**Chapter 13**

**The personal dimension of an entrepreneurial competence: An approach from the Spanish basic education[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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**Abstract**

This chapter focuses on the concept of entrepreneurial competence and how it may be developed within the educational system. In particular, a tri-partite model of entrepreneurial competence is defined. Nevertheless, in order for this competence to be effectively developed through entrepreneurship education, the concept of entrepreneurial identity is introduced. The entrepreneurial identity is considered as a mechanism to building the individual’s entrepreneurial self-concept. A case study of one entrepreneurship education experience is used to illustrate the key role of this entrepreneurial identity in the construction of entrepreneurial personalities.

**Keywords**: Entrepreneurial identity; entrepreneurial competence; entrepreneurship education; Secondary school; Spain

**Introduction**

The identification of the characteristics and components of the entrepreneurial competence, as the one that has to be developed in would-be entrepreneurs and the population at large, has recently attracted considerable attention. In particular, Europe is often considered as lacking an entrepreneurial culture and, thus, in greater need of instilling this competence in its citizens.

However, one initial difficulty lays in the delimitation of the entrepreneurship concept. There is some agreement that those identifying an opportunity and acting on it are entrepreneurs (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Its role includes the re-organisation of the productive activity or capitalising on knowledge and technology transfer activities (Plummer & Acs, 2014; Terjesen & Wang, 2013). However, at the same time, there is little doubt that the concepts of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities spill over from the original economic domain (Komarkova, Conrads, & Collado, 2015). In this sense, the launching of new projects in social, cultural or even public sector domains may also be considered as entrepreneurial action. It is to this wider view of entrepreneurship to which we will be referring in this chapter.

This definition matches quite well the European approach to entrepreneurship (Erkkilä, 2000; Komarkova et al., 2015). Thus, the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan (European Commission, 2013) proposes a number of actions that, although mostly intended to foster business creation and growth, also include the promotion of an entrepreneurial culture and more entrepreneurial individuals in the society. According to it, entrepreneurial activity is seen as part of the wider environment – commercial, but also natural, social and cultural (Ahmad & Seymour, 2008). This view opens the door to interpretations other than those exclusively based on business/economic value creation (Hytti, 2008; Komarkova et al., 2015). Thus, entrepreneurship has been considered as a major social force (Sarasvathy & Venkataraman, 2011).

In parallel with the increased attention paid to entrepreneurs by academics and policy-makers, entrepreneurship education has also experienced a rapid growth (Kozlinska, 2016; Liñán, 2007). There is now some agreement on the importance of identifying the set of elements conforming the entrepreneurial competence, as the focus of entrepreneurship education.

In this chapter, we focus on the concept of entrepreneurial identity as a mechanism to building the individual’s entrepreneurial self-concept. A case study of one entrepreneurship education experience serves to present our understanding of the entrepreneurial identity. We argue that this entrepreneurial identity is a key element in the construction of entrepreneurial personalities, one of the stated objectives of policy action in this field. It encompasses the development and assimilation of the entrepreneurial competence by the students.

