



**Embedding entrepreneurship  
competence in vocational  
education and training  
in Europe**

**28 September 2023**  
Online conference

#KeyCompetences  
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## **Background paper for session**

### **11.10 – 12.10 Interactive parallel sessions: navigating the paradoxes and solutions**

#### **2. The curricular paradox: dedicated modules/subjects or cross-curricular approach?**

The curricular paradox triggers a debate on whether we should have specific subjects/modules for entrepreneurship, or whether it should be included in all (or most) subjects (cross-curricular). Is having entrepreneurship-specific subjects a good idea or does it limit the flexibility and meaning of entrepreneurship, and lower the motivation of teachers and trainers (who are not specialised in entrepreneurship) to invest in the development of the competence? This session will also address the concern that integrating entrepreneurship into all subjects may water down the skills learned.

The study revealed that the creation of standalone subjects on entrepreneurship has been a common policy response to embedding this competence in VET (HR, FI, LV, ES, SE) but these subjects are often perceived to have a lower profile compared to technical subjects. The analysis of content and learning outcomes of dedicated subjects reveals a strong focus on business creation and/or management that often fails to engage VET learners in the identification of opportunities and the generation of ideas. This siloed approach to curriculum development may also lead to a significant neglect of cross-curricular approaches, as teachers of other subjects could be led to think that developing this competence is somebody else's duty.

The cross-curricular approach has also challenges. Lack of confidence, support and guidance combined with the pressures to deliver an overloaded curriculum, and lack of time to coordinate efforts with other colleagues, could make VET teachers wary of embedding entrepreneurship competence in their subjects. Similar concerns were raised in previous research. For example, Swedish VET teachers lamented the weak connection to profession-specific skills (Fejes et al, 2019). In the group discussions with Finnish VET teachers, Järvi (2012) found that the most central theme and concern was how to link entrepreneurship education with the vocational field and expertise.

Organisational changes at VET provider level are often needed to enable collaboration across subjects. The leadership and organisational measures put in place by principals and other school management are also pivotal in promoting and nurturing a supportive, open and collaborative school culture, providing training and networking opportunities for teachers, including those with a leadership role (e.g. entrepreneurship coordinator). These teachers are expected to play a key brokerage role in meaning-making and advancing the agenda for embedding this competence at institutional level (Beresford & Michels, 2014). Setting the nurturing of an entrepreneurship competence at the top of a VET provider's agenda is often followed by the appointment of a dedicated teacher or team of teachers as coordinators or ambassadors, a pattern observed in some VET providers in Spain and Finland.

Regional and national support policies and initiatives may also encourage the systematisation of the entrepreneurship agenda in VET. Several countries and regions have put in place policies and measures encouraging reflection, providing funding and acknowledging VET provider efforts to enable the development of entrepreneurship competence in a more systematic and coherent way, including definition of roles of cross-curricular activities and dedicated entrepreneurship subjects within VET providers.

### Key discussion points

- What works best to develop entrepreneurship competence in VET: a specific subject, a cross curricular approach, or a mixed approach? Why?
- Is having entrepreneurship-specific subjects a good idea or do they limit the flexibility and lower the motivation of teachers and trainers to invest in the development of the competence?
- Could integrating entrepreneurship into all subjects 'water down' the skills learned?
- How can we better integrate entrepreneurship competence in VET programmes?

### **References** (in addition to [Cedefop research papers 2022-23](#))

- Beresford, R., & Michels, N. (2014). Embedding change through the entrepreneurial role of middle managers in the UK further education sector. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2014.897505>
- Fejes, A.; Nylund, M.; & Wallin, J. (2019). *How do teachers interpret and transform entrepreneurship education?* *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1-13. doi:10.1080/00220272.2018.1488998
- Järvi, T. (2012). *Teaching entrepreneurship in vocational education viewed from the regional and field perspectives.* *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 64(3), 365-377.