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CHALLENGES TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN HIGH SCHOOL. INTERACTION BETWEEN FORMAL AND INFORMAL ASSESSMENT

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Abstract. This paper attempts to identify appropriate methods of teaching entrepreneurship in schools. The key to successful entrepreneurship education is finding the most effective way to manage learner skills and identifying the best match between student needs and teaching techniques. As entrepreneurship education includes all activities aimed at fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes, and skills, as well as aspects such as idea generation and innovation, experiential learning is an appropriate approach. For this purpose, a small experiment was conducted within the „Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship" classes and an online survey among students, the results of which are presented in the paper. The target audience for this closed poll is teenagers who are around 15 to 16 years old. In this case, the survey was administered among students from Profiled High School for Romance Languages „G. S. Rakovski" in Burgas, focusing on entrepreneurship with Spanish and entrepreneurship with French. The findings of the study revealed that there are many prevalent obstacles to effective entrepreneurial education (EE), concerning resource availability, standardized curriculum issues, and training opportunities for educators. Moreover, the findings of the research indicate both the impact of formal evaluation, its systematic approach to assessing students' knowledge and abilities, and informal evaluation approaches, as well as their alignment with the entrepreneurial mindset.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education; formal and informal education; high school learning tools

1. Introduction

The significance of entrepreneurship education (EE) in promoting creativity, self-sufficiency, and economic progress has been increasingly recognized in high

schools around the globe. Despite the potential advantages, the integration of entrepreneurship education (EE) into the high school curriculum encounters many obstacles. Entrepreneurship, often hailed as the backbone of modern economies, has gradually woven its way into educational curricula around the globe. It holds the promise of fostering innovation, resilience, and a proactive mindset among students, positioning them as not just job seekers but potential job creators. As schools embark on this journey of incorporating entrepreneurship education, they find themselves navigating a complex maze of pedagogical and practical challenges. The urgency to effectively impart entrepreneurial skills while ensuring students grasp both their theoretical underpinnings and practical applications is more pressing than ever.

This paper delves deep into the multifaceted challenges faced by educators and learners in the realm of school-based entrepreneurship education. Through an exhaustive exploration, it juxtaposes the theoretical paradigms of entrepreneurship education against the real-world demands of the entrepreneurial landscape. While theoretical assessments often aim to provide students with a robust foundational understanding, the real test often lies in the practical realm, where theories are tested, pivoted, and sometimes even discarded. The interplay between these two dimensions – the theoretical and the practical – forms the crux of this research.

By drawing upon a mix of qualitative and quantitative data, expert opinions, and case studies, this paper seeks to shed light on the gaps, inconsistencies, and opportunities in current pedagogical approaches to entrepreneurship education. Our objective is to stimulate a discourse that could pave the way for more comprehensive, relevant, and effective entrepreneurship education paradigms for future generations.

2. Emergence and Impact of Entrepreneurship Education – Literature review

Entrepreneurship education (EE) has seen remarkable growth in recent decades. Its emergence and impact can be understood in various contexts, such as educational curricula, societal implications, and economic outcomes. The findings indicate a substantial increase in the number of publications and citations throughout the last ten years, with a nearly equal representation of business and educational research. Publications and writers that exhibit the highest levels of creativity and impact are identified. The analysis conducted in our study has identified separate research areas. Some reflect on behavioral factors that are relevant to the concept of entrepreneurial engagement (EE). Others are focused on entrepreneurial behavior and the development of new ventures. The significance of entrepreneurship in fostering economic growth has been widely acknowledged in academic literature (Galindo and Méndez 2014). Moreover, there is a growing consensus that educating individuals to become entrepreneurs can

effectively cultivate entrepreneurial attributes (O'Connor 2013). The discipline of entrepreneurship education (EE) has seen significant growth, evolving from a specialized area of study (Hills, 1988) to a thriving domain including both practical application and scholarly investigation (Katz, 2003). The proliferation of course and program offerings has seen significant growth. The growing significance of teaching and learning has led to the emergence of educational inquiries that are ripe for inquiry.

