



NETT

Networked Entrepreneurship Training of Trainers

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Entrepreneurship Education and Train-ing Needs of Teachers in Entrepreneur-ship Education in Italy Quantitative Survey and qualitative Focus Group
Entrepreneurship Education and Train-ing Needs of Teachers in Entrepreneur-ship Education in Italy “Quantitative Survey and qualitative Focus Group”

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Summary

This document describes the main findings of the NETT national quantitative survey on entrepreneurship training of teachers together with the results of the national qualitative focus group on teachers' needs. The main objectives of the deliverable are to identify more broad and more specific needs of entrepreneurship teachers while delivering their training and to display the results of the research carried out with this purpose in Italy. The document is structured in three main chapters: the first one is an introduction about NETT project and its importance to improve entrepreneurship in Europe; it's divided in three sub-chapters: the aims of the Italian research conducted between February-March 2013 in Milan, Italy, the specific objectives with an excursus about the questions introduced to teachers and their purpose, and the third section is about the findings of the survey, with a careful analysis of target group and its perception of what entrepreneurship actually is and the experience of focus group. The second chapter displays the conclusions about the Italian research while the last one is dedicated to references.

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1.1 Introduction

This document discusses a statistical analysis emerging in the field entrepreneurship education, as a result of a survey conducted in the frame of the European Project NETT (Networked Entrepreneurship Training of Teachers, <http://nett-project.eu>).

The analysis concerns both the quality of data and the emergence of some special patterns denoting some interesting features of the entrepreneurship perception and its teaching. In the authors' intention this note should constitute a simple, yet concrete, tool to foster a scientific discussion on a discipline that is deeply rooted on knowledge management and represents a strategic lane in the improvement of modern societies.

In the lack of a strong political deal delineating a feasible feature of the modern society, entrepreneurship is going to play a backup solution of the society illness [1, 2]. People identify exciting businesses that may represent the seeds of modern enterprises which, in turn, may constitute the real spring of the community life at various scales. In spite of the large potentiality of this new deal and of undoubtedly successful instances, young generations are not prepared to this challenge, since older ones did not elaborated a supporting cultural tissue. Hence there is a birth of many initiatives promoting the entrepreneurship education [3], that are supported by both private companies and public bodies such as state ministries and European Community directorates [4]. *Demographic groups that are underrepresented within the entrepreneurial population and especially founders of startups are young people, women, disabled and/or migrants. Europe has to open up for them paths into entrepreneurship to create for them jobs, empower them economically and socially and leverage their creative and innovative capacities. These paths should be sensitive to the needs of different groups, their expectations and their norms with regards to how advice and information is delivered and received. Actions should be based on an integrated support scheme that promotes human capital, as well as providing financial support. Besides specific activities adapted to the needs of each of these groups, they should all be included into entrepreneurship training programs that are designed and offered in partnership with education and training providers, youth organisations, mainstream business advisers and financial institutions.* [5]

In this line, NETT is a project financed by European Commission, Enterprise & Industries DG with the aim of gathering a Networked Social Community of teachers for improving the entrepreneurship teaching in the European educational system. As a basic step, an Internet open platform will be set up in the cloud for exchanging contents, tools and methods between (actual or prospective) entrepreneurship teachers. The platform will support, with the most advanced technologies, an international social community where people involved in entrepreneurship education will debate on this topic and find concrete helps for realizing an European way of training young people to become entrepreneurs [6], yet in respect of local industrial and commercial frameworks. To ensure a high level of pervasiveness, in accordance with the Bologna Process [7, 8], the platform will give teachers and trainers appropriate knowledge, skills, networking opportunities, tools, strategies, "innovative and practice-based methods necessary to teach entrepreneurship effectively" by matching skills needed towards specific training and teaching techniques. This goal is pursued by giving teachers the opportunity to share experiences supporting their peers with technical training, but also entrepreneurship theory and practical examples deriving from mutual and practical experience. Furthermore, the platform will benefit from the member's examples and experiences on entrepreneurship education, aimed to integrate and build an online community of professionals developing high quality online accessible resources, teaching methods, concepts and entrepreneurial training programs.

A first step to realize this platform is a quantitative small scale survey to collect and

analyse the training needs of primary and secondary school teachers together with some university and vocational education teachers and to capture the initial understanding of specific countries [9]. In the next sections we will discuss the results of this survey as it has been carried out in the Milano area (in Italy). Moreover, this document discusses the result of the qualitative focus group carried out with the purpose of gathering further information on the teachers' training needs in entrepreneurship education.

