



The Future in our Hands: Creating European Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

The economic crisis in Europe has revealed the need to deal with entrepreneurship, not only in adults but also in children's and adolescents education. During the last decades a great number of students graduated from the University. However, a great number of them cannot find a job and they are unemployed. As a result, more people tend to deal with new occupations and new ideas about innovative kinds of businesses. Consequently, students in schools should be subjected to alternative activities in order to overcome the borders between school life and adult life, equip them with the tools for discovering their talents and the means of putting them to work for their success. A great majority of European countries addresses entrepreneurship education through national strategies or initiatives. This clearly reflects the wide recognition of the importance of entrepreneurship education in Europe.

Objectives

The activities proposed in this project open the minds of young students to the joy of entrepreneurship at a time in their lives when they are full of imagination and open to new possibilities. The project helps participating students to develop a number of skills including literacy, presentation, technology, research skills, numeracy, consumer awareness, storytelling, listening skills, creative thinking, problem solving, team building and collaboration skills.

The programme has a significant personal development impact on participating students building confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem, and an appreciation of individual skills and talents.

Development

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This project requires not only the involvement of students and teachers, but also the involvement of parents and community members in a great number of activities. Activities take place both in the classroom and out of it (laboratories, workshops, in the streets, markets, gardens, art labs, farms etc.). Thus, students, teachers and parents together meet a significant number of new opportunities given by several occupations which they did not have the chance to meet during school time.

The main objectives of this project is the students to:

- prove (by the means of their achievements) higher basic skills, gained in order to become



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successful members of the society

- learn from people with different occupations that, even without a university degree, one can succeed and what skills are needed
- make decisions regarding their job preferences. Emphasis is given to the choices of students with low academic performance
- bring to life traditional occupations that are about to become extinct (belonging either to their country or the partners')
- put into practice what they have seen/learned according to their preferences and skills
- improve both their basic and transversal skills through their involvement in research, analytical and practical activities despite the differences generated by their national, economic, social background
- use their creativity and imagination, put into practice their innovative ideas
- communicate freely and easily both in English and the partners' languages
- improve the existing curriculum with activities promoting entrepreneurship and ICT (some activities being computer based) at young age
- prove enhanced social skills such as friendships, cooperation, equity, tolerance and acceptance
- develop their self-esteem through meeting their preferences, abilities and being properly praised and appreciated
- participate in alternative social activities, developing their European active citizenship

In order to implement the above, each partner school is currently developing a number of activities, which are:

- The presentation of each partner country and each partner school
- The presentation of articles/lectures/workshops/seminars etc. about entrepreneurship to the students of the school. Students discuss about entrepreneurship with their teacher and/or with a specialists and present their own entrepreneurial ideas
- Enrichment of students' library with books that deal with several occupations. Students, parents and teachers can borrow books and read at school/home.
- Occupation Art Corner: art point where an art exhibition is taking place. Students draw and create art pieces showing their favourite occupation or perform something they have learned during the programme
- Lectures on entrepreneurship for the parents/adults
- Students of each school meet different occupations, either by visiting them or by inviting them to the school. Then, they prepare/build/structure/cultivate/feed etc according to the occupation the met. They role-play/perform/present results of the jobs in front of other students/ teachers showing their newly acquired skills, abilities, knowledge. They express their feelings and write about their new experiences.
- Students of each school meet also traditional occupations of their country, in order to become familiar with jobs that are somehow extinct
- Students organize and run "**small companies**". They have the idea of a "product", they suggest ways to make it as good as they can, they produce a number of it, and they sell it in markets. They keep financial accounts and they suggest methods to minimize their costs.
- Entrepreneurship Day. During this day (different day in each school), students get the chance to show the relevant skills that developed during the project. They present their small companies and sell their products.



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Conclusions and prospective

Entrepreneurship education is one of the top priorities of European education. Thus, the project is innovative for European standards by all means, as it is dealing with entrepreneurship in pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Through the activities, the partner schools try to overcome the barriers between school/studies and real life. It gives the students an idea of how companies work, how they manage and how they achieve their goals.

By participating in a European partnership students develop collaborative relationships with schools in European countries and meet other educational systems, thus contributing to the implementation of the European dimension in education. This project also helps them to raise their international awareness, learn about other European countries which lead to an enhanced motivation and interest in partners' life style, culture, language, traditional art, traditional occupations etc. The blend of formal and non-formal activities, designed for achieving the project aims makes the school more attractive to them and, hopefully will prevent them from early school leaving and for pursuing the lifelong learning process.

The partnership improves community and parental involvement in education. It raises the prestige of local and international schools by involving teachers in international projects.

Teachers of the school try to find new ways of promoting young entrepreneurship. They try to give their students new opportunities and challenges. Moreover, teachers also have their own benefits from this partnership. They keep working on their self-development as educators, through entrepreneurship education for adults.

Questions and/or considerations for discussion

During the duration of the project, students and teachers deal with entrepreneurship education. However, this project was only an initiative and it was up to the schools to carry it out. We can't stop wondering if this should be a part/lesson of the curriculum being taught by professionals, covering the entrepreneurial issues of Europe in the 21st century?



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