According to Ratten and Jones (Ratten & Jones 2020), the field of entrepreneurship education is seeing significant growth as a subject of study within the realm of management education. The expansion has led to several objectives in entrepreneurial education and various pedagogical approaches implemented to deliver entrepreneurship education (van Ewijk et al., 2020). There is a notable variation in the methodologies and approaches used across various initiatives, workshops, and locations (Bauman & Lucy 2019). Students actively participate in entrepreneurial activities in the field of entrepreneurship education that places an emphasis on action-based approaches (Neck & Corbett 2018; Günzel-Jensen & Robinson 2017). Others call the entrepreneurial education program a venture creation program, which is a specialized kind of action-based learning that centers on the development of a new business enterprise. The acquisition of business skills can also be perceived as advantageous for individuals as a means of providing a valuable life skill (Sagar, 2015). This is because the adoption of enterprise behaviors, attributes, and competencies contributes to the generation of cultural, social, or financial benefits. In a similar vein, Rindova et al. (2009) expound on the concept of „entrepreneuring," which they describe as the deliberate endeavors undertaken by a person or a collective to instigate novel economic, social, institutional, and cultural contexts.

The concept of distinguishing between enterprise and entrepreneurship education has been discussed in the context of the ‚enterprising person vs. new venture development' theme (Jones & Iredale 2007). The focal point of an entrepreneurial individual's endeavors has economic ramifications when examined through the lens of human capital, namely the cultivation of people who possess the ability to enhance the economic productivity of their organizations, either via corporate entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship. The cultivation of entrepreneurial traits may have advantageous outcomes for both individuals and society, extending beyond the realm of economics. Timmons (1999) posited that entrepreneurship encompasses more than the mere establishment of new companies, the generation of cash and employment opportunities, or the cultivation of innovation, creativity, and discoveries. According to Neck, Greene, and Brush (2014), developing an innovative human spirit and enhancing the well-being of humanity are other important aspects to consider.

3. Challenges in Entrepreneurship Education in Schools Formal and informal assessment

Entrepreneurship education (EE) programs and teachers specializing in entrepreneurship have encountered several concerns and obstacles pertaining to the conception, implementation, student involvement, and adaptation to the evolving company sector. In the contemporary economy, characterized by a knowledge-based approach, the establishment of new firms and start-ups no longer adheres to the linear process observed by entrepreneurs at the end of the 20th century. It is not always the case that the procedures followed by entrepreneurs in the new-age economy mirror those of their predecessors.

The field of entrepreneurship education (EE) encounters a common difficulty that is prevalent in other areas of learning and research. This challenge revolves around the need to strike a delicate equilibrium between promoting progress and innovation in entrepreneurship while preserving the fundamental principles and foundations of the field. The problems pertaining to entrepreneurship education may be categorized based on the concerns and obstacles faced by entrepreneurship educators, the need for appropriate and impactful teaching materials, research conducted by entrepreneurship teachers, and the common difficulty of determining the optimal approach for teaching entrepreneurship.

There has been a significant shift in the attitude towards entrepreneurship education (EE) and other administration or higher education disciplines. The topic of active learning, along with the inclusion of novel experiences for students outside the confines of the classroom, necessitates much discussion and deliberation.

One of the enduring concerns in the field of environmental education (EE) is the effective design, implementation, and development of curriculum, pedagogies, and learner-centered approaches. Additionally, the evaluation and assessment of these educational initiatives pose significant obstacles. These issues have long been recognized as fundamental and complex challenges within the field of EE. Moreover, an important consideration is determining the appropriate threshold for the quantity of information. The difficulties lie in managing the material and ensuring comprehensive coverage. Additionally, it is crucial to differentiate between essential knowledge, desirable knowledge, and supplementary knowledge. Furthermore, the method of teaching entrepreneurship introduces a fresh array of problems and obstacles. One of the primary challenges is determining the optimal amount of content to be imparted as well as the extent to which aspiring entrepreneurs should be encouraged to acquire knowledge independently as they progress. Therefore, the primary concerns are the methods and content of instruction in EE programs. What is the optimal length of an EE course at the postgraduate level? What are the many pedagogical instruments used to enhance the effectiveness of environmental education? However, the primary obstacle seems to be determining the specific stage of the entrepreneurial lifecycle or stage in the firm that should get more

emphasis within the context of the Entrepreneurship Education (EE) program.