1.2 Aims

This research has been conducted as a part of research work package of NETT project which is supported and financed by the EU. The research conducted between February-March 2013 in Milan, Italy. The aims of the survey were:

1. To get a deeper understanding of the training needs of primary and secondary school teachers together with some university and vocational education teachers in entrepreneurship education.
2. To collect and analyze the training needs of primary and secondary school teachers together with some university and vocational education teachers in the specific area of entrepreneurship in Italy.
3. To identify the most appropriate active learning methods which can be applied for effective and efficient of entrepreneurship education.

1.3 Specific Objectives

The target group is composed of both teachers who are teaching or not teaching entrepreneurship.

The study is aiming to respond to questions below.

1. What are the demographic data of teachers participating in research (age, sex, education level, teaching experience, school type, teaching subject)
2. Do teachers:
 - a) feel competent in entrepreneurship?
 - b) think that the entrepreneurship education is important for their students?
 - c) want to participate an in-service training on entrepreneurship education?
 - d) think that they will benefit from attending an online training offer on teaching entrepreneurship?
3. What do teachers expect to share at a community of practice of entrepreneurship?
 - For teachers:
 - a) Which skills are the most important in entrepreneurship?
 - b) Which skills should be a part of learning process in entrepreneurship?
 - c) How are teachers prepared to teach listed competences/topics?
 - d) Do teachers need to improve their knowledge and skills to teach listed competences?
 - What is the percentage of teachers who are teaching entrepreneurship?

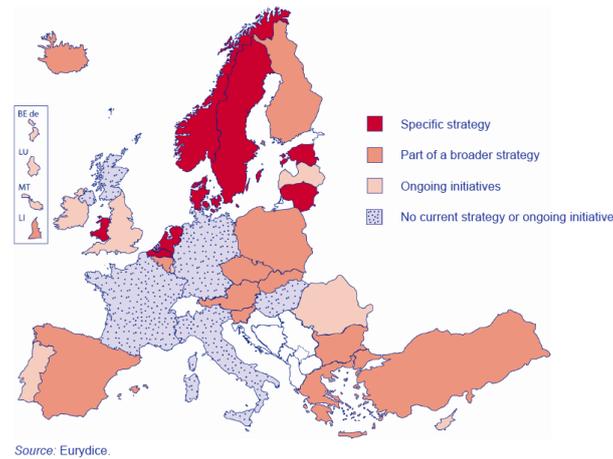


Figure 1.1: European strategies to teach entrepreneurship.

- Do current curriculum:
 - a) support development and explanation of the ideas for a good?
 - b) help students to create a new job?
 - c) help development of the business plan?
 - d) encourage students to become entrepreneurs?
 - e) fit with market reality?
 - f) in line with the market needs?
 - g) put the students in real entrepreneurship environment?
 - h) help students to create real or simulated enterprises?
 - i) duration is enough to prepare the students to be entrepreneurs?
- Which teaching methods do teachers use in entrepreneurship education?

1.4 The Findings

Inside the Europe map shown in Fig. 1.1 which characterize the states with respect the national/regional strategies and initiatives to the implementation of entrepreneurship education into general education in the period 2011/12, Italy appears among the *null strategies* countries. Still worse, neither national objectives related to entrepreneurship education can be found in national lifelong learning strategies as well as in general education and youth strategies which generally include a key competences approach [10].

However, economic growth strategies often embrace entrepreneurship education. This entails that regional programs financially promote educational initiatives toward entrepreneurship (see for instance [11, 12]) and ancillary actions, such as the IFS portal [13] (http://www.ifsnetwork.it/portale_ifs/content/index.php?action=read_clean&id_cnt=6239) created by the Italian Education Ministry to introduce students in the entrepreneurship world through a guided simulation of the main entrepreneurship activities. In summary, common people, students and teachers perceive the importance of this discipline both as relevant components of a complete curriculum of a student and as valuable promoter

of the future activities the young generation are going to carry out. In order to have a blow up on this scenario, a questionnaire has been submitted to 31 people teaching in different contexts, as for school type, teaching subject and experience. People were well balanced, as for gender, instruction and teaching experience. A set of 88 question has been formulated in order to jointly answer to the following questions:

1. What are the demographic data of teachers participating in research (age, sex, education level, teaching experience, school type, teaching subject) (questions 1 to 8)
2. What do teachers think of his competences on entrepreneurship education and his possible improvement (questions 9 to 14 requiring marking a score from 1 to 5).
3. A two way table where on the row are listed Skills / Capabilities which are questioned along the columns with respects 4 aspects (question 15):
 - a) The importance of the skill for the entrepreneurship
 - b) Should this skill be a part of learning process in entrepreneurship?
 - c) How prepared are you for teach this topic?
 - d) Would you need to improve the knowledge and skill to teach it?

