
**ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR
PRIMARY LEVEL IN BULGARIA**

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to explore how entrepreneurship education is addressed in the national curriculum for primary school in Bulgaria. It makes a comparative analysis of the legal and policy documents on education in force during the period from 2000 to 2015 and after the adoption of the Pre-school and School Education Act in 2015. The purpose of this analysis is to study the evolution of the concept of entrepreneurship education in Bulgarian education system and gain a better understanding of its theoretical grounding, objectives and learning outcomes as stipulated in the national general education curriculum and syllabuses. The analysis examines whether and how these documents address competences related to entrepreneurship and general economic knowledge. In order to avoid confusion and ensure terminological consistency, a brief overview of the wide and narrow understandings of entrepreneurship education is provided in the beginning. The documents included in the analysis are the laws on education and the regulations establishing the state educational requirements and standards on the curriculum and the educational content together with the enclosed syllabuses for subjects containing topics and concepts related to economics, entrepreneurship, financial literacy and professions for grades 1 to 4. The main subjects discussed are Technology and Entrepreneurship and its predecessor Domestic Lifestyle and Technologies. The educational standards and the syllabuses are analysed from the perspective of their objectives and the learning outcomes expected to be attained by the students at the end of the primary level, each of the grades and within the above topic areas. In addition, they are reviewed in order to verify whether the learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes identified for each topic area are compatible to those in the standards and to what extent the progression between the grades is ensured. Special emphasis is given to the impact of the national lifelong learning strategies on the advancement of entrepreneurship education in the period under review. The findings of this analysis are used to substantiate the current curriculum framework for entrepreneurship education at primary level in Bulgaria. They also highlight the process of gradual integration of entrepreneurship within the area of technology education as a result of which a new compulsory subject Technologies and Entrepreneurship was introduced. Thus, entrepreneurship education has become part of the general curriculum in Bulgaria. Alongside with technological competences, the subject aims at developing the key competence of initiative and entrepreneurship. Based on the overall findings, conclusions are drawn regarding the theoretical foundations of entrepreneurship education as well as the factors which have influenced the process of its infusion into the Bulgarian education system.

Keywords: entrepreneurship competence, Technology and Entrepreneurship, primary education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is one of the most discussed topics in the European Union, where it is seen as the main driver for reviving the economy and achieving growth and jobs. The potential of entrepreneurial mindset is widely discussed and entrepreneurship education (EE) is attributed a central role for its development. However, the debate on the nature and characteristics of entrepreneurship is ongoing due to the different implications it can have. In order to avoid confusion and ensure terminological consistency, a brief overview of what is understood by entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education (EE) is provided below.

Narrow and wide definition of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education EE

The debate around entrepreneurship in the last few decades has resulted in a number of definitions, which focus on different aspects of this phenomenon. In his background report for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Commission, Lackéus (2015) makes a thorough review of the two main views on entrepreneurship – narrow and wide. The understanding of entrepreneurship is crucial as it determines the objectives, scope, methods and learning outcomes of EE. The narrow view on entrepreneurship is about identifying opportunities and starting innovative business organisations, which entail risk and create value, either for the purpose of profit or not. Therefore, entrepreneurship is about business development, self-employment, venture creation and growth, i.e. becoming *an entrepreneur*. The wide view is “about personal development, creativity, self-reliance, initiative taking, action orientation, i.e. becoming *entrepreneurial*.” These different approaches to entrepreneurship often cause misunderstanding what is meant by EE. Confusion also arises from the fact that both in

research and practice several terms are used to define it– “enterprise education”, “entrepreneurial education”, “entrepreneurship education”. In addition, sometimes they may be based on the same understanding, while in other cases one and the same term can denote different meanings of EE. Further on, he discusses that entrepreneurship should be infused into education based on the wide definition of entrepreneurship preferably in preschool and primary school (Lackéus, 2015). In a recent publication, Tsanev (2019) corroborates this stand with the argument that “these qualities are built over a long period of time and it is only natural ... to start working in this direction since the first school years”.

In the European Union (EU), the definition of EE is based on the understanding that entrepreneurship is a key competence that “can contribute to a successful life in a knowledge society” (Recommendation of 18 December 2006). Most EU countries use the following definition of EE:

Entrepreneurship education is about learners developing the skills and mind-set to be able to turn creative ideas into entrepreneurial action. This is a key competence for all learners, supporting personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability. It is relevant across the lifelong learning process, in all disciplines of learning and to all forms of education and training (formal, non-formal and informal) which contribute to an entrepreneurial spirit or behaviour, with or without a commercial objective. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016)

In this paper the term entrepreneurship education will be used in its wider meaning i.e. education aiming at developing an entrepreneurial mindset as well as appropriate entrepreneurship competences related to primary school level.