Several scholars in the field of entrepreneurship education have suggested that it is imperative to go beyond mere acceptance of the notion that "entrepreneurship education is different." Instead, they argue that the current moment calls for proactive efforts to address and actively engage with this perceived difference. Stevenson (2000) also articulated his perspectives on the need for entrepreneurship educators to accept the paradigm shift in the field of entrepreneurial education. Additionally, the speaker emphasized the need for the field of entrepreneurship education (EE) to include elements from the past, present, and future in order to ensure its longevity, similar to other industries. Electrical engineering (EE) has several problems. A limited number of scholarly publications have addressed the many problems that are being faced within the field of environmental education (EE).

Entrepreneurship education in schools presents a unique set of challenges both in teaching and studying. Some of the primary challenges include (Table 1):

Table 1. Challeges in Entrepreneurship Education

Issues:	
Standardization vs. Creativity:	Entrepreneurship thrives on creativity, innovation, and the ability to think outside the box. However, the traditional educational system often prioritizes standardized testing and fixed curricula. Balancing these two can be challenging.
Tangible Experience:	Entrepreneurship is as much about experience and learning from failure as it is about theoretical knowledge. Creating real-world experiences in a controlled school environment can be difficult.
Assessment Difficulties	How do you grade an entrepreneurial idea or a business plan? Traditional assessment tools might not be appropriate or fair when applied to entrepreneurship education.
Lack of Resources	Starting a business often requires capital, tools, mentorship, and networking opportunities. Providing these resources in a school setting is not always feasible.
Changing Mindset	Not all students (or even educators) are accustomed to the risk-taking, failure-embracing mindset that entrepreneurship often requires. Changing this mindset can be a major hurdle.
Variability of Outcomes	Unlike many other subjects, there's no definitive ‚right' answer in entrepreneurship. This can be challenging for both teachers, who might struggle with how to guide students, and students, who might feel uncertain without clear guidelines.
Keeping Up with Trends:	The business world, especially in the tech sector, changes rapidly. Schools may struggle to keep their curricula up to date with the latest entrepreneurial trends, tools, and technologies.

Relevance:	Different regions, communities, or countries might have specific business environments or challenges. An entrepreneurial curriculum that works in one setting might not be relevant in another.
Skill Diversity	Entrepreneurship requires a mix of skills, including marketing, finance, product development, and more. It can be challenging to cover all these bases adequately in a single program.
Fear of Failure:	The educational system often punishes mistakes, while entrepreneurship views them as learning opportunities. Overcoming this ingrained fear can be a challenge for many students.
Availability of Qualified Educators:	Not all successful entrepreneurs are good teachers, and not all teachers have entrepreneurial experience. Finding educators who can bridge this gap can be difficult.
Cultural Barriers:	In some cultures or communities, certain entrepreneurial behaviors might be discouraged, or certain industries might be taboo. This can pose challenges for educators trying to foster an entrepreneurial spirit.

4. Learning tools for teaching entrepreneurship

Subject work and internships are considered essential teaching tools for educational programs in the areas of entrepreneurship education (EE) and management. Entrepreneurship education (EE) curricula have a unique issue when it comes to organizing summer internships. This challenge pertains to the formulation of internship programs, the establishment of goals, the determination of internship emphasis, and the identification of deliverables. Various educational programs across the globe use diverse pedagogical tools and learning methodologies.

Pedagogical techniques often used in the fields of social science education and management education include traditional methods such as lectures, readings, workbook exercises, and case-based class discussions. Additionally, interactive approaches such as talks with experts, guest speakers, individual coaching, role plays, and sometimes team-based projects are utilized.

The process of formulating and composing a comprehensive business plan has emerged as a fundamental component of several entrepreneurship education (EE) programs on a global scale. The fundamental concept is acquiring knowledge through integration and establishing connections among various components of a firm, all while formulating a comprehensive business strategy. In conjunction with the field-based project, a business plan of this kind often aids in the initiation of a student-led initiative.