In synthesis, the first two points refer to the perceptions that interviewees have about the skills required for teaching entrepreneurship, while the remaining two points relate to the perceptions that interviewees have about the need of being trained on those skills, and their capability of using them. There are 53 items in the list, which may be gathered in 5 almost equally populated clusters: 1. management skill; 2. economic skill; 3. communication capabilities; 4. personal initiative; 5. technical skills. Each cell of the table has to be scored between 1 and 5.

4. Didactic versant , split in two family of questions: the one concerning the education curricula of future entrepreneurship (question 17), the latter the didactic tools (question 18), to be filled up only by teachers on entrepreneurship education (question 16). Each family list 10 questions requiring a 5 level evaluation.

In the following subsections we will examine the results of this inquiry from two perspectives: the quality of data and the emerging patterns.

1.5 Inquired people description

The people distribution is shown in the six pie charts in Fig. 1.2.

From these pictures we may conclude that people are: 1) well balanced as for gender, age and school level where they teach; 2) mostly bachelor graduated or higher, and 3) with a long teaching experience, 4) peculiarly, as for the teaching filed, most are involved in humanities, but all remaining fields are well represented. Of course, 31 is a very small number, however the relatively large standard deviation of the data (1.29 averaged on the questions) says that we span a meaningful sample.

1.6 Overall trends and quality of the data

As predictable, the score histogram is strongly biased by the highest values. This is true both for the general questions (up to question15), and for the professional ones as well (questions 17 and 18), see Fig. 1.3

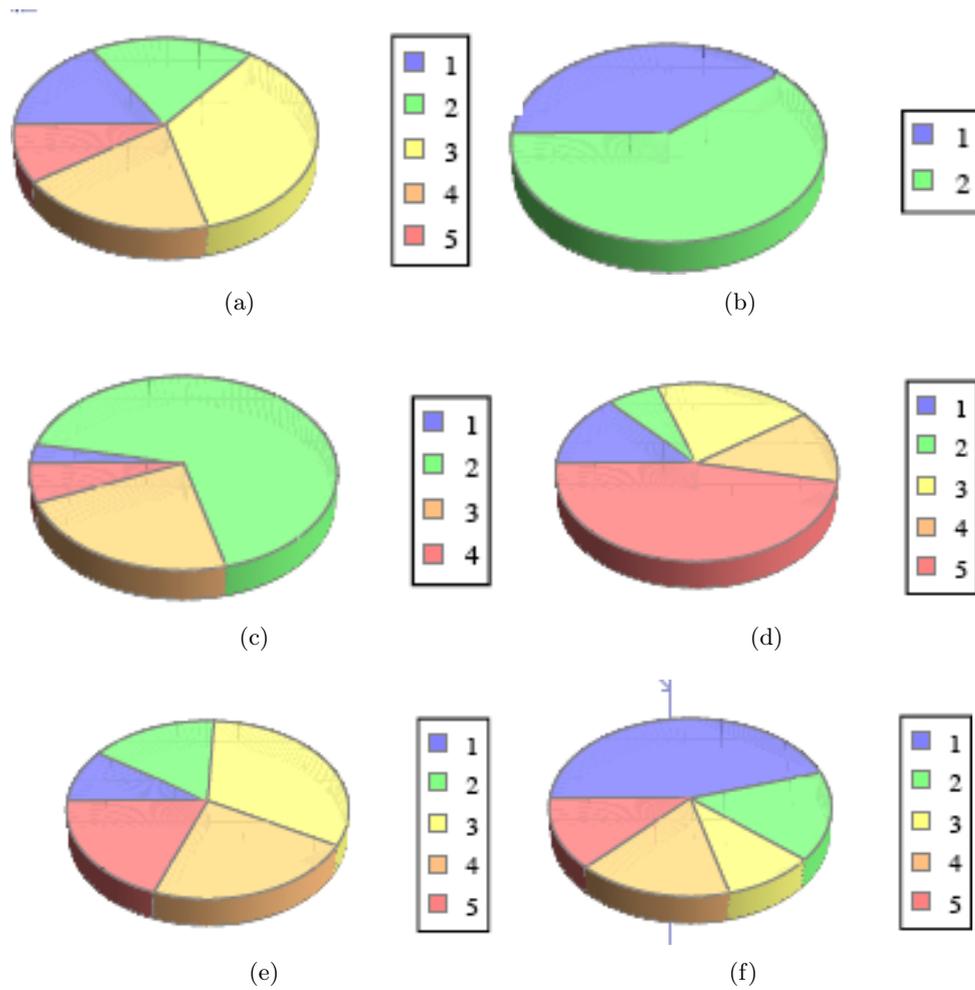


Figure 1.2: A synopsis of inquired people. a. quantized age ($\lceil(\text{age}-25)/10\rceil$); b. gender: 1 → male, 2 → female; c. instruction level; d. teaching experience in years $\times 4$; e. school level; f. teaching field: 1 → humanities, 2 → technological, 3 → informatics, 4 → others, 5 → entrepreneurship

