Entrepreneurship Education and Economic Growth

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Abstract

The joint interest in disseminating an entrepreneurial mindset to the students even before graduation has led to cooperation between VIA University College and the Central Denmark Region to support entrepreneurship in the Professional Bachelor’s degree programmes at VIA University College. This paper addresses the presumptions behind the project.

The presumptions in relation to entrepreneurship demonstrate that the effort should target both growth entrepreneurs and SMEs in a wide sense; there is a need for growth entrepreneurs with ambitions to generate breakthrough innovation as well as the many others with more modest ambitions about incremental innovation.

In relation to education and training this concerns the combination of curricular and non-curricular activities. Entrepreneurship teaching must be realised in close cooperation with the degree programmes and should focus on both entrepreneurial skills and competencies. The teaching should be experimental and incorporate entrepreneurial practice.

These presumptions already form an integral part of existing activities such as the UCT week and the new advanced studies programme in entrepreneurship. They will also be embodied in the student entrepreneurship centres to be established at each of the seven campuses, which is the project’s main focus.

Key words: Entrepreneurship education, enterprising behaviour, economic growth.

JEL codes: I230, M130, O400

1. Introduction

VIA University College collaborates with the Central Denmark Region about strengthening entrepreneurship in the Professional Bachelor’s degree programmes at VIA. This shared initiative is part of a major regional focus on the entire education system to help create a labour force with more entrepreneurial competencies – a labour force that can either generate development and renewal within the framework of existing companies and institutions or create growth and development by establishing new businesses.

In connection with this project, we have studied the underlying presumptions and the choices that have to be made in the project. This article discusses these presumptions and their practical implementation.
2. National and regional political strategies

In 2006, the Danish Government launched a strategy to prepare Denmark for progress, innovation and cohesion in the global economy\(^1\). The strategy contained 350 specific initiatives involving education and training programmes, research and entrepreneurship, as well as improvements in the framework conditions for growth and innovation. The initiatives covered a wide range of activities allocated to different ministries and in some cases designed to be carried out jointly by several ministries. In Denmark, higher education is split between three ministries: the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Culture. Regional development and business promotion is handled by another ministry, the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs.

The many initiatives within education and training in entrepreneurship were evaluated in 2008, and in 2009 the evaluation was followed up by the government's strategy for education and training in entrepreneurship\(^2\). This strategy has three parts:

1. Setting objectives for the Danish state-run school system, upper secondary education and higher education. The government wants to enhance education and training in entrepreneurship at all levels.

2. Bringing all the supporting work together under a single body, the Foundation for Entrepreneurship. The foundation will promote the training of teachers and the development of teaching methods and courses, etc. for pupils and students in all branches of education.

3. Establishing the Partnership for Education and Training in Entrepreneurship incorporating the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs.

Table 1 shows the definition and vision of the government's strategy. The definition includes social entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship and covers value creation in a broader sense.

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\(^1\) The main report on the strategy — "Fremgang, fornyelse og tryghed" - is available in Danish only. The publication "Progress, Innovation and Cohesion Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy — Summary", is a translation of the summary of the strategy. 
http://www.globalisering.dk/page.dsp?area=52

\(^2\) The strategy for education and entrepreneurship is available in English:
The following broad definition of entrepreneurship is used in the government’s strategy:

- Innovation for commercial purposes or value creation in a broader sense. That is to say a process in which a person sees an opportunity or has an idea and implements it, with the result that the idea creates value. This value creation does not need to be financial in nature.
- The creation in an existing enterprise of new processes and/or products that can be of value to the existing enterprise or organisation.
- Starting one’s own business and putting it into operation.

The vision of the Danish government is to:

- Give pupils and students an introduction to entrepreneurial thinking.
- Develop knowledge of entrepreneurship in pupils and students.
- Develop the ability of pupils and students to act entrepreneurially.


The government uses regional partnership agreements to involve regional growth forums in developing the foundation and training in entrepreneurship at all levels of education. As part of its business development strategy, the Central Denmark Region has launched the Entrepreneurship in Education initiative, which aims to strengthen entrepreneurship teaching at all levels of the education system. The collaboration between VIA University College and the Central Denmark Region to strengthen entrepreneurship in the Professional Bachelor’s degree programmes is part of this initiative.

Both the national strategy from 2009 and the regional business development strategy from 2010 contain changes compared with previous strategies. It is a new feature that the regional initiatives are aimed at all levels of the education system and that the education system and the regional business development activities are as interconnected as they are in this case. It is also a new feature that the initiative is based on such a broad definition of the term entrepreneurship.