Various methods of out-of-classroom learning, such as conducting interviews with entrepreneurs to create profiles, shadowing entrepreneurs, engaging in extended interactions with entrepreneurs, and participating in internships with start-ups and entrepreneurial firms, have also been utilized as part of the design, delivery, and evaluation of entrepreneurship education programs.

There exist a multitude of debates pertaining to the optimal curriculum design for entrepreneurship education programs. The decision between using standardized components or personalized inputs in courses and entrepreneurial education programs has long been a topic of concern for educators in this field. According to Ronstadt (1987), entrepreneurship relies not only on the acquisition of information and skills (know-how), but also on the establishment of networks and relationships (know-who). The author argued that in order for EE courses to be successful, they need to provide instruction on entrepreneurial behavior to learners. Additionally, these programs should assist students in establishing a network of people who can support their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Entrepreneurship, by its very nature, often involves a combination of formal and informal education. Entrepreneurs come from diverse backgrounds, and while some may have formal educational backgrounds in business or entrepreneurship, many others learn from experiences, mentors, failures, and real-world applications. Let‘s delve into how both formal and informal education play roles in entrepreneurship.

5. Formal Education in Entrepreneurship:

– Structured Learning: Many universities and colleges offer bachelor‘s, master‘s, and doctoral degrees in entrepreneurship or business administration with a focus on entrepreneurship. These courses provide structured knowledge on business planning, strategy, marketing, finance, and other crucial areas.

– Networking: Formal settings like universities often provide budding entrepreneurs with the opportunity to meet peers, industry experts, and potential investors.

– Access to Resources: Institutions often have resources like incubators, accelerators, libraries, and funding opportunities that can be invaluable for aspiring entrepreneurs.

– Case Studies and Simulations: Formal courses usually incorporate case studies, allowing students to analyze real business scenarios, and simulations that help them apply their theoretical knowledge.

– Certification: A formal degree or certificate in entrepreneurship can lend credibility, especially when seeking certain types of funding or partnerships.

6. Informal Education in Entrepreneurship:

– Learning from Experience: Many entrepreneurs swear by the value of ‚learning by doing.‘ Starting a business, facing failures, pivoting strategies, and daily problem-solving provide invaluable lessons.

– Mentorship: Building relationships with experienced entrepreneurs and industry veterans can offer guidance, advice, and shortcuts to solutions based on their experiences.

– Networking Events: Informal gatherings, industry conferences, and workshops can be goldmines of knowledge, providing insights outside of a structured

curriculum.

– Self-directed Learning: This includes reading books, attending online webinars, listening to podcasts, or taking non-accredited online courses tailored to specific needs.

– Community Learning: Joining entrepreneurship or industry-specific communities (like online forums, local groups, or co-working spaces) can be instrumental in shared learning.

While formal education provides a structured foundation and theoretical understanding of entrepreneurship, informal education equips entrepreneurs with practical, real-world insights and adaptive skills. For many, a blend of both formal and informal learning experiences proves most beneficial in their entrepreneurial journeys. It allows them to combine the structured strategies learned in formal settings with the adaptability and resilience developed through informal experiences.

Asessment

Assessment is an integral part of any schooling plan. Assessment and evaluation are also part of EE initiatives. It is said that several evaluation and assessment strategies are created to measure various educational outcomes. Written exams, for example, are deemed more reliable indicators of mastery of fundamentals; however, such tests are inadequate for gauging more intangible qualities, such as the ability to think creatively and entrepreneurially. There is a need for a broad variety of assessment components and metrics to be created; some of them may be innovative and not fit into the established educational paradigm. Some assessment components or techniques may serve as both education and evaluation in the pursuit of fostering critical competencies essential to successful entrepreneurship. Similarly, administrators should acknowledge and reward entrepreneurship educators who are entrepreneurial in their teaching practices, such as those who incorporate active learning and assessment components that encourage students to take risks, think critically, and demonstrate originality in their work. When it comes to the methodology and content of EE courses, assessment elements play a vital role.