Entrepreneurship as a key competence

In 2006, the European Union responding to the growing need of new competences in 21st century came out with the concept of the key competence framework. Key competences are defined as a “combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context” (Recommendation of 18 December 2006). The revision of the Key Competence Framework substituted initiative and entrepreneurship with entrepreneurship competence defining it as, “the capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas, and to transform them into values for others. It is founded upon creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, taking initiative and perseverance and the ability to work collaboratively in order to plan and manage projects that are of cultural, social or financial value” (Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018).

2. BULGARIAN POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

The time frame of the policy and legal documents that are reviewed below is from 1991 to 2019. It is divided in two main periods related to the period of enforcement of the main educational acts from 1991 to 2016, and 2016 to date. EE is addressed in the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014 – 2020, which sets the objective of the “Promotion of EE education and training aligned to the needs of the economy and changes in the labour market” and emphasises the importance of key competences, such as learning skills, proactiveness, and enterprise. (2014).

Up to date, Bulgaria does not have a specific national strategy for entrepreneurship education. However, in line with the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan of the European Commission (COM(2012) 795 final) an Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan was accepted in 2015 addressing EE with special emphasis on primary and lower secondary school (2015). However, no budget was allocated to this measure.

3. BULGARIAN LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Comparison between the laws

EE was introduced in the national legislation in 2015 with the main objective to develop the competence of initiative and entrepreneurship based on the European Reference Framework of Key Competences. Until then, the Public Education Act (1991, rep. 2015) was in force. Even though it has undergone numerous amendments, it failed to address the concept of key competences for lifelong learning. The law, the rules and regulations to it had no provisions related to EE. However, concepts related to economics and entrepreneurship were included in the subject Domestic Lifestyle and Technologies taught at primary level 1 hour per week, which is equal to 4% of the total instruction time in grades 1 and 2, and 3% in grades 3 and 4.

In October 2015, was adopted the Pre-School and School Education Act (2015), which came into force in August 2016. Education is explicitly stated as a national priority. The law is based on fundamentally different philosophy, objectives and principles. It gives more autonomy to schools and allows including in the curriculum some subjects – among which entrepreneurship and personal finance management – as elective or optional subjects by the decision of the head of school.

The most important improvement is the introduction of key competences based on the European Key Competence Reference Framework, which gives new dimensions of the education process. One of the key competences is initiative and entrepreneurship. This key competence should be achieved by the new compulsory subject Technologies and Entrepreneurship, which is studied by all students from grade 1 to 9. It substituted three subjects in the former cultural and educational field Lifestyle and Technologies, taught from grade 1 to 8, among which Domestic Lifestyle and Technologies taught 1 hour per week to grades 1 to 4, which is equal to 4% of total instruction time in grades 1 – 2, and 3% in grades 3 – 4.

The recognition of initiative and entrepreneurship as a key competence and the change of the subject name has sent a clear message that entrepreneurship has become a priority on the educational agenda. It also shifts the focus of learning outcomes related to economics in the field of technology education to entrepreneurship competences.

Comparison between the educational standards

The State Educational Requirements (SERs), or Standards, for the subject content of Domestic Lifestyle and Technologies (Regulation No. 2 of 18 May 2000) are explicitly focused on developing technological literacy, lifestyle culture and basic career orientation skills. The content is divided into content cores, one of which is Content core 5: Organisation of Work and Economics. It includes four standards aiming at providing students with knowledge about household income management, consumer behaviour and professions. The specific objective of the subject is to equip students with basic technical and technological awareness as an important part of their general knowledge and skills.

It should be noted that though not explicitly named as entrepreneurial, some of the recommended activities suggest the development of such competences – problem solving, designing, experimenting, planning and implementation of small projects. Teamwork is encouraged. However, the objectives in the old SERs are too broad and the learning outcomes are focused on the technical rather than the economics aspect.

In contrast, the new State Educational Standard (Regulation No 5 of 30.11.2015) sets explicit entrepreneurship objectives and learning outcomes for the new subject Technologies and Entrepreneurship as its the main role is to develop the key competence of initiative and entrepreneurship. The specific objectives for primary level are related to understanding the importance of different professions and the need for leadership in community development and building a positive attitude towards labour, preservation of natural resources and environmentally friendly behaviour. Through the Global Topic: Professions and Entrepreneurship, students are expected to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to understand the meaning of basic economic concepts such as: labour, income, cost, profession, salary, family budget, good, service, etc. and connect the production of goods and services with satisfying personal and social needs.