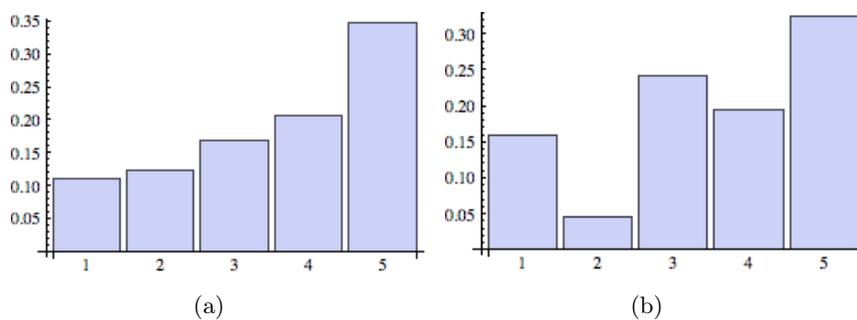


Figure 1.3: Histograms of the scores assigned to (a) the general queries of question 15 answers and (b) the queries for specifically experienced teachers (questions 17 and 18)(b)

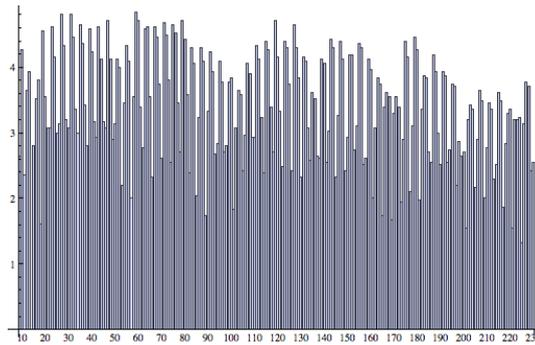


Figure 1.4: Barchart of the mean scores assigned to the single (232) general queries

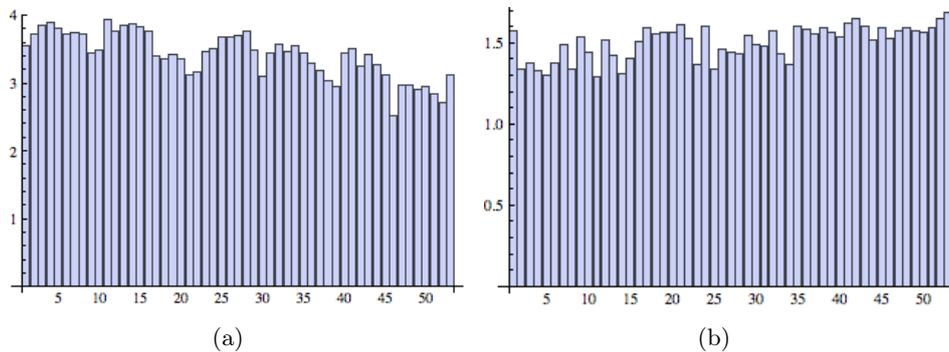


Figure 1.5: Average and standard deviation of scores per row items (53) in question 15.

Focusing to the first category of queries, and specifically on table question 15, if we look at the single answers we see an enough variegated spectrum of marks (see Fig. 1.4). Namely, each bar reports the mean score attributed by people, where some particularly low values will be discussed later.

General skills’ appreciation

Looking at the mean score per each item of question15 (i.e. grouping the score of the 4 questions heading the columns), as reported in Fig. 1.5(a) we may perceive some either tiring effect on the part of the interviewed people or their willing of issuing more discriminant judgments, which reflects in a decreasing trend with the questioning progress. This is accompanied by a complementary increase of the standard deviation (see Fig. 1.5(b)). Vice-versa, if we gather the queries per column, we obtain the graph in Fig. 1.6, which confirm the score bias when we refer to the importance of a skill and the willing of teaching it to candidate entrepreneurs, while the teacher preparation and the willingness of improve his preparation on a given skill deserve substantially a uniform assignment of scores.

The answers of teachers on the field

As for the more professional questions (17 and 18) the analogous graphs denote more articulated verdicts with a standard deviation decreasing with time (see Fig. 1.7).