If entrepreneurship teachers are to be sensitive to the needs of entrepreneurship students and the difficulties of EE programs, they must first gain an appreciation for the unique characteristics of EE programs. The problem is how to encourage risk-taking behaviors alongside inventiveness and creativity. It is not so much a question of what to teach as it is of how to cultivate teachers with the requisite problem-solving, initiative, decision-making, leadership, risk-taking, and creative skillsets to teach entrepreneurship. The problem is not with the knowledge of entrepreneurship experts, but with their competence and outlook. The goal is to broaden the scope of EE to include more traditional forms of experiential and active learning. Start-up team building, client acquisition in the early days, communication and negotiation skills, project management, and in-depth learning are all areas where EE programs

can make a significant impact.

7. Experimental rezults

This section includes a research study that examines the impact of informal approaches used in entrepreneurship training programs for students.

The study is a small experiment conducted over a period of one year with the students of three eighth graders of the Profiled High School for Romance Languages "G. S. Rakovski" in the city of Burgas in the "Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship" classes. It takes place in the context of the secondary school entrepreneurship curriculum. Profiled High School for Roman Languages "G. S. Rakovski" is the first secondary school in Burgas and has established itself over the years as a school for European spirit and self-esteem. For this purpose, the school provides profiled training in the main European languages: Spanish, French, Italian, and English. A very important new step in the development of the high school is the introduction of a new profile from the academic year 2021 – 2022 – profile ENTREPRENEURSHIP. The successful realization of admission last year showed serious interest in this class, where students with the highest score were accepted. Therefore, during the 2023 – 2024 school years, the management of the high school offers the prospective high school students TWO classes with the Entrepreneurship profile.

Thus, the students from the two courses with an entrepreneurial profile will master not only two foreign languages but will also acquire the skills to assess their personal potential and the career opportunities of the socio-economic environment and, on this basis, make an informed career choice in order to successfully realize themselves in the labor market. For the approval of the new profile, the management of the high school cooperated with the help of the teachers from the Center for Business Studies of the Burgas Free University.

During the period of the experiment, in entrepreneurship education, in addition to the formal learning methods in accordance with the educational standards, discovery learning approaches were applied in one of the classes. For the purposes of informal education, classes were used:

– Participation in international scientific conferences (Student Research Conference Proceedings, Burgas Free University);

– Hackathons (Nassa SpaceApps Challenge)

– Seminars (skills of the future)

– Participation in projects and presentations on the occasion of Global Entrepreneurship Week and Global Money Week

– Social afternoons (quizzes, silent games, team building)

– Visiting enterprises (types of family businesses and social enterprises)

– Bank branch visits

– Volunteer activities (packaging food products and sanitary materials for victims of war, disasters, the homeless, and Roma)

In this class, assessment of student progress was based on both formal and informal assessment. Formal assessments, as a regulated instrument, have a standardized nature

and are obtained because of tests on a certain subject of educational content. Informal assessments are qualitative in nature, so a variety of informal assessments have been developed for their application in traditional classroom settings. The assessment is based on pre-set criteria, time management and presentation skills, and making quick decisions where necessary. Informal assessment was an indicator of learning gaps and provided an opportunity to re-explain unclear concepts, which in turn led to improved results from formal assessment. As a result of the informal methods of teaching and assessment used, the formal results of the students in the class appeared to be better than those of the students trained only in traditional formal education. In this class, 65% of students achieved excellent results, while in the other classes, excellent results were achieved by 48% and 45%.

As part of the study, an online survey was conducted, the purpose of which was to identify the attitudes and needs of learners towards non-formal education. 78 students took part in the survey. The survey results showed that 90% of the surveyed students think that non-formal educational methods of entrepreneurship (such as club activities, mentoring, real projects, and hackathons) are much more motivating and enjoyable than traditional ones. However, when assessing the effectiveness of formal (theoretical) education in promoting entrepreneurial thinking among secondary school students, 31% of respondents remained neutral, and 44% of them considered it to be somewhat effective. Various conclusions can be drawn from this, such as: in the case of informal educational methods, the assessment and planned learning outcomes are not clearly emphasized, which creates the impression of being less effective; in formal education, the end results achieved through the highly structured curriculum, the learning plan, the sequential learning process, and the clear assessment plan are clearly formulated, which is perceived as more effective; students are used to traditional classroom methods, etc. But in order for the conclusion to be correct, more in-depth research is needed.