3. Strategy presumptions

The expectations to the strategy are that education and training of students in entrepreneurship will lead to increased entrepreneurship, which in turn will lead to economic growth and improved competitiveness. This correlation is illustrated in figure 1.
This strategy goes against previous assumptions that entrepreneurship is a personality trait associated with the individual. If entrepreneurship was presumed to be a personality trait, the work would focus on identifying 'the DNA of the entrepreneur'. We could identify them early in the degree programme and focus on teaching them skills. The number of entrepreneurship subjects in higher education and the objective to develop more subjects for degree programmes that did not traditionally include teaching in entrepreneurship reflect the broader understanding that anybody can potentially come to see themselves as an entrepreneur. Whether this happens depends on social relations, existing self-knowledge and any desires for a specific future identity that the individual brings into the entrepreneurial situation (Nielsen et al. 2009).

At the start of the project, VIA University College offered 33 subjects in which the word entrepreneurship is included, either in the title or in the learning objectives for the teaching. All in all, 1,800 of VIA’s 17,000 students participated in entrepreneurship teaching in 2010/2011. These figures include all activities associated with ECTS credits regardless of their scope. The teaching ranges from course components or subject components with entrepreneurship-related learning objectives to special subjects in which innovation or entrepreneurship is part of the title of the subject or course as well as nuances and specialisation within specific degree programmes. The aim is to increase the number of entrepreneurship subjects by 20% per year during the project period (2011-2013). Another aim is to give all students the option to participate in entrepreneurship subjects of a minimum of 5 ECTS by 2013 and that a minimum of 30% of the students should accept the offer and participate in entrepreneurship education.

Once a year, the Danish Foundation for Entrepreneurship maps entrepreneurship education in Denmark. The mapping shows that 124 courses were offered in the autumn semester of 2010, which is a 9% increase compared to the 2009 autumn semester. However, the number of students in the courses has not increased. In the 2010 autumn semester, 3.3% of university students participated in entrepreneurship courses. An entrepreneurship course adds up to an average of 8.3 ECTS credits. Most entrepreneurship courses at Danish universities are still offered at graduate level (Vestergaard et al. 2011).

In American Higher Education entrepreneurship is one of the fastest growing subjects in undergraduate curricula. Formal programmes (majors, minors and certificates) in entrepreneurship have increased from 104 in 1975 to more than 500 in 2006.\(^3\)

The increase in the number of new subjects seems to indicate that the strategy has come to form an integral part of the Danish educational institutions, and as the Kauffmann report shows this is not only a Danish phenomenon. But which initiatives are the most effective ones? Which education and training initiatives best promote entrepreneurship, and what type of entrepreneurial behaviour best promotes economic growth (Figure 2)?
In the following, the two questions in Figure 2 will be discussed in more detail, i.e., the presumption regarding education and training activities and the presumptions regarding entrepreneurship. What activities are available in the new joint initiative between the Central Denmark Region and VIA University College and what choices should we make? The presumptions about entrepreneurship influence the presumptions about education and training activities, so we will commence with entrepreneurship.

3.1 Presumptions about entrepreneurship

The arguments for a correlation between entrepreneurship and economic growth are based on OECD’s identification of entrepreneurship as a driver for growth together with innovation, competent labour, ICT and globalisation. This would be used as an argument when defining the universities’ new role (Blenker et al. 2006) and determining the focus areas in the Central Denmark Region’s Growth Forum during the 2007 structural reform (Growth Forum’s Business Development Strategy 2007-2009 and 2010-2020). The GEM analysis (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) of data from 2000-2006 shows:

- that only 1.7% of entrepreneurs expect their company to employ more than 100 people within five years. This group will nevertheless create almost 60% of all new jobs in new companies;
- that only 7.4% of the entrepreneurs expect their company to employ more than 20 people within five years. This group will create more than 74% of the new jobs in new companies (Autio and Heebøll 2009).

As a driver for growth, it is not surprising that many business promotion activities focus on identifying growth entrepreneurs and target their activities towards them. The aim is to create new companies of the type described as ‘superstars’ by Tidd et al. (2005). Superstars are large firms that have emerged from small beginnings through high rates of growth based on the exploitation of a major invention or a rich technological trajectory enabling small firms to exploit first mover advantages. Microsoft is a well-known international example. In Denmark we have examples such as LEGO, B&O, Danfoss and Grundfos. The question is which company will be the Microsoft or LEGO of the future and who will be the next generation’s Bill Gates or Kirk Kristiansen? The spotlight is typically on the category consisting of new technology-based firms (NTBFs). NTBFs are small firms that have emerged recently from large firms and large
laboratories in such fields as electronics software, and biotechnology. They are usually specialised in the supply of a key component, sub-system, service or technique to larger firms, who may often be their former employers (Tidd et al. 2005). The concept stems from the USA where NTBFs originate in either large companies or universities. Especially MIT and Stanford University are known for their many entrepreneurial alumni (Route 128 in Boston and Silicon Valley in California).