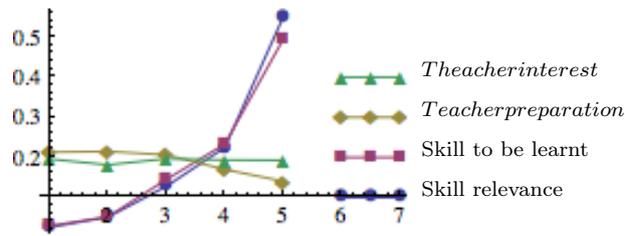


Figure 1.6: Score frequency distribution on skills' consideration.

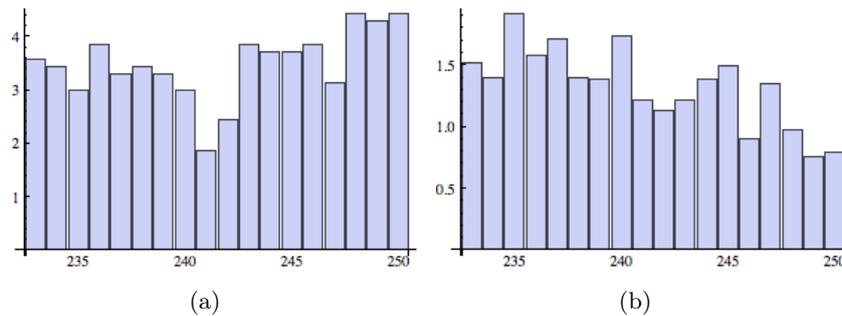


Figure 1.7: Average and standard deviation of scores per queries in questions 17 and 18.

Looking at the overall attitude of single people

Shifting our perspective on inquired people, Fig. 1.8(a) shows a rather variegated approach to the questionnaire. In particular Fig. 1.8(b) lists the features of those scoring less, in average, the questions (namely average less than 2.9). It emerges that all them are over 45 old, while variously distributed as for the remaining features.

1.7 Particular trends

We have 31 persons filling up the first part of the questionnaire and 7 person completing the second part as well. Hence we cannot expect strong features emerging.

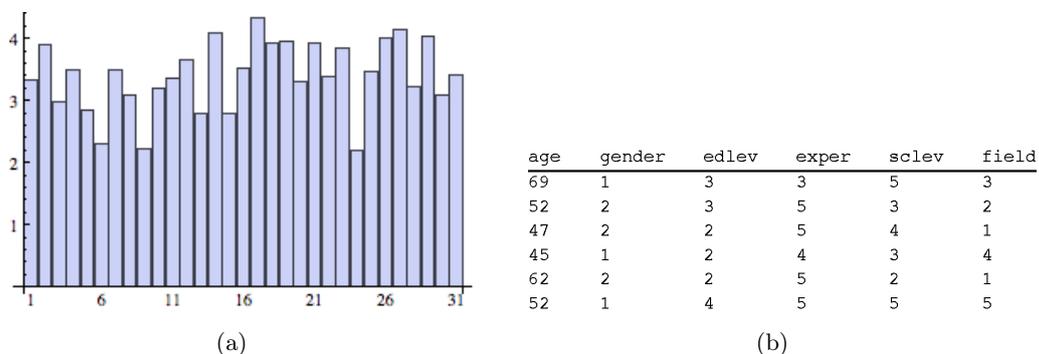


Figure 1.8: An overview on people filling up the forms. (a) barchart of the mean score for each people; (b) features of the 6 less scoring (in average) people.

In particular, as for the 7 responses, the average mark on items from 233 to 241 (concerning what is really taught) we observe no particularly enthusiastic answers, with a minimum concerning the amount of time dedicated to teaching entrepreneurship and the attention to the business plan. The most scored answer is rather a wish that the teaching activities promote entrepreneurship willing of the students. Answers to question 18 items promote the usage of role games and simulation in general while distrust in the teacher centrality.

As for the most populated answers (question 15), the general trend seems following the importance with which the question lines have been allocated in the form (from the most relevance to the less one). Thus, management issues and instrumental issues (computer and electronic tools) prove less appealing than the human management aspects (actually the most easy ones, those no requiring rigorous education, probably). Per se, the general voices (queries 42 and 45) are well scored, a less benevolent fate they is obtained by the single specifications of these voices, with a definitely bad score for the ability to draw picture with computer and reckoning abilities, but also to the capability of managing the day-per-day operations. As it emerges from Fig. 1.8(b), the most severe verdicts come from aged people, even though the correlation coefficient between mean score per person and its age is only -0.057 .

