 2019). Accordingly, empirical studies (e.g., Fejes et al., 2019; Mård, 2020) indicated that teachers tend to use economic and work life-related content, although they emphasize the wider aims of entrepreneurship education.

Instead of sidelining questions of content in favor of desirable skills and competences that should be developed, the pedagogization of entrepreneurship education would benefit from elaborations on how to approach the core content. According to Klafki (1998), the content of teaching should address contemporary structures and phenomena in society. Seen from the perspective of entrepreneurial Bildung, students cannot only be presented with existing structures and phenomena, but have to challenge them as well (see also Chapter 4). Teaching for entrepreneurial Bildung should be open to unpredictable moments of how students may understand and approach entrepreneurship (cf. Chapter 10). This is supported by the idea of students applying broad meanings to the content, which is fundamental in Bildung-oriented teaching (see Chapter 3). This counts especially for critical examinations of both narrow and broad understandings of entrepreneurship, and discussions on economic structures in relation to other values of human life, such as democratic, aesthetic, sustainable, and ideological dimensions. Questioning who creates value to whom in society and what the actual value for society is helps students reflect on individual and collective value creation related to entrepreneurship. Thus, leaning on principles of Bildung as an overall formation of students, the concept of entrepreneurial Bildung can support teachers in opening up different aspects of humanity and human agency related to entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we introduce entrepreneurial Bildung as an overarching didactic concept for entrepreneurship education. We set out to examine entrepreneurship education through a didactic lens in order to understand the aims and content of teaching entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial Bildung draws on classic ideas of Bildung and the dialectic relationship of the individual and

society, challenging the traditional dichotomy in entrepreneurship education. By exploring the value-based perspective of entrepreneurship, we found that there is strong support also within literature for dissolving this dichotomy. If we understand entrepreneurship education in terms of creating different forms of both individual and collective value, entrepreneurial Bildung can be regarded as the way to go about this when teaching students in the classroom. The links between a value-based perspective of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial Bildung is an interesting avenue for further research.

The concept of entrepreneurial Bildung can help teachers and educators to comprehend the complex task of teaching to promote students' Bildung-processes. Entrepreneurial Bildung sheds particular light on the entrepreneurial and economic dimensions of humanity and citizenship, but does so in an open process with the many dimensions of humanity in mind. Although distinguishing between different aspects of Bildung may challenge its strive for cohesion and unity (cf. Chapter 3), it can support teachers in teaching for contemporary and future needs of both individuals and society. The crosscurricular aims of entrepreneurship education allow teachers to explore teaching for entrepreneurial Bildung through a variety of subjects, and also through approaches that go beyond existing subject-related practices. However, to gain validity and functionality in different contexts, the concept of entrepreneurial Bildung needs to be further developed and empirically tested in classroom practices.

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