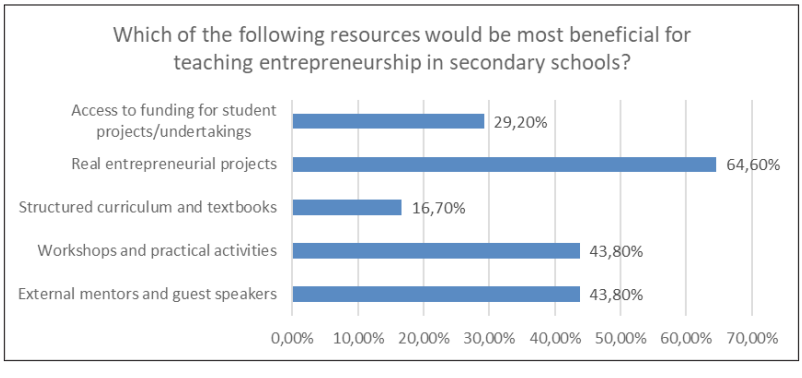


Figure 1. Respondents' views on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training resources

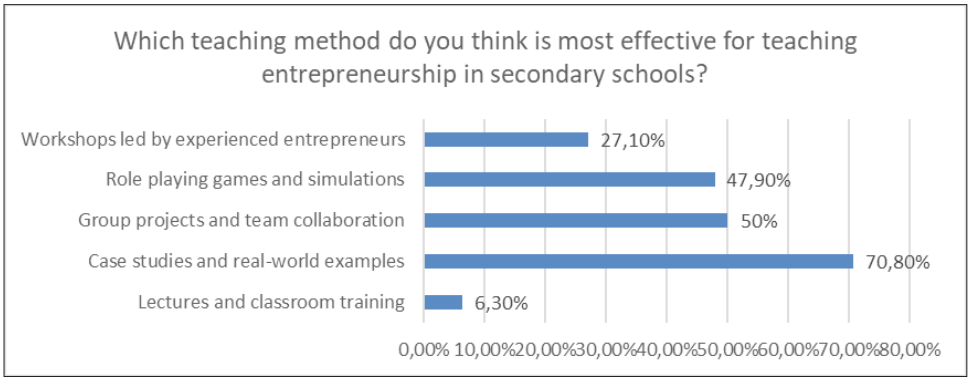
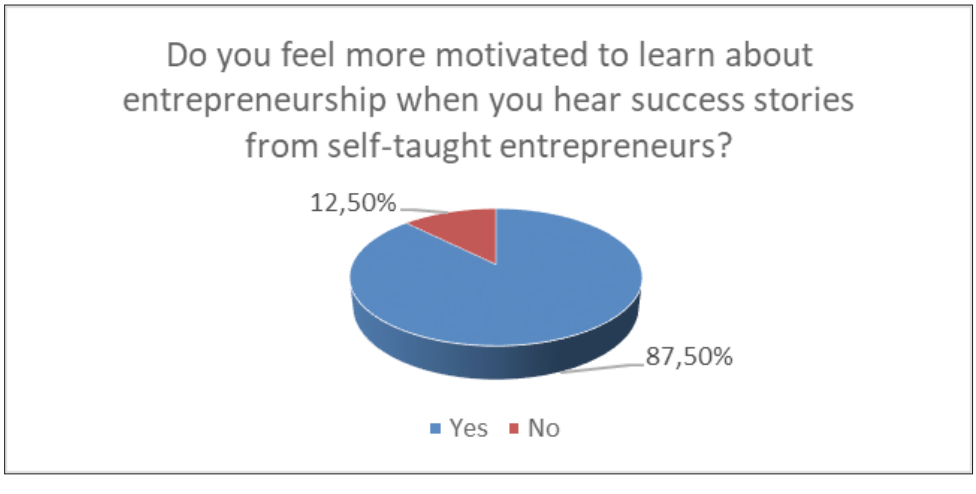
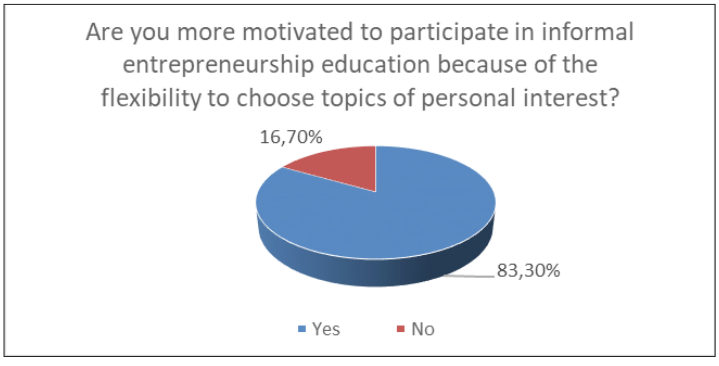