**The entrepreneurial competence**

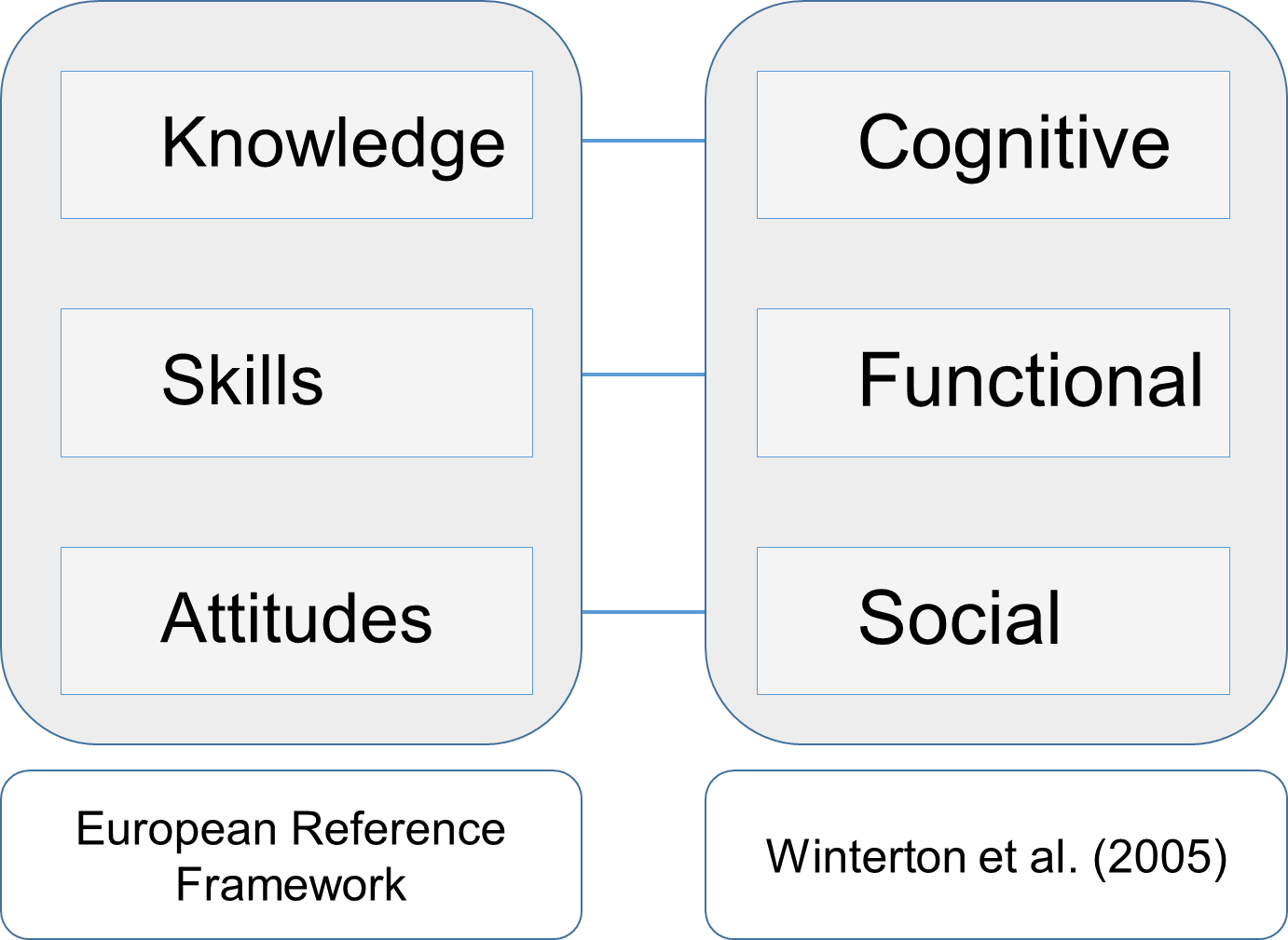
Entrepreneurship research and entrepreneurship education have invested heavily in exploring, identifying, and understanding the relevant entrepreneurial skill-set which would make a successful entrepreneur (Lazear, 2004; Oosterbeek, van Praag, & Ijsselstein, 2010; Smith, Schallenkamp, & Eichholz, 2007; Trish Boyle, 2012). How to build a functional model of entrepreneurial competences has been the central topic of the academic debate on this subject (Komarkova et al., 2015). The current literature addresses work expectations, input measures related to knowledge and skills, personal attributes and personal characteristics of the entrepreneur. Cheetham and Chivers (1996, 1998) introduced a more holistic classification of professional competences, which may be useful to our purpose. Their classification of four sets of interrelated competences is described as follows by Komarkova et al. (2015):

1. cognitive competences: the knowledge-base of the entrepreneur, in other words, his/her set of work-related knowledge and ability to put it to use;
2. functional competences: a standardised description of the tasks that someone working on a job is able to perform;
3. personal competencies: the characteristics of an individual that enable him/her to produce superior performance. This definition goes beyond the knowledge and the skills of individuals, focusing on their psychological traits and personal drives;
4. meta-competencies, is a set of soft skills and other individual characteristics that tend to be associated with superior performance in adversity. These, along with technical competences and personal attributes related to the competencies we have seen so far, include flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity and the ability to learn and ‘judgement and intuition’, creativity and analytical and problem solving capacities.

Building on this view, Winterton et al. (2005) consider the meta-competences, together with personal ones under the label of “social competences”. Thus, this tri-partite classification fits well into the European Reference Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (European Commission, 2007), which identifies eight key competences for all members of a knowledge-based society and defines them in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes (K-S-A). One of these eight competences is the ‘Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship’. Regarding this, the framework identifies some basic components. The necessary knowledge relates to the identification of suitable opportunities, understanding of the particular challenges faced by the business owner and of the economic and business contexts. Meanwhile, relevant skills refer to proactive project management, as well as effective representation and negotiation skills or assessing personal strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, individuals with an entrepreneurial attitude take the initiative and are pro-active in both their personal and social lives and at work, and have the determination to meet their objectives (European Commission, 2007).

As may be seen, the two frameworks are interlinked and interdependent. They are both based on a three-component definition of “competence”, although the terminology differs. Figure 1 highlights the similarities between these two frameworks.

**Figure 1**. Competence components

Source: elaborated based on Komarkova et al. (2015).