Comparison between the syllabuses

In the syllabuses for the subject Domestic Lifestyle and Technologies for primary level, only a limited number of concepts related to economics are included in Content Core 5: Organisation of Work and Economics and the learning outcomes associated with them focus mainly on technology skills. For instance, the Syllabus for grade 1 (2000) states that the students are expected to understand the concept food commodities by being able to “name some types of food commodities, classify them and draw them following different criteria”. In most cases the standards in Content Core 5 include more learning outcomes and concepts, related to technology than economics. For instance, in the Syllabus for grade 2 (2002), within the same standard the students are expected to know different ways for preparing basic foods and to describe a basic service used (serving, haircut, repair). The concepts in this topic include hot and cold processing as well as service.

The main weakness of the syllabuses regarding their economics part is that the learning outcomes are not clearly differentiated and are rather a mixture of technology and basic economics knowledge and skills. Some of them are not related to the standards – for instance differentiating between public and private property in grade 3 Syllabus (2003). Some of the economic concepts listed in the SERs – e.g. resources, products, goods, services, money, career, profession, are not included in the syllabuses. On the other hand, there are concepts in the content core that are not related to economics. However, the syllabuses underline the importance of activities aiming at developing skills for idea generation, presentation, critical thinking, discovery and experiential learning, problem solving and project work, teamwork. The teacher’s role in these activities is more of a facilitator who guides and advises students. These are also recognised approaches to entrepreneurship education.

In comparison, the syllabuses for the new subject Technologies and Entrepreneurship make a significant step forward establishing a framework for EE. The format of the syllabuses is updated, which reflects the adopted competence-based approach. They include areas of competences that should be achieved at the end of each grade, one of which is that of initiative and entrepreneurship. The content is organised in five global topics; Professions and Entrepreneurship covers the topics related to economics, financial literacy and professions.

The syllabuses are intended to follow a spiral approach where each level builds upon the previous in terms of learning outcomes and concepts. For instance, professions are studied in the whole course for primary level from a different perspective, starting with identifying professions related to the production of goods or provision of services, then emphasising the importance of each profession for the community, exploring how different professions are involved in the production of goods and services and finally – the importance of different professions in the public and private sector. The scope of concepts is much wider than those included in the old syllabus. They encompass areas like financial literacy with a focus on personal finance – money, price, personal and family budget, income, expense, tax, bank; economics and entrepreneurship – producer, consumer, production, public needs. A full list of the learning outcomes and concepts for primary level by grade is presented in Table 1.

However, though the new syllabuses are much better organised and more concepts are included, there are some inconsistencies regarding the relevance between the knowledge, skills and attitudes at the end of the grade and the learning outcomes and concepts for the topic. For instance, the learning outcome for the end of grade 1 “Have a general awareness of basic economic concepts – labour, price, good, service, personal budget” is transposed in the global topic as “Identify and name certain goods and services”, which is obviously insufficient to ensure that this outcome will be covered, while labour is not included in the concepts or the learning outcomes for the global topic at all. Two basic terms such as needs and wants are also missing in the list, though included in the learning outcomes (Syllabus for Technology and Entrepreneurship for grade 1, 2015). Mostly surprisingly, the term entrepreneur or entrepreneurship is not found in the concept lists, although it is included in the learning outcomes in the global topic in the Syllabus for grade 3 (2017).

The syllabuses also provide examples for activities and interdisciplinary connections. Those related to entrepreneurship, for instance, include organising charitable and voluntary events at school and in the community, conducting research on different topics such as professions, energy saving, reasonable consumption, presentation of ideas, discussions, individual or team projects. These can be used for the assessment of the component related to entrepreneurship in addition to the initial acquisition of economic concepts (Syllabus for Technology and Entrepreneurship for grade 3 (general education) in force from 2918/2019 school year, 2017).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical grounds of entrepreneurship education in Bulgarian national curriculum is the wider understanding of entrepreneurship as the ability of the individual to turn ideas into action. The adoption of the European Reference Framework as a basis for the key competences provided by the law paved the way for entrepreneurship to become part of the general curriculum. The Bulgarian model relies not on the integration of entrepreneurship into a large array of subjects but on including a specific global topic within a subject. It should be noted, that though lacking consistency and explicit connection to entrepreneurship in terms of objectives and learning outcomes, the old SERs served as a basis, which was further built upon in the new standard.