Deepening the analysis w.r.t. the five categories: management skill, economic skill, communication capabilities, personal initiative, technical skills, we observe that the general trend: high score for relevance of the skill both in the entrepreneurship and its education, almost uniform score for preparation degree and improvement willing (with a slight bias toward low values in the latter), is maintained in all categories, with the mentioned general bias toward low scores in the last category (see Fig. 1.9). Focusing on the full score 5, we see that it is attributed to the skill importance with a decreasing rate moving from more humanistic to more technical skills. The personal implications, in terms of what teacher already knows and what want to improve, is almost the same along the categories, apart the fifth. In essence, interviewees denote the same picture as for the management, economic and communication skills (apart the mentioned decreasing of the full rank rate). The category "personal initiative" is similar but with an obvious decrease of willing of improving willingness (as for the initiative, either you own it or not). Finally, as for the technical skills there is a general lack of confidence of the interviewee with the technical tools, not adequately paired, however, with a willingness of recovering this drawback. Namely the correlation table between the four answers to each query is the one reported in Fig. 1.10(a). While in Fig. 1.10(b) the analysis is specialized on category 5. Thus we may see that, on the one hand correlation between columns 3 and 4 are the sole negative one, and that their value in case of category 5 are relatively low in absolute value (actually the lowest among the categories).

Coming back to the first questions to interviewees, Fig. 1.11 denotes that:

- the importance of student entrepreneurship education is high but not uniformly maximal (average 4.26 over 5)
- the willing of developing competence in entrepreneurship is neutral (average 2.65 over 5), though the perception of benefiting of web teaching within an international community is higher (average 3.79 over 5)
- where the the best evaluated sharing opportunity within a web community is represented by the best practices (average 3.80 over 5) and teaching material in general (average 3.51 over 5).

where all these evaluations are expressed with similar standard deviation.

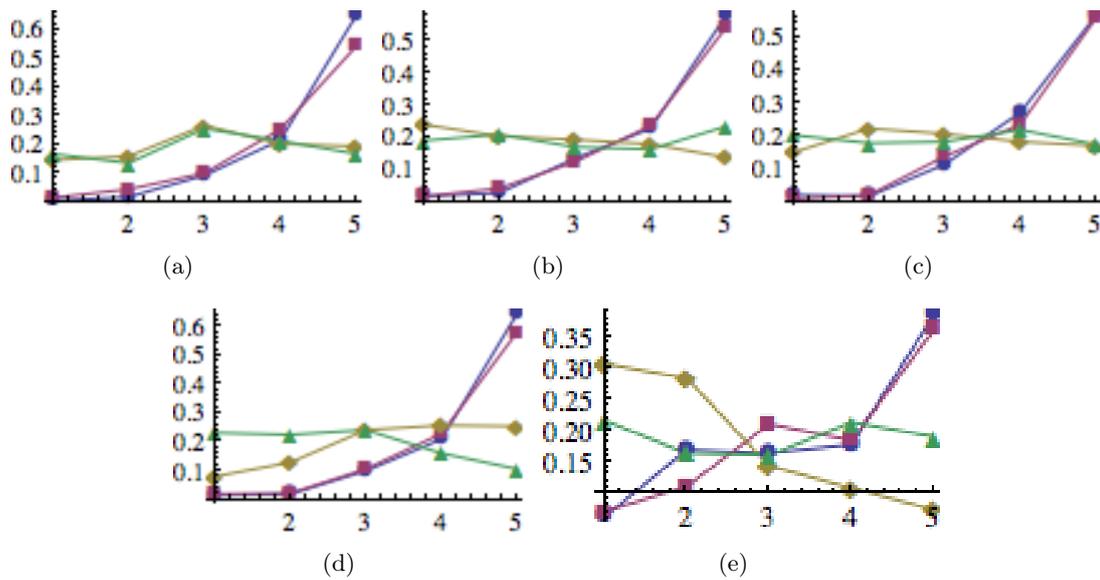


Figure 1.9: Score frequency distribution on skills' consideration, split by categories: (a) management skill, (b) economic skill, (c) communication capabilities, (d) personal initiative, (e) technical skills.

	c1	c2	c3	c4
c1	1.	0.752632	0.310484	0.344696
c2	0.752632	1.	0.248107	0.430148
c3	0.310484	0.248107	1.	-0.256919
c4	0.344696	0.430148	-0.256919	1.

(a)

	c1	c2	c3	c4
c1	1.	0.91442	0.420008	0.40007
c2	0.91442	1.	0.428169	0.452145
c3	0.420008	0.428169	1.	-0.127661
c4	0.40007	0.452145	-0.127661	1.