Regarding the specific elements comprising each component of the entrepreneurial competence, several contributions have been made identifying single elements, or sets of them. The original taxonomy is based on the three-fold classification mentioned above. It corresponds to different domains of learning: cognitive (dealing with knowledge, comprehension and critical thinking), psychomotor (focusing on change/development in behaviour/skills) and affective (concerning attitudes, emotions and feelings) (Mets, Kozlinska, & Raudsaar, 2017). A good summary is the one proposed by Lakeus (2015), synthetizing previous contributions in this respect (see Table 1). This is the case of Kraiger et al., (1993), who tried to develop a framework to evaluate learning outcomes using this tripartite model of competence. Fisher et al., (2008), in turn, attempted a similar framework specifically focused on entrepreneurship education. Nevertheless, the affective component seems to be more elusive or complex, as reflected from a wider variety of sources.

**Pedagogical approaches to develop the entrepreneurial competence**

Even if agreement is reached regarding the contents of the entrepreneurial competence, the question remains how to best develop it in students. Béchard and Grégoire (2005) acknowledge that the educational underpinnings of entrepreneurship education research have not been sufficiently clear. They assert the need to strengthen the theoretical base, based much more strongly in education sciences. More recently, Fayolle (2013) reiterates the lack of theory-driven research and its disconnectedness from education and educational psychology. The conceptual grounds of entrepreneurship pedagogy, therefore, are still limited to a few basic frameworks that are also open to further empirical testing (Kozlinska, 2016). Among them, the one proposed by Béchard and Grégoire (2005, 2007) has received considerable attention.

**Table 1**. Entrepreneurial competence framework

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Main theme | Sub themes | Primary source | Description / interpretation |
| Non-cognitive competences 🡨 🡪 Cognitive competences | Knowledge | Mental models | Kraiger et al., (1993) | Knowledge about how to get things done without resources, Risk and probability models. |
| Declarative knowledge | Kraiger et al., (1993) | Basics of entrepreneurship, value creation, idea generation, opportunities, accounting, finance, technology, marketing, risk, etc |
| Self-insight | Kraiger et al., (1993) | Knowledge of personal fit with being an entrepreneur / being entrepreneurial. |
| Skills | Marketing skills | Fisher et al., (2008) | Conducting market research, Assessing the marketplace, Marketing products and services, Persuasion, Getting people excited about your ideas, Dealing with customers, Communicating a vision. |
| Resource skills | Fisher et al., (2008) | Creating a business plan, Creating a financial plan, Obtaining financing, Securing access to resources |
| Opportunity skills | Fisher et al., (2008) | Recognizing and acting on business opportunities and other kinds of opportunities, Product / service / concept development skills |
| Interpersonal skills | Fisher et al., (2008) | Leadership, Motivating others, Managing people, Listening, Resolving conflict, Socializing |
| Learning skills | Fisher et al., (2008) | Active learning, Adapting to new situations, coping with uncertainty |
| Strategic skills | Fisher et al., (2008) | Setting priorities (goal setting) and focusing on goals, Defining a vision, Developing a strategy, Identifying strategic partners |
| Attitudes | Entrepreneur-ial passion | Fisher et al., (2008) | ”I want”. Need for achievement. |
| Self-efficacy | Fisher et al., (2008) | ”I can”. Belief in one’s ability to perform certain tasks successfully. |
| Entrepreneur-ial identity | Krueger (2003, 2007) | ”I am / I value”. Deep beliefs, Role identity, Values. |
| Proactive-ness | Sánchez (2011), Murnieks (2007) | ”I do”. Action-oriented, Initiator, Proactive. |
| Uncertainty / ambiguity tolerance | Sánchez (2011), Murnieks (2007) | ”I dare”. Comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, Adaptable, Open to surprises. |
| Innovative-ness | Krueger (2003), Murnieks (2007) | ”I create”. Novel thoughts / actions, Unpredictable, Radical change, Innovative, Visionary, Creative, Rule breaker. |
| Perseverance | Markman et al. (2005), Cotton (1991) | ”I overcome”. Ability to overcome adverse circumstances. |

Source: Lackeus (2015; 2014), Table 2

Béchard and Grégoire (2005) identify three ‘archetypical’ teaching models in entrepreneurship education: the supply model, the demand model and the competence model, plus two hybrid teaching models (Nabi, Liñán, Fayolle, Krueger, & Walmsley, 2017). The supply model focuses on pedagogical methods highlighting a behaviourist paradigm, in terms of the “transmission and reproduction of knowledge and application of procedures” (e.g. lectures, reading, watching/listening) (Bechard & Gregoire, 2005, p. 111). The demand model focuses on pedagogical methods highlighting a subjectivist paradigm, involving personalised meaning through participation in terms of “exploration, discussion and experimentation” (e.g. library use, interactive searches, simulations) (Bechard & Gregoire, 2005, p. 111). The competence model focuses on pedagogical methods highlighting an interactionist theoretical paradigm, in terms of active problem-solving in real-life situations, where “teaching is conceived as a strategic intervention to allow for – and influence – how students organize the resources at their disposal (e.g. knowledge, abilities) into competences that can be mobilized for action” (Bechard & Gregoire, 2005, pp. 115–116). This model focuses on methods emphasising “communication and discussion” (e.g. seminar, presentations, debates) and knowledge “production” (e.g. essays, modelling, portfolios).