The greatest achievement so far regarding EE is undoubtedly the introduction of the new compulsory subject *Technologies and Entrepreneurship*. The change of the name of the subject, together with the shift of its objectives to reflect more clearly entrepreneurship, is a big step forward. However, the number of hours for it at primary level is still quite limited and the share of the topic related to entrepreneurship is even smaller, which does not allow for more in-depth study of entrepreneurship. This will naturally have a negative effect on the achievement of initiative and entrepreneurship as a key competence. At the time being, this is a drawback that could be overcome with the opportunities provided by the law – i.e. studying entrepreneurship as an elective or optional subject within the general curriculum or extracurricular activities.

Another weaknesses of the subject is the lack of inner balance as its two parts are not proportionally covered. The new subject is related to a much greater extent to technology rather than entrepreneurship education, due to the influence of its predecessor. Through the Global topic: Professions and Entrepreneurship is better organised and more consistent in comparison to the old Content core: Organisation of Work and Economics, it is still a very small part of the syllabus and respectively – in the textbooks and the hours of instruction.

An advantage, which is not completely utilised yet, is the combination of technologies and entrepreneurship in one subject. By acquiring technological skills students develop entrepreneurship competences. The success of it depends mostly on the way this is interpreted in the textbooks.

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Table 1. Comparison between the learning outcomes for the subject Technologies and Entrepreneurship and for Global Topic: Professions and Entrepreneurship

	DOMESTIC LIFESTYLE AND TECHNOLOGIES Area of competence: Initiative and Entrepreneurship Knowledge, skills and attitudes at the end of each grade <i>As a result of the instruction, the student will:</i>	TECHNOLOGIES AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP Global topic: Professions and Entrepreneurship Knowledge, skills and attitudes <i>As a result of the instruction, the student will:</i>	Concept
Grade 1	<p>Have a general understanding of basic economic concepts – labour, price, good, service, personal budget. Understand that financial resources are needed to produce and purchase a good or service. Differentiate types of goods according to their purpose and use – sporting goods, food commodities. Have a general awareness of basic economic concepts – labour, price, good, service, personal budget. Understand that financial resources are required to produce and purchase a good or service. Differentiate types of goods according to their purpose and use – sporting goods, food commodities. Take initiative in carrying out individual and group activities. Prove the advantages of the educational activity and its outcome.</p>	<p>Identify and name certain goods and services. Understand the need of financial resources to produce and purchase an item. Distinguish between their own necessities as “needs” or “wants”. Name machines, apparatuses and equipment used in modern professions. Distinguish between professions related to the production of goods and services. Understand the importance of saving and donating.</p>	<p>price good service personal budget</p>
Grade 2	<p>Know the importance of popular professions. Understand that work remunerated. Link teamwork with the pursuit of a common goal. Use names of goods and services in a practical activity. Know the importance of popular professions. Understands that the work done is paid for.</p>	<p>Specify the importance of each profession to the community. Understand that people get paid for their work. Relate family spending with satisfaction of its needs and wants. Understand that spending money on the needs and wants of the family should be planned. Know basic services they use (serving, haircut, repair) etc. Know the places where basic services are provided (serving, haircut or repair). Know the places where they purchase basic goods for the home.</p>	<p>income expense family budget</p>
Grade 3	<p>Know the relationship between the activity of the entrepreneur, the manufacturer and the consumer. Explain the path of products from production to exchange and sale. Understand that people from different professions are involved in the production of goods and services. Understand the connection between personal and social needs and how to meet them.</p>	<p>Describe typical activities of popular professions related to the production of goods and services. Describe the activities of the entrepreneur. List ways to advertise goods and services. Understand the relationship between consumers and producer. Describe the production of a specific product. Links the importance of ideas and innovation to the ability to satisfy consumer wants.</p>	<p>producer consumer production</p>
Grade 4	<p>Understand the movement of money in the community. Know the role of taxes in meeting public needs. Understand the importance of different professions in the public and private sector. Link the role of the bank to production and consumption.</p>	<p>Give examples of money flow in exchange for goods or services. Link the necessity for taxes to meet public needs. List services provided by the state – education, healthcare, transport. Indicate the bank as a place for storing and lending money. Name companies in the region and the professions of the people working there.</p>	<p>money tax public needs bank</p>