(b)

Figure 1.10: Correlation table between the four columns in the query table of question 15. (a): all data; (b): referred to the sole category 5

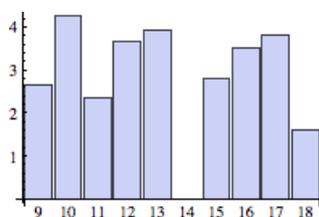


Figure 1.11: Scoring (in average) the favor of the teachers toward entrepreneurship education.

1.8 Qualitative Focus Group

The Italian partners have decided to involve in the focus group only a small number of respondents in order to broaden the topics and issues arising in the debate. Professors and professionals were selected from different Italian backgrounds, in order to have, albeit in limited numbers, the views from the different geographical areas and the Italian contexts. The participants came from Campania, Lazio, Lombardy, Veneto and Sicily.

The meeting was devised to give participants the report of the analysis of the questionnaire and to jointly study issues of entrepreneurship training through a series of questions agreed with the partners of the NETT consortium. Here are the questions answered by the participants in the focus groups:

1. Do you think that entrepreneurship training is important for your students? Why?
2. Do you think that the training of teachers in entrepreneurship is enough? (During the initial training of teachers and training programs to upgrade). What kind of training program do you suggest for teachers? What skills do you think are necessary / important for entrepreneurship education?
3. What do you think of the current business curriculum that you use in your school / university?
 - A Is useful for students to become entrepreneurs? Can you explain why?
 - B What do you add to make entrepreneurship curriculum current best?
4. What teaching methods do you use in business training? Can you explain why? What would you like to use?
5. Would you be interested in participating in an on-line training in entrepreneurship teaching?
 - A What do you expect to learn / gain in this training?
 - B What topics should cover this type of training?
6. You think that your institution has the technical capabilities to entrepreneurship training?
7. Do you think that your institution has external support for entrepreneurship training?
8. What tools do you believe should be provided the platform for optimal training of entrepreneurship?

Interviewees gave the following suggestions for the Italian context. There are few teachers who had direct knowledge of entrepreneurship education: the only case cited, concerning a primary school in Lombardy, suffered a stop due to a lack of support from the institutions and ministerial school. The case in question concern the development of activities by the students through funds that deposited on a school desk (actually a real bank branch).

Despite the lack of knowledge and presence of entrepreneurship education in Italy, it is clear from the answers that the small group of interviewees have a clear vision of what needs to be the entrepreneurship education and clear ideas to improve the Italian situation. In addition to training examples concerning the knowledge assessment, the teachers showed how institutions, both public and private, should change their mindset

to offer a real contribution to improve the entrepreneurship education. At present in the Italian context there are only individual positive cases worthy of note, carried out by people or institutions who believe strongly in the educational project.

We also mention requests for workshops and hands-on activities that can help both teachers and students, and to make valid operating any form of entrepreneurship. Among the examples include the Theater of enterprise and guided tours in the companies, as well as testimonials from employers and teachers who already have experience in the field.

Finally, it is important to learn a methodology that is entrepreneurial per-se, hence which has a strong multidisciplinary vision in order to better capture all the realities that a hypothetical future entrepreneur might face. In this sense it has been outlined the importance of promoting specific training topics including the methods of funding and the necessity of having good practices and laboratories and problem solving sessions. To meet these demands, interviewees requested applications that allow interactivity between teachers in the platform and systems to best to share information and documentation.

1.9 Conclusions

Conclusions Starting from the analysis of survey results, there is a clear evidence: participant teachers responding to the questionnaire need to increase and improve entrepreneurial skills. First of all we analyzed the answers concerning the “importance to entrepreneurship” items. It appears that teachers think that the “Humanistic” components need greater consideration than those “Technical” in a plan for entrepreneurship education. To be precise, the questions concerning the Entrepreneurial Vision (63% of maximum level of importance) and Personal Development (58% of maximum level of importance) show the highest degree of importance for participants, against 44% of the economic skills and 36% of the technical ones. Communication skills get a 51% of maximum importance. In this sense Italian teachers participating to the survey are saying that, in order to improve entrepreneurial skills, it is fundamental to work on: vision first, personal development second and communication third. Moreover, they are saying that they feel not fully prepared to teach those items. This is matching a specific Italian context where visioning, communication and personal development are considered mainly as meta-competencies, rarely managed as part of a training plan, often ensured by companies in training-on-the-job practices and/or in managerial courses inside companies, only for a specific subset of employees (mainly clerks or professional/technical categories). Looking at single charts and starting from the Management Skill (fig. 1.9(a)) item, we notice that participants feel the importance but clearly state their low preparation to teach it, even if the 63% of respondents believe in its “importance” and 51% say that it should be inserted in a plan of entrepreneurship education.