In contrast to the supply model, which emphasises a behaviourist perspective, both the demand and competence models fit within the constructivist approach to entrepreneurship education (Lobler, 2006; Neergaard, Krueger, & Robinson, 2012). Behaviourism assumes learning is primarily the passive transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the student, while constructivism assumes that learning involves actively participating in the construction of new understanding (Nabi et al., 2017). Often, pedagogical methods in entrepreneurship education in higher education are highly behaviourist: lectures, homework, quizzes, and so forth, that focus on knowledge acquisition, rather than the deeply experiential approaches of the constructivist perspective (Neergaard et al., 2012).

It is relatively straightforward to relate the behaviourist paradigm to learning the knowledge element of the entrepreneurial competence. In this sense, Kozlinska (2016) also relates the skill element with the demand model; while the competence model would be most directly linked to the attitude element. In our view, though, both constructivist paradigm models (demand and competence models) address the skill and attitude components of the entrepreneurial competence. The demand teaching model constitute a form of situated learning, in which the students have to learn how to apply knowledge to their specific circumstances (Nabi et al., 2017), thus helping develop skills, but also attitudes. In the case of competence models, which involve entrepreneurship real-life situations, the effects on attitudes and skills should be more intense.

Therefore, the analytical framework proposed by Béchard and Grégoire (2007; 2005) constitute a solid contribution to developing the pedagogical side of entrepreneurship. These models are backed up by mainstream learning paradigms – behaviourism/cognitivism, and constructivism/social constructivism (Kyrö & Carrier, 2005; Nabi et al., 2017). At the same time, they can be related to the so-called three basic modes of entrepreneurship education – education about, through and for entrepreneurship – often used to categorise educational interventions (Gibb, 2005). Thus, as suggested by Kozlinska (2016), the supply model (related to education about entrepreneurship) focuses on transmission of information. Meanwhile, the demand model (related to education through entrepreneurship) focuses on developing entrepreneurial personalities. Finally, the competence model (related to education for entrepreneurship) focuses on training entrepreneurs.

Overall, given the characteristics of entrepreneurship education in the wider sense - the centrality of the participant, the practical nature of the topic and the types of skills involved - the most appropriate approach seems to be that of action learning (Komarkova et al., 2015). Action learning relies on an education framework, which involves learning from direct experience and hands-on project work, thus matching the demand and competence models described above. This approach is endorsed by academia (Caird, 1990; Johannisson, 1991) and has gathered considerable consensus among entrepreneurship education specialists (Ruskovaara & Pihkala, 2014).

The knowledge component is clearly not a challenge to entrepreneurship education. In contrast, traditional teaching methods such as lectures are not well-suited to teaching the skill and attitude components of the entrepreneurial competence. There is consensus that learning which is student-centred, self-directed, personalized, interactive, cooperative, flexible, project based, including challenge or problem-based, discovery and reflective, is better suited for this endeavour (Ruskovaara, 2013).

**Entrepreneurship and the construction of the personal identity**

So far, we have defined the entrepreneurial competence as comprised of knowledge, skills and attitude elements, focused on developing entrepreneurial personalities (rather than just entrepreneurs), and identified the constructivist teaching (demand and competence) models as most suitable for this purpose. Nevertheless, this approach leads to a wider consideration of the concept of entrepreneurial identity (Bernal & Cárdenas, 2006, 2014). It is, we believe, appropriate to link the entrepreneurial competence to personal identity and to the agency that ultimately characterizes people.

Conceptualizing the construction of a personal identity means, on the one hand, to appeal to dynamic processes of social interaction and, on the other, to refer to the narration of episodes that are happening in personal trajectories. With one meaning or another, in the course of life, the subject is forced to choose. They cannot elude choice, thus becoming the creators of their own biography. In this sense, we would understand that personal identity is a "chosen personality" within the possible frames of human action, thus highlighting not only the contingency, uncertainty and the random condition of life, but also the opening of possibilities of the person (McAdams & McLean, 2013).

The configuration of the personal identity, understood as the agency of the subject, is intimately related to the motivational and intentional processes. These processes confer energy and action patterns, facilitating the realization of personal aspirations, tasks and projects (Cantor, 1994; Emmons, 1989). Being and feeling agency implies not only initiating actions and knowing how to carry them out, but also managing self-emotions for a consistent execution of our actions. Pedagogically, this agency of the person could be considered as entrepreneurial competence for initiative and personal autonomy (Bernal, 2014), although its meaning and scope obviously transcend the domain of competence.

The construction of identity takes place in the emergence of social and temporal memories of life, along with an autobiographical reasoning about successive experiences, contexts and people encountered (Williams, Conway, & Cohen, 2007). People shape their identity by telling the story of their own lives. In this sense, narrative plays a central role in the construction of identity because, through the story, persons "invent" themselves and give meaning to their existence (Ricœur, 1990).