Many other places have attempted to create something similar but without similar success. Isenberg (2010) recommends that instead of attempting to create another Silicon Valley, people should try to create what he calls an entrepreneurial ecosystem shaped around local conditions. Not even Silicon Valley would be able to create the same all over again if they tried, he argues. The opportunity was a result of a special combination of circumstances. Instead, local players and decision makers, both in the political system and the private sector, should answer the following question: If not Silicon Valley, then what entrepreneurial vision do we aspire to?

In the new joint project between the Central Denmark Region and VIA University College, this question becomes extremely relevant. VIA’s degree programmes are divided between seven campuses with widely differing structures, and the project’s main focus is to establish student entrepreneurship centres in all seven campus cities. In the student entrepreneurship centres, the students must have an opportunity to develop and test ideas for entrepreneurial practice, whether a project, a new product or a new business idea. From society’s point of view, the objective is that more ideas should be converted into commercial activities, and the student entrepreneurship centres should give the students inspiration, motivation and the competencies to carry them out. The project is carried out in partnership with the municipalities, and the intention is that the student entrepreneurship centres should generate synergy between local business development activities and VIA’s education environments. For each campus, VIA together with the municipality and other local partners should answer the question: *If not Silicon Valley, then what entrepreneurial vision do we aspire to?*

In OECD’s 2010 recommendations for how government policy can boost innovation by improving the environment for entrepreneurship and small firm development, one of the main arguments is that the initiatives should differentiate between the few firms with high growth potential and the great majority of SMEs that innovate very little compared to larger companies. However, it is important that the initiatives target both types. One type focuses on R&D and breakthrough innovations; the other type, the bulk of new and small firms, focus on doing, using, interacting and creating incremental innovations. The importance of targeting the initiatives towards the large number of SMEs that have not traditionally been given much attention mainly resides in what OECD describes as the New Economy and the Knowledge Economy. Here there is a need for the many SMEs that are willing to take the risk of trying new products and processes. Although the individual SMEs are not as innovative as larger companies, they are extremely important as a group. OECD also points towards to other areas, developing entrepreneurship skills and social entrepreneurship. OECD’s definitions of social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship are shown in Table 2. According to OECD’s definition, social entrepreneurship and social context are interlinked. Both concepts encompass value creation and a form of economic activity or business.
Table 2: OECD’s definition of entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Entrepreneurship</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Entrepreneurship is the phenomenon associated with entrepreneurial activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Entrepreneurial activity is the enterprising human action in pursuit of the generation of value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity by identifying and exploiting new products, processes and markets</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social entrepreneurship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Social entrepreneurship aims to provide solutions to unsolved social problems through some form of business. It often goes hand in hand with social innovation processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social innovation is about social change in response to social needs and challenges. Social innovation implies a conceptual process or product change, organisational change and changes in financing and can deal with new relationships with stakeholders and territories. It seeks new answers to social problems by identifying and delivering new services that improve the quality of life of individuals and communities and identifying and implementing new labour market integration processes, new competencies, new jobs, and new forms of participation as diverse elements that each contribute to improving the position of individuals in the workforce.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: OECD (2010), SMEs, Entrepreneurship and Innovation. OECD Publishing

All in all, the joint project between VIA and the Central Denmark Region relies on the following presumptions about entrepreneurship:

Each local area must identify its own ecosystem. In this context, the project will be regarded both as a single local area covering the entire Central Denmark Region and as seven local ecosystems based around a campus. Each local area must find its own answer to the question: *If not Silicon Valley, then what?*

As a driver of growth, entrepreneurship should be given a broad interpretation. There is a need for both the highly innovative companies with ambitions about breakthrough innovation and the many other companies with more modest ambitions about incremental innovation. There is a need for technology-based companies, social enterprises as well as the many SMEs based on familiar products and services.