In the following chart focused on Personal Initiative (fig. 1.9(d)), teachers say that this item is definitively important for entrepreneurship development, but only a 21% of them feel to be fully prepared to teach it.

The results and the difference noted on those charts can be explained looking at the fact that in Italy there is not a clear understanding of what is actually entrepreneurship education. It needs to be recalled that, in Italy, entrepreneurship education covers only marginal economic and technical skills in the field of economics and management. For convenience, we will use the definition of “entrepreneurship education” reported in a study resulting from the workshop of 2009 Universities, Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Good Practice Workshop: “All activities aiming to foster entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes and skills and covering a range of aspects: such as idea generation, start-up, growth and

innovation” [14]. Looking at the chart focused on Communication Skills (fig. 1.9(c)), it appears that more than 75% of respondents state its importance, whether only 15% feel to be fully prepared to teach it.

In terms of economic skills (fig. 1.9(b)), respondents say that they are important to entrepreneurial skills development (nearly 67% concentrated on the highest values) even if only 5% feel to be fully prepared to teach it.

In order to separate the fields from economic studies degrees and entrepreneurial skills development, the paper “Entrepreneurship in Vocational Education and Training” is quoting that: “Entrepreneurship education should not be confused with general business or economic studies, as its goal is to promote creativity, innovation and self-employment”. Following are listed some of the activities that are considered necessary and useful for Entrepreneurship Education: “

1. Developing those personal attributes and generally applicable (horizontal) skills that form the basis of an entrepreneurial mindset and behavior;
2. Raising students’ awareness of self-employment and entrepreneurship as possible career options;
3. Work on practical enterprise projects and activities, for instance students running mini-companies;
4. Providing specific business skills and knowledge of how to start and successfully run a company”.

The document also points out that, in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning, the spirit of initiative and entrepreneurship is one of the eight key competences to be included in all stages of formation ¹ Entrepreneurship education is therefore part of a long-term project that the European Union since the early 2000s introduced it as one of the main components of the training ². The excursus on entrepreneurship and its formation appears to be the historical and theoretical basis (see [1]) for the analysis of the last two key aspects for skills and capacities considered in the questionnaire: the preparation on the competence/capability analyzed and the need to improve the expertise in order to be able to teach it. In terms of technical skills (fig. 1.9(e)), respondents present a similar

¹ In the Annex “KEY COMPETENCES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING – A EUROPEAN REFERENCE FRAMEWORK” on page four of Recommendation, we find the eight key components:

1. Communication in the mother tongue;
2. Communication in foreign languages;
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
4. Digital competence;
5. Learning to learn;
6. Social and civic competences;
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and
8. Cultural awareness and expression.

² Please see the European Councils of Stockholm (23 and 24 March 2001), Barcelona (15 and 16 March 2002) and Brussels (March 2003 and December 2003) on the developments of lifelong learning, the Work Programme ‘Education and Training 2010’ . These works have been incorporated into the Council Recommendation of 18 December 2006 regarding the development of lifelong learning. The basis for entrepreneurship education is “Oslo Agenda for Entrepreneurship Education in Europe”, developed after the European Council in 2006.

trend: importance is stated by nearly 55% of respondents (36% put the value “5” and 18% put the value “4”); but the 54% of teachers (sum of 26% of respondents with 1 vote and 28% with score 2) do not believe to have the skills to teach this item. Comparing this aspects to the above items, it appears that economical and technical sides are perceived less important than entrepreneurial vision, personal development communication skills. Finally, looking at the 36 respondents, a few of them (7 teachers) filled the part dedicated to entrepreneurial teaching: it means that only 20% of respondents are holding specific training activities in this field. Part of the respondent have been involved in a focus groups in order to explore deeply the items and to share opinions and suggestions of main survey results. Involved teachers have little or no expertise on the entrepreneurship training and only a few institutions are working on this approach in a comprehensive and structured way: they refer specific isolated projects, pilot initiatives or stand-alone activities managed directly by teachers in a non-structured way. This is in particular related to voluntary individual teaching or laboratories experiences outside clear policies of the Ministry, and in some cases not even in a medium or long term perspective inside schools and/or academic institutions. As far as the future platform NETT will be available, teachers require interactivity among themselves, simplicity of usage as well as an environment to share documents and materials. It has also been required to integrate the project with the few cases of entrepreneurship education in Italy and the possibility to include interviews and best practices/case studies of entrepreneurs, winning companies and testimonials and training material for entrepreneurship as well as examples of teachers already managing entrepreneurial skills development training programs.

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