Building the narration of oneself means finding a guiding thread that offers meaning to past experience by relating it to the present and projecting it into the future. The narration fulfills a mediating function between the different times lived and the present moment. Educational events are part of life stories and shape our personal identity. Thus, the investigation of how educational experiences contribute to the formation of the personal identity is highly relevant (Bernal, 2014).

To deepen our knowledge about the formation of the personal identity, we have to attend to the formation of autobiographical recollections in that memory (Williams et al., 2007). In particular, experiences experienced as emotional are best remembered, and have a more important role in the construction of the personal identity (Holland & Kensinger, 2010). School experiences do not escape this argument.

The period of basic education and schooling usually ranges from three to sixteen years of age. This involves a path or educational trajectory where the subject undergoes profound changes, based on physical growth, cognitive and intellectual development, progress in social knowledge, development of norms and values, ​​and affective development (Bernal, 2014). The great number of hours and years spent in school, along with the variety of relationships established among its members, play a main role in understanding the gradual transformations that are chiselling the features and constructing the subject's personal identity from early childhood (Pillemer, Krensky, Kleinman, Goldsmith, & White, 1991).

Thus, the inclusion of entrepreneurship education in the basic education may play a substantial role in the configuration of a personal identity that is entrepreneurial. In particular, an entrepreneurship education that involves emotional elements will have a more important contribution to the individual’s personal identity. In this sense, a recent study in the first year in higher education shows that inspiration (an emotional element) is basic to achieve these outcomes (Nabi, Walmsley, Liñán, Akhtar, & Neame, 2018). The debate is still open, though, between the relative effectiveness of using specific modules or subjects, or alternatively cross-curricular contents. The following case study analyses one entrepreneurship education programme that can be initially classified under the competence model. Its potential to develop an entrepreneurial identity in the participants is discussed.

**The EME programme: entrepreneurship education in the Spanish context**

In the case of Spain, in consonance with EU guidelines, all levels of the education system have received attention in the attempt to develop an entrepreneurial spirit in the society. It was first introduced in the secondary school curriculum as a basic competence in 2006. Entrepreneurial education was expanded in 2013 at the national level[[2]](#footnote-2), with its inclusion into the primary school emphasizing its cross-curricular character. The different regional authorities have also tried to push entrepreneurship in the education system within their regional contexts. Thus, a considerable number of proposals -diverse in nature and scope- have been implemented around the country, trying to reconcile the entrepreneurial culture with the promotion of venture creation.

As mentioned above, this recent official recognition of the need to develop the entrepreneurial competence has involved the creation of some specific subjects in the secondary school, and especially in vocational training. These subjects, though, typically adopt a supply teaching model, focused in the transmission of knowledge to the students.

Alternatively, a number of programmes focused on both "business plan elaboration" and the "creation of mini-ventures" started to be developed, initially as pilot projects. They have extended rapidly to several schools in compulsory educational levels, although not yet generally included in the curriculum. The development of "Enterprise projects" carried out by students during the school year is more frequent in secondary and vocational training levels. Training experiences related to business management are also implemented through "programmes of business simulation" (*Simula*, in Galicia; *PEON, Business Plan on-line*, in Catalonia; *Empresaula*, in different regions).

Mini-enterprises, despite having a considerable trajectory in practice, have only very recently been legally recognized as an educational element[[3]](#footnote-3). This recent legislation sets out issues relating to duration, tax obligations and civil liability of the mini-ventures as pedagogical tools. Since this recognition was approved, new forms of entrepreneurship education programmes have gradually been emerging. All this framework of training projects are encouraged and inspired from institutions integrated into the structure of the regional authorities, since they are responsible for educational matters. To mention only a few: *Instituto Aragonés de Fomento*, in Aragon; the technological city of *Valnalón*, Asturias; *Andalucia Emprende*, in Andalusia. However, they work under the form of pilot projects that are only offered to a limited number of schools each.

All this set of initiatives, actions and programmes for the promotion of an entrepreneurial culture in Spain still suffers from the lack of rigorous evaluations of their performance and any real accomplishments. The stated aim is the promotion of innovation, creativity, responsibility and entrepreneurship at all levels of education. However, we lack precise and comprehensive diagnoses about its effectiveness and optimal curriculum development.

One of the most widespread programmes in this respect is EME (Empresa en Mi Escuela, Company in My School). It takes the form of an educational mini-company and is implemented in the last two years of primary education (age 10-12). Inspired by the social economy, the purpose of EME is the creation and management of a cooperative by participating students during the school year, culminating with the organization of a market in which students sell their handmade products. This programme develops across all the knowledge areas of the curriculum, thus promoting core competencies. Using a project-based methodological approach, it aims to achieve an active, practical, cooperative and significant learning. The teaching experience aims at:

1. the acquisition of habits of conduct oriented to interpersonal relationships,
2. the introduction to the identification and knowledge of the basic elements and principles of project implementation, and
3. the knowledge of group operating procedures through the development of entrepreneurial awareness habits about a company or other type of association.