3.2 Presumptions about education and training activities

In the documentation currently available, entrepreneurship typically means starting your own business. Vestergaard (2011) has thus studied whether entrepreneurship teaching and training results in more companies, and based on Danish studies under GEM and studies from Norway and the USA, he finds that teaching and training in entrepreneurship has a positive effect on the interest and tendency to start a business.

Experience from American universities with highly rated entrepreneurship teaching indicates that it is the combination of curricular and non-curricular activities that produces
students with entrepreneurial skills. While the curricular activities give the students the knowledge foundation and ensure the subject area the necessary academic recognition, the non-curricular activities contribute by providing opportunities for the students to test their ideas for products, services and other forms of entrepreneurial practice. The underlying rationale is that the more entrepreneurial experiences and influences the students have while completing their degree programmes, the more they will demand teaching and activities based on creativity, innovation and self-expression.

Entrepreneurship education is one of the three areas that promote entrepreneurship, according to OECD (2010). It works best if the activities are closely linked to the degree programmes and if entrepreneurship education is a strategic focus for the management of the institution. In addition, there is a need for student entrepreneurship centres.

In several of the Danish higher education institutions, entrepreneurship teaching takes place in student entrepreneurship centres (‘incubators’) (Brink 2011). The student entrepreneurship centres are as different as the educational institutions at which they are based. At some institutions, the offers available at the student entrepreneurship centres are incorporated into the degree programmes and involve activities attracting ECTS credits. Other entrepreneurship centres work relatively independently of the educational institutions at which they are based.

In the first Danish initiatives within education and training in entrepreneurship, teaching the students how to prepare a business plan was a core component of the programme. The individual steps in the business plan dictated the structure of the subject, and the teaching was designed to provide guidelines for the preparation of a good business plan. In some degree programmes the teaching was based on theory supplemented by practical examples. In other degree programmes, the students could choose to work on starting their own business. However, according to the experience of the teachers, as revealed in networks for teachers of entrepreneurship, teaching students to prepare business plans did not increase their entrepreneurial behaviour or their motivation to start their own business despite the fact that it increased their knowledge.

An analysis of GEM data from the period 2000-2006 indicates that the most important learning goal within entrepreneurship education is a flair for business opportunities. Out of ten of the analysed framework conditions, education is the only one that has a positive impact on growth-oriented entrepreneurial activities, and it is the development of the ability to identify business opportunities that has this positive effect rather than skills training (Aution and Heebøll, 2009). The analysis focuses on the small group of growth-oriented entrepreneurs and does not throw any light on the effect of the large group of entrepreneurs who have no major growth ambitions but who OECD nevertheless recommends be included in the efforts to promote entrepreneurship.

Blenker et al. (2006) distinguishes between two different target groups within education. One group of students has an academic interest in learning about the entrepreneurship phenomenon. This can be done by means of research-based knowledge. This group does not present any complex challenge in terms of education, as this type of knowledge can be communicated by means of traditional teaching methods. The other group of students is interested in becoming entrepreneurs. They want to prepare themselves for their own entrepreneurial practice, and this form of teaching presents a major challenge to the education system, as all that is available is good explanations that can be mapped and generalised. The latter group moreover includes two

4 IDEA Danmark’s network for teachers of entrepreneurship and networks for student entrepreneurship centres in Denmark.
categories of enterprising behaviour. One category comprises the type of behaviour where a person establishes a new company either alone or together with others. The other category comprises enterprising behaviour in which the goal is to develop people’s ability to handle uncertainty and complexity, and this ability can also be used for enterprising behaviour in existing companies. As the teaching of the ability to see, create and realise business opportunities is gaining ground as an alternative to the teaching of business plans and is a component of enterprising behaviour, whether in growth entrepreneurs, other entrepreneurs or large companies, it would be interesting to find out whether this form of teaching is equally effective for all three categories.

As already mentioned, entrepreneurship teaching that aims at preparing the students for their own entrepreneurial practice represents a challenge to the education system, and experiments are being carried out in which entrepreneurial practice is incorporated in the teaching and the traditional teaching framework is varied with the inclusion of camps, etc. (Bager and Nielsen, 2009).

All in all, the joint project between VIA and the Central Denmark Region is based on the following presumptions about education and training:

- It is the combination of curricular and non-curricular activities that produces students with entrepreneurial competencies.
- Entrepreneurship teaching should be well entrenched in the degree programmes.
- Entrepreneurship teaching should focus on both knowledge about entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial competencies, including the flair for identifying, creating and realising business opportunities.
- Entrepreneurship teaching should be experimental and incorporate entrepreneurial practice.

In Figure 3 the questions in Figure 2 above have been replaced by presumptions.

