

## Europe needs entrepreneurship

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Europe is confronted with world-wide developments that require an adequate response. The balance of economic power is shifting. New nuclei of power arise in the arena. Also within Europe a variety of challenges are waiting for solutions. Europe is in crisis. In some countries the unemployment has risen to a really worrisome level. This situation has an internal labour mobility as a consequence. This coincides with another influx of people in Europe from other continents. This all requires an economic growth, but that unfortunately does not happen. Production work is moving east to Asia; while innovation and development is moving west to the United States. This trend would turn Europe into a place for services and tourism. Valuable as these sectors may be this is not the perspective Europe applauds to. What is needed is a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship in order to move Europe forward and to have it regain and further strengthen its position in the international competition. It is for quite some years now that the European Commission promotes policies to realise this. Parts of these policies consist of actions focussing on promoting a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship through school education. The Yedac project seeks to promote these competences in schools.



### Entrepreneurship

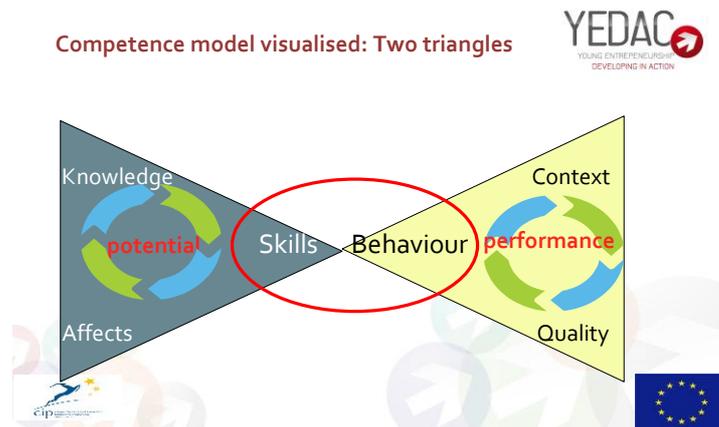
Entrepreneurship is a way of being. Some define it simply as the competence to make things happen. This implies that entrepreneurship is not only a way of looking at things, or a strong drive to get involved in things; but it per definition includes action. Entrepreneurs or people with an entrepreneurial mindset:

- Seek to create value and quality
- Take responsibility and take risks
- Innovate, are creative; think out of box
- Seek and take opportunities
- Are self-directing, persisting, productive
- Have a sense of aesthetics
- Inspire, direct and manage

## A competence oriented approach

Competence is an integrated mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes. These elements compose the potential of a person to act in a particular situation at a particular level of quality. In fact it is this last part of the description of a competence that actually shows someone's competence.

Competence model visualised: Two triangles



Nowadays views on learning show an emphasis on action (the right one of the two triangles in the model). Through times views on learning shifted from traditionally a focus on knowledge (to know), towards problem solving, knowledge production, networking and innovative action. In the scheme outlined above this trend may be interpreted as a shift from an emphasis on the left triangle towards the more performance oriented right triangle.

Parallel to this trend a growing awareness arose of the necessity of lifelong learning. Entrepreneurship is one of the competences the European Commission includes in its plans on lifelong learning. A sense of initiative and entrepreneurship are seen as both a means and an end. In order to be entrepreneurial learning is required, but to initiate and successfully fulfil this learning process one needs to have this very sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. So entrepreneurship is both the vehicle of lifelong learning as well as its result.

## Acquiring the competence of entrepreneurship

Basically the process of acquiring a competence is a process of learning by doing. Entrepreneurs develop their entrepreneurial mindset and competences by actively initiating entrepreneurial actions and by seeking their way to make things happen and make them happen increasingly better. Competence oriented learning of entrepreneurial competence is characterised by room for exploring, challenges, risks, opportunities to connect to others, to experiment, to make mistakes and continuous, monitoring and reflection.

## Implications for teachers

Since entrepreneurship includes initiative and room for experimentation the role of teachers will have to be accordingly. Teachers will not just teach, but be facilitators, and critical monitors of the learning and entrepreneurial processes students go through. Since entrepreneurship includes connecting to other people (target groups, stakeholders, funders, clients, competitors etc.) more people than just teachers will be engaged in the

processes necessary to acquire the strived for competence. Teachers will have to facilitate such opportunities without taking them over. Their more withdrawn role in the learning process is required to allow students to experience the challenges, risks and chances. Last but not least teachers will have to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and competence themselves in order to be inspiring partners in the learning process the students have to go through.

## Entrepreneurial schools



For schools the task of helping students acquire entrepreneurial competences implies that schools will allow for entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurship is a multidisciplinary competence and will have to be approached accordingly. Students will have to be given the opportunity to connect to each other and to people outside the school. The learning process of acquiring an entrepreneurial mindset and competence necessarily includes such connections. Furthermore many entrepreneurial activities include also an element of production, of prototyping and of experimentation. The school will have to provide the rich/powerful learning environment that allows for such initiatives. The fact that the learning process is not confined to school activities only requires active parental involvement. This is needed since parents are actors in the process of acquiring the intended competences, but also since among parents entrepreneurs may be found to serve as inspirators and models of entrepreneurship. The process of developing the desired competences does not only affect school programmes, but also the homework assignments students are working on. This requires a thorough re-thinking of school curricula.