The contents of the programme, originally published by De la Iglesia (2003), are organized around six teaching units (Valnalóneduca, 2016), as shown in Table 2. The implementation of EME seeks students to learn how to create and manage their cooperatives, to present them to the public and to sell finished items. In short, it approaches the business world to the classroom through practice. Based on this description, it would fit within the competence teaching model described above.

While entrepreneurship can be studied from different perspectives (OFSTED, 2011), this research focuses on the influence of the EME programme in entrepreneurial training of schoolchildren.  A narrative approach has been used (Rubin, 1999; Somers, 1994), with the purpose of exploring the effects of EME on students’ memories.

Autobiographical recollections are closely related to the development curve of autobiographical memory. Therefore, in this study, we inquire into the recollections of students who belong to the late Primary Education (11-12 years) and early secondary school (13-14). This age coincides with the beginning of the reminiscence peak where memories about personal identity have a high presence (Conway & Holmes, 2004). Entrepreneurial educational experiences, such as episodes of personal trajectory, should contribute in a relevant way to the formation of the entrepreneurial sphere within the student identity.

**Table 2**. *Teaching units of the EME programme.*

|  |
| --- |
| I. *An entrepreneur is born*: this unit explores the discovery of certain personal abilities: self-esteem, communication, responsibility, teamwork, and creativity and problem solving. |
| II. *A company is born*: this second unit facilitates the creation of a business idea and a certain legal form is attributed to the company. It also consider the contribution by the partners, and election of its representatives (President, Secretary, Treasurer). |
| III. *We are launched!*: in this unit, the activity focuses on the corporate image of the company (logo, stationery, advertising posters, labels, containers). An advertising campaign is also designed, and the functions of a marketing department are identified. |
| IV. *This company is worth a lot*: in the fourth unit contents related to company accountancy are developed. |
| V. *With head and hands*: the main didactic component of this module focuses on the techniques to manufacture the chosen products, offering different models of production. |
| VI. *Sales and results*: this last unit addresses the content related to the sale of products, from the aesthetics of the sale point to dealing with potential customers. |

Source: De la Iglesia (2003).

To collect data, open questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used. The structure of the instruments was dual. On the one hand, the autobiographical recollections asked about description of the experiences during the development of the programme. Secondly, the autobiographical reasoning consisted in reflections on formative contributions produced. The stories contributed by schoolchildren concerning his formative experience, enable the reconstruction of educational experiences as a methodical resource to know and understand the implemented influence and learning processes. I.e., it has sought to check what learning has remained in his memory. This will tell us, indirectly, what has been the programme contribution to the setting of some entrepreneurial narrative identity. Put another way, we try to find out whether EME really develops the entrepreneurial competence and what its effect is on the different elements that comprise it. Thus, we contribute to the structural and functional understanding of the competence.

In what follows, we reflect on the content raised through the programme and its relationship to the curricular discourse about suitable contents for entrepreneurial education. Thus, we will not consider the discussion of strategies and teaching methods for the cultivation of entrepreneurial training (Middleton & Donnellon, 2014), which have been mentioned above, and are expected to be significantly related with the personal dimension of the entrepreneurial potential. In this regard, it is important to mention that emotional experiences are best remembered (Holland & Kensinger, 2010), opening up a highly valuable exploration path for the development of entrepreneurship pedagogies. Lackeus (2014) has shown the existence of some emotional events in the entrepreneurial competence: interaction with the outside world, uncertainty and ambiguity, and the experience of teamwork. Such events would constitute the basis for several elementary principles of the formation of the entrepreneurial identity: self-efficacy, tolerance for uncertainty and strengthening of insight.

Beyond the specific effectiveness of the EME programme (Bernal & Cárdenas, 2014), the predominant presence of personal indicators -along with technical and business-related ones- can be inferred from the memories and autobiographical reasoning explored (see Table 3). Among the business knowledge and skills, the following may be mentioned:

1. management and organisation of the work-groups and the resources;
2. production processes;
3. marketing and sales.

Regarding contents related to the personal content, the following emerge:

1. autonomy (responsibility, independence);
2. initiative (risk propensity, locus of control);
3. creativity (imagination, innovation);
4. cooperative spirit (social skills, collaboration).