**Figure 3:** Presumptions about the correlation between entrepreneurship education and economic growth

**Educating and training in E-ship**
- Opportunities
- Enterprising behaviour
- Practise

**Acting e-rially**
- Innovation in SMEs
- Local ecosystem
- Social e-ship

**Economic growth**
- Competitiveness
- Cohesion

4. Examples of entrepreneurial practice in the degree programmes

The presumptions are relevant for the entrepreneurial practice in the degree programmes. We have chosen to expand on this in two examples:

- Innovation week for technical and commercial study programmes
4.1 Innovation Week: Return Ticket to Uncharted Territory

For five years, an innovation week has been held in which between 225 and 450 students from up to ten different study programmes have participated. Return Ticket to Uncharted Territory (UCT) is an expedition into the land of cross-disciplinary thinking. The specific aim of the project is to give students the possibility of using systematic methods for innovative processes – cutting across disciplines and in close cooperation with external partners. During the week, the students have to create something new and useful for external stakeholders (the people setting the task). The UCT week starts with a two-day workshop to introduce students to idea development, innovation, and cross-disciplinary teamwork. From Wednesday to Friday, project groups work on a particular project idea. Project solutions must be presented on the Friday, and an expert panel will select the most innovative solution. Table 3 shows companies and challenges in UCT 2010.

Table 3: Companies and challenges in UCT 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating companies</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bright Ignite</td>
<td>Electric vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cembrit</td>
<td>Intelligent technology in building materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsens Municipality</td>
<td>Attract new citizens to Horsens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skanderborg Municipality</td>
<td>CO₂-neutral village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>Improvement of communication at Solar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers from the degree programmes participate in the week in a new role as facilitators and are responsible for supporting the innovative process. An innovation week cutting across technical, commercial and teaching degree programmes with the involvement of external companies and institutions, carried out by teachers with different backgrounds and with the participation of both Danish and foreign students is a challenge for all levels of the organisation — management, project group, IT staff, canteen, caretakers, students and teachers.

The UCT week focuses on problem-oriented project work involving an innovative process. One of the didactic challenges has been to combine the requirements that the innovative project should create value and ensure the academic diversity of the groups with a desire for a higher degree of participant control. External companies and institutions present a demand/challenge which they would like to have met, and there is a clear tendency for the students to want challenges from companies or institutions related to their own academic area. The week places new demands on the teachers. They must support the group and help the participants handle diversity in all stages of the innovative process in a constructive manner. This requires that the teachers redefine their traditional teacher role and focus on the students’ relations and innovative process. Whether the teachers specialise in bridge construction or the Danish Service Act, they will experience a cross-disciplinary innovation week as a special challenge. Instead of the communication of academic knowledge, the week primarily involves skills in innovation and communication as well as social and personal competencies. Most teachers are used to handling such competencies
but few of them are prepared to radically shift the focus from the subject to the process (Pedersen and Lyager, 2008).

The UCT week is part of the curriculum of the individual degree programmes. The teaching involving the development of solutions to a challenge is therefore a form of theory while practice is incorporated in the form of the companies presenting the challenges. These companies participate in selected parts of the weeks' programme. The companies providing the challenges primarily include companies with which VIA already cooperates, and they can be regarded as part of the local ecosystem.

### 4.2 Establishing a degree in entrepreneurship at VIA

In 2010, VIA decided to establish an advanced studies programme in entrepreneurship. The degree programme is a special line within the Professional Bachelor's degree in Design and Business and takes 18 months. The degree programme covers 90 ECTS credits. By implementing the degree programme as an advanced studies programme, it becomes possible for students from other short higher education programmes to enrol.

The degree programme is a top-up programme that builds on the so-called 'Academy Profession (AP) degrees', two-year higher education programmes available in Denmark. All these two-year degree programmes focus on a specific profession and finish with a project attracting 10 ECTS. The graduates then have an opportunity to choose between continuing with an 18 months' top-up degree programme, and in this way acquire a Bachelor's degree, or continuing with a 3.5 years' Bachelor's degree, typically with the benefit of 1-2 years' credits. The position of the degree programme in the Danish higher education system is shown in the figure below.