Figure 2. Respondents' opinion on effectiveness of entrepreneurship teaching methods

The best way to teach entrepreneurship is by showing students how to think entrepreneurially and have the ambition and creativity to start and commit to projects. The surveyed students indicated that the most useful resources for teaching entrepreneurship in secondary schools were entrepreneurial projects (65%), guest speakers (44%), workshops, and practical activities (44%; Fig. 1). As can be seen from the diagram in Figure, learning through case studies and real-world examples is the most effective method of learning entrepreneurship, according to students.





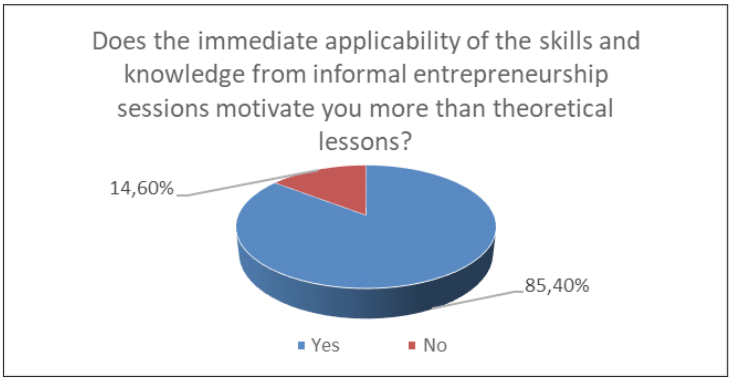


Figure 3. How teaching methods affect motivation to study entrepreneurship

Informal learning methods implemented in the classroom encourage students to set goals and take responsibility for their learning. 88% of respondents (Fig. 3) would be more motivated if they learned about entrepreneurship from the personal stories of successful entrepreneurs. As can be seen from the diagram in Fig. 1, a large percentage of students would like guest speakers in entrepreneurship classes. Non-formal education, due to its flexibility, allows students to choose topics that interest them, which makes them more motivated to participate in the learning process (83%; Fig. 3). In front of the respondents, the opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge during the informal sessions on entrepreneurship motivated them more to participate in the learning process than traditional classes (85%, Fig. 3) As shown in the diagram in Fig. 2, solving case studies and real-world examples, working on projects, and team collaboration are students‘ preferred methods in the classroom.

Due to the novelty of school-based entrepreneurship education, one of the limitations of this study is the small sample size. The results would be slightly different if it were conducted in several schools and teachers were also surveyed in addition to students.

Evaluating each teaching method in the entrepreneurship course based on a broader study will allow the instructor to make a better decision about choosing the best teaching method.

8. Conclusion

While formal education has a role in providing foundational knowledge, informal education is often preferable for teaching entrepreneurship due to its emphasis on practical learning, adaptability, experiential learning, and the development of an entrepreneurial mindset. It better prepares aspiring entrepreneurs to navigate the challenges and complexities of the real world. Combining elements of both formal and informal education can offer a well-rounded entrepreneurial education experience. Informal education tends to tap into intrinsic motivation, offer more autonomy and choice, provide hands-on experiences, and emphasize practical skills and real-world applications. These factors make informal education more appealing and motivating for many students compared to formal education, which may have more rigid structures and a standardized curriculum. Furthermore, the study results demonstrate the influence of formal assessment, which employs a systematic strategy to assess students' knowledge and skills, as well as the compatibility of informal evaluation techniques with the entrepreneurial mentality.

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