**Table 3**. Content indicators for the entrepreneurial competence.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Business-related dimensions | Personal dimensions |
| * Management and organisation of working groups * Management and organization of resources * Production processes * Sales and marketing | * Autonomy   + Responsibility   + Independence * Initiative   + Risk-propensity   + Locus of control * Creativity   + Imagination   + Innovation * Cooperative spirit   + Social skills   + Collaboration |

Source: Bernal and Cárdenas (2014)

Obviously, the mentioned indicators may be subject to readjustment and restructuring resulting in new categorizations that may more closely fit the concepts identified in Table 1. Thus leadership may be included as a relevant indicator. Or perhaps, the critical sense may be added to point out to deep independence. Risk evaluation may be proposed, instead of risk propensity. Similarly the importance of problem solving may be made explicit, rather than referring to imagination. Recently, Mueller and Anderson (2014), in a study on the impact of entrepreneurial learning in the personal development of students, have identified three outstanding personal qualities: sense of responsibility, independent thinking, and ability to connect self-needs and others’ needs. It is not difficult to find an association between these personal qualities and those drawn from our study. Thus, autonomy can be associated with responsibility and independence. Meanwhile, initiative and co-operative spirit can be linked to the ability to connect the own needs with that of others, which can only be met completely from creativity.

Ultimately, interviewed students mnestic traces have shown that entrepreneurial competence has a close relationship with personal factors that, in themselves, are not necessarily linked to the ability to create a business. However, they are essential if we intend to become entrepreneurial persons. This idea connects seamlessly with the notion of learning as an active process of building immersed in a particular context, and not as mere acquisition of content. The context is inseparable from the action of subjects and meanings that they build. *Situated learning* allows people to coordinate their cognitive operations and their actions, based on particular and actual challenges, and thus answer the demands posed by their environment and achieve their objectives (Castejón, González, Gilar, & Miñano, 2010).

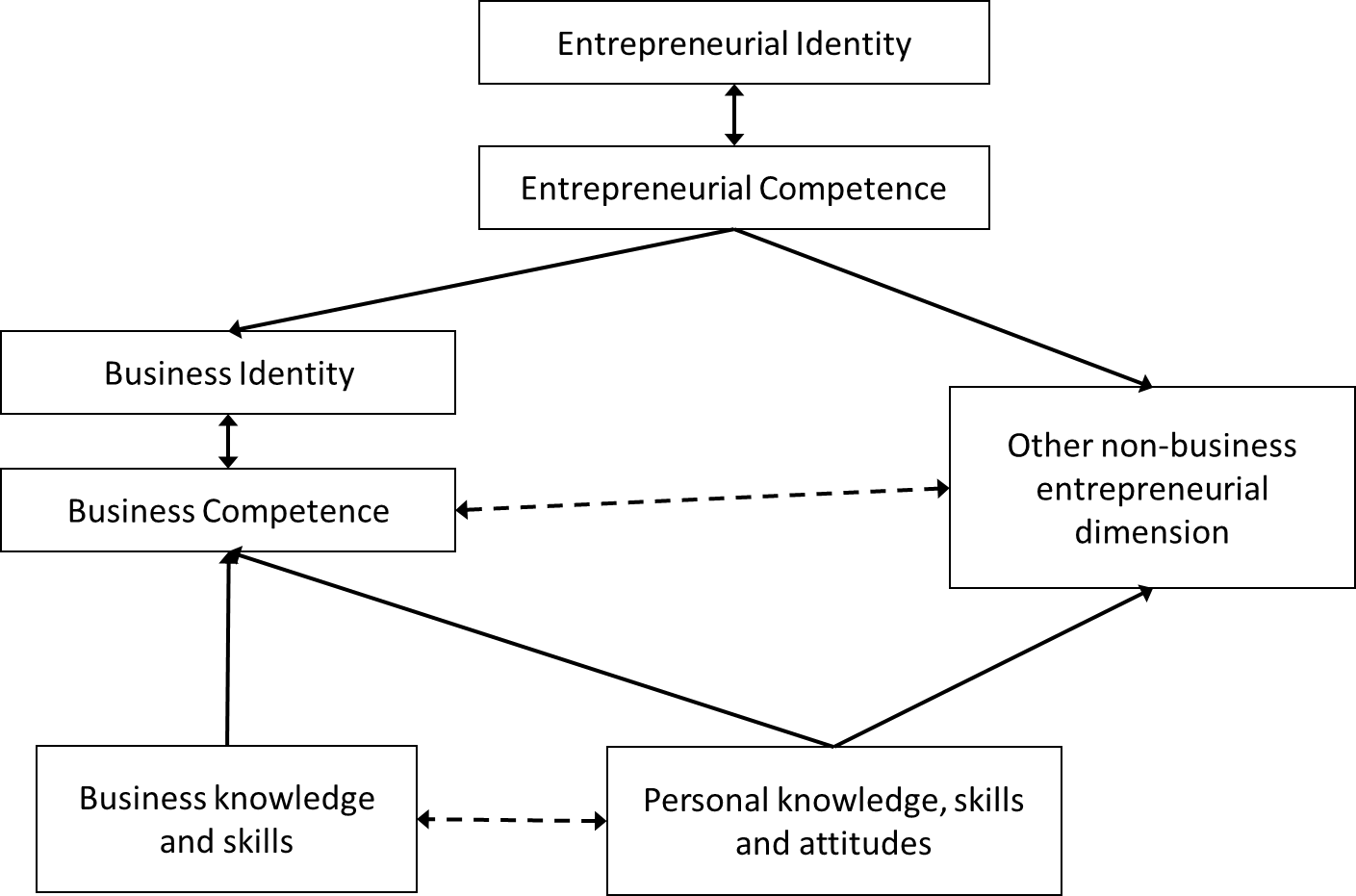
That is, in the context of entrepreneurial education, personal qualities acquire its full relevance insofar as they are accomplished in dynamic relationship with the challenges posed by the different entrepreneurial actions. This potential, however, is not only exerted from entrepreneurship-related disciplines, but may also take place from other scenarios away from entrepreneurship training (Feinstein, 2000). In this sense, it has been progressively argued that what counts as a good education goes beyond the strictly cognitive or academic matters (Mulford, 2006), to recognize the importance of attention to personal factors.