**Figure 4:** The Danish higher education system

![Diagram of Danish higher education system](image)

The degree programme is an advanced studies programme that can be based on several different AP degrees, primarily within technical or commercial subject areas, for example:

- AP degree in Design Technology
- AP degree in Marketing Management
- AP degree in Production Technology
- AP degree in Financial Management
The reason why the above innovation circle (Figure 5) is used as a basis for the degree programme is that the different phases of this model serve several purposes. In addition to allowing the students to work with the business model in an entrepreneurial project, the model also ensures that the students learn to work with tools such as research, field analysis and different trend-spotting methods. In addition, the students get an opportunity to work with idea generation at both a practical and a more theoretical level. Finally, the model also ensures that the students actually start an entrepreneurial project, either in the form of a social entrepreneurial project, an entrepreneurial project in an existing company or their own business (probably the most common scenario). It is vital for the choice of model that it makes it possible to combine theory and practice and allows the students to test their theoretical skills in practice. The model allows the students an opportunity to work for 18 months with a specific idea and make it ready for commercialisation during their years of study. Each of the phases in an innovation project represents one theme in the degree programme. Each theme contains several topics which the students must complete, see the figure below (Figure 6).
The teaching will be in the form of theory lessons, projects, and the practical work of starting a business. The different forms of teaching will alternate throughout the programme. The teachers will function not only as traditional teachers but also as coaches. External mentors who can help the students with their practical work will also be associated with the programme. By the time the students graduate, they will be in the process of running their own business or will be able to use their academic skills in connection with entrepreneurial projects in existing companies.

An advanced studies programme involves curricular activities, as a matter of course. However, it is the expectation of VIA that the degree programme will constitute the core of a student environment with many non-curricular activities and the involvement of external mentors. This collaboration will form part of the local ecosystem and can potentially benefit other students at the same campus. Like the UCT week, the degree programme will require a new teacher identity that can form part of this collaboration and take on the role of both teacher and coach.

5. The new opportunities created by this project

The UCT week and the new advanced studies programme are examples of VIA activities within entrepreneurship education. One of the new activities that the project has paved the way for is student entrepreneurship centres. As already mentioned, the project’s main focus is the establishment of these centres in all of the seven campus cities. In the centres, the students must have opportunities to develop and test ideas for entrepreneurial practice. The project is to develop a concept for VIA’s student entrepreneurial centres that are characterised by

- being a physical environment where students who have an idea for a project, a product or a business concept will have access to offices and conference facilities, and where the existing laboratory facilities of the educational institution can be used for testing
and experimental purposes in relation to the activities in the student entrepreneurship centre;

- being a social environment where students will meet other students, business people, hands-on people and teachers;

- offering professional advice and coaching;

- being an environment that has been adapted to the students on that particular campus; and

- being a multi-disciplinary/professional environment for the teachers involved in entrepreneurship on the campus.

Ideally, the student entrepreneurship centres are located close to the educational institutions and close to other businesses, both entrepreneurs and the more established companies. The campuses have different means of achieving this. Where the facilities at some locations can be under the same roof, common activities will have to be organised for others. A student entrepreneurship centre builds bridges for the student between the educational system and start-up of the project or company, and the centre’s activities complement the educational system and the business promoting system, including the business community services offered by the municipal authorities. As a consequence VIA works with the local contributors to business community services and entrepreneurship services.

The value of the various types of business concepts and in particular the presumption that new companies which do not boast a high business potential and have no high-growth potential make it possible to create a more inspiring entrepreneurial environment than can be done if interest centres only around the select few growth entrepreneurs and superstars. In view of the very low share of growth entrepreneurs, the initiatives that only target this group will focus on a very small group, and the commercial ideas with growth entrepreneurship potential that are generated by students and survive an evaluation of the potential will be few and far between. If a higher number of companies are given a positive relevance assessment, the entrepreneurial environment will expand and become more dynamic.

One of the challenges of the project objective of increasing the scope of the teaching in entrepreneurship is that the teaching should also spread to educational programmes and professional environments lacking teachers who have entrepreneurship as their core academic competence. Previously, entrepreneurial subjects have been practically non-existing within the spheres of teaching, social sciences and health sciences, and the intention of spreading the notion of entrepreneurship to these programmes is well in agreement with the wide understanding of entrepreneurship in relation to the strategy for education and training in entrepreneurship and OECD’s recommendations to governments how to boost innovation and growth. VIA’s activities within social entrepreneurship comprise both new curricular activities under existing programmes and an application to the Ministry of Education for permission to offer a new Professional Bachelor’s degree in social entrepreneurship.

As can be seen the activities under this project have incorporated the new elements in the strategies at national level and in relation to business development. In the student entrepreneurial centres, the degree programmes work with promoters of business initiatives and the platform of this work is a broad definition of term entrepreneurship.
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