In the new knowledge society, training for new production models requires attention to the personal dimension, beyond the attention paid to the strictly cognitive-academic and instrumental elements. Thus, multiple studies underscore the relevance of personal and subjective factors for the formation of new businesses, emphasising the real value that and personal qualities represent in the development of the entrepreneurial potential (Athayde, 2009; Liñán, Santos, & Fernández, 2011). This has also been claimed about employers (Barba & Atienza, 2012), where priority is given to ethical, civic and social education stressing the importance of honesty and ethical commitment, interpersonal and communication skills, or the ability to work in multi-cultural environments, under total connectivity and interactivity formats (Santos Rego, 2013).

**Discussion and conclusion**

The consideration of the personal dimension as an integral element of the entrepreneurial potential increases our conceptual perspective of entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship is a multidimensional phenomenon, which lies not only in the promotion of self-employment or business creation, but also in the achievement of values linked to responsibility, the management of personal projects and the configuration of personal criteria contributing to moral construction. Apart from the acquisition of knowledge and skills to act in a business and enterprising manner, the entrepreneurial competence also means the development of an enterprising and entrepreneurial identity (Nielsen & Lassen, 2012). However, most descriptions of entrepreneurship education do not include this essential and referential notion (Donnellon, Ollila, & Middleton, 2014).

**Figure 2**. Structuring the entrepreneurial identity



Source: Bernal and Cárdenas (2014)

It is inferred from our reasoning that the entrepreneurial competence must be linked to the entrepreneurial personal identity, as shown in Figure 1. People shape their identity narratively with the emergence of memories and autobiographical reasoning on the succession of experiences, contexts and people found in the course of life. Similarly, the potentially entrepreneurial person, by telling the stories of their own (contextualized and interpersonal) training experiences, set their entrepreneurial (business) identities through their (re)built stories. Through their stories, the contingent and uncertain nature of any learning process is made evident. At the same time, such learning is closely linked: (a) to the person’s inner world, (b) to his/her interpretation and construction of the symbols used in the educational action, (c) to the meaning provided to the business project and its realization, and (d) to the influences received from other people participating in the educational experience.

The set of stories warns us about the relativity of the entrepreneurial competence and its fragility. It may be affected by the environment and the managed cultural artefacts (languages, statistical and calculation documents, pieces of art, audio-visual media, etc.) influencing the educational relationship. Building the self-narrative is as much as finding Ariadne's thread, able to offer meaning to past experience, relating it to the present and projecting it into the future.

Perhaps, ultimately, we are being challenged about the very sense we attach to entrepreneurship education. It seems the configuration of the business identity, the multiple business identities, does not encompass the full meaning of what is entrepreneurship education and, therefore, the entrepreneurial identity. Possibly, at this time it is not so much a question of prescribing what to teach and how to do it. Rather, it is a question of trying to understand how and why the formative practices occur in a certain way. Something, however, does seem to be confirmed. The models underlying the practices of entrepreneurship involve a certain version of the personal development, without which everything else remains vaporous, lethargic and without real anchorage in the person.

Although current legislation adequately contextualises the integration of entrepreneurship education in the school system, a clear strategy for its implementation is still lacking. There are no meridian models of progression for the development of the entrepreneurial competence, capable of providing coherence and complementarity to the education system.

And this is so, even if the "sense of initiative and entrepreneurship" is present in the various Spanish regional curricula of all educational stages. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of entrepreneurship education is still a pending task in Spain, among other reasons, due to the lack of sufficiently reliable indicators (Rodríguez & Vega, 2016). We believe these very same issues are affecting the development of entrepreneurship education in other countries as well.

Our research line tries to overcome this deficiency. According to our analysis, the formation of entrepreneurial persons is a remarkably complex process in which it is necessary to consider several elements present in the personal dimension underlying any entrepreneurial process. The delimitation of such personal elements must constitute the core of the so much needed evaluative indicators of the impact of entrepreneurial education.

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2. By Law 8/2013, LOMCE (Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Through the approval of Law 14/2013 for the support of entrepreneurs and their internationalization. Detailed regulation still to be developed (as of early 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)