

## **Integrating a Work-Study Programme in an Entrepreneurship Course to Develop Leadership**

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**Summary:** *Today, there are many Entrepreneurship course opportunities in higher education curricula (universities, management schools). They help gain the necessary skills to manage a company. Sandwich courses offer a training in real-life professional situation likely to develop leadership and thus respond positively to the underlying challenge of business creation/takeover entrepreneurial activities.*

**Context:** *Teaching leadership to future entrepreneurs is not simple since this field requires self in-depth thinking as well as reflection on our relationship with others. The major challenge is to create representative didactic transpositions of future situations in their professional lives within a classroom standard framework.*

**Challenges:** *One of the major objectives of entrepreneurship courses is to discuss with students the questions and challenges associated with team management, leadership and performance assessment and learn how to better manage collective situations. A successful team depends on the contribution of every team member and in particular a trusting environment to be built by the team leader. The leader's task is also to set objectives, remove barriers, make decisions and carry them out. Teachers often use case studies to illustrate best practices<sup>1</sup>. However, leadership is an action, "a praxis is mostly gained through experience, others' experience first, and then our own experience." (Lapierre, 2006).*

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### **1. METHOD**

Entrepreneurship is "the phenomenon associated with entrepreneurial activity, human action to be taken to generate value by creating or developing economic activities through the identification and exploitation of new products, processor market" OECD (2011). "Entrepreneurship" refers to the emergence of an organisation (process where individuals create an organisation) or to the identification or exploitation of a new opportunity. This translates into different modalities: business creation from *scratch*, business take over, creation of activity within existing companies, product development, innovation... Entrepreneurship also refers to entrepreneurial spirit (associated with the corporate culture) and entrepreneurship spirit (entrepreneurial culture in different situations: personal life, community life, entrepreneurship, Intrapreneurship...)<sup>2</sup>.

The entrepreneur skills can be gained during training courses. A growing number of courses in entrepreneurship are offered in higher education to develop entrepreneurial skills. An entrepreneur is also a leader, referred to as "entrepreneurial leadership"<sup>3</sup>: the entrepreneur has an ability to create change and innovation as well as a leader capacity to manage the change, in particular in changing, uncertain and difficult situations (Kotter, 1990).

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<sup>1</sup> Gillet C., Reynet O., Coadour D., 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Openbook entrepreneurship.

<sup>3</sup> La Violette, 2011.

Leadership is however seen by young people as one of the weakest qualities and they are not necessarily aware of the challenge posed by this 'quality' in the entrepreneurial process

Young people and their perception of entrepreneurial qualities

Which of the following qualities, are the best two...			
Qualities	The most important ones to set up a project	Your strongest quality	Your weakest quality
Determination	34%	26%	13%
Self confident	<b>35%</b>	17%	<b>48%</b>
Believing in your project	<b>43%</b>	13%	<b>10%</b>
Being resourceful	22%	<b>42%</b>	8%
Creative	13%	21%	30%
Assuming your choices	7%	26%	11%
Team spirit	13%	<b>31%</b>	11%
Leadership	4%	5%	<b>45%</b>

Source: "Entrepreneurial Spirit: what are the youth aspirations? What support from the local branches? ", 2013.

Yet, once they enter into an entrepreneurial process, they realise it is a barrier.

Barriers to young entrepreneurs are summarised in the following diagram.

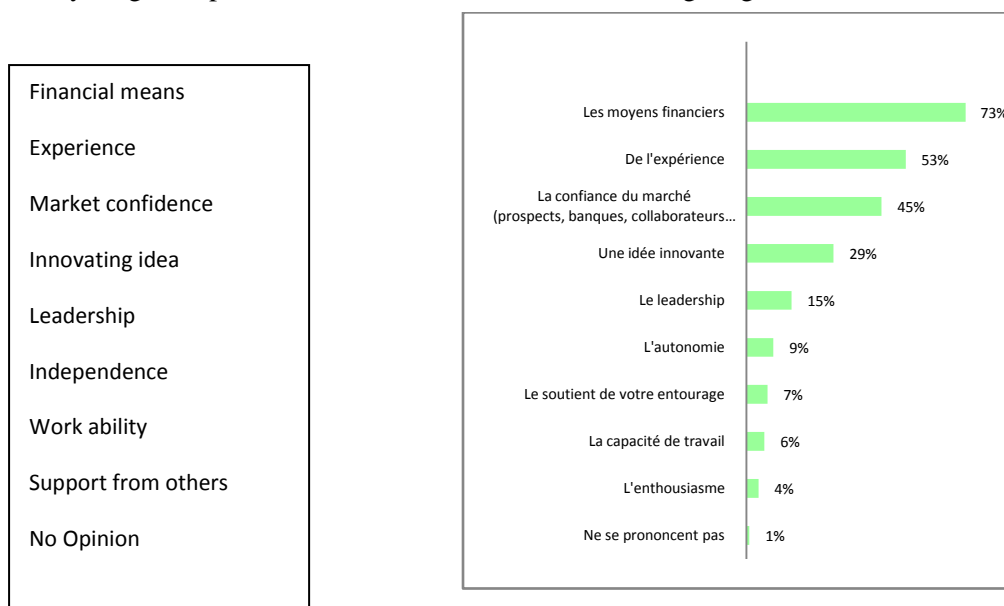


Figure. Main barriers for young people

Source: Survey Opinion way for MoovJee, entrepreneurship image to vocational high schools and students, 2015.

One of the ways to bridge this gap is to do an apprenticeship to develop their leadership skills. Collins (2005) Leadership 5-level course, going successively through each level to reach the highest level of management, is not necessary:

Level 5: company manager

Level 4: effective leader

Level 3: skilled manager

Level 2: active employee

Level 1: highly skilled individual

The study of different skill reference systems of sandwich course<sup>4</sup> shows that this status helps develop in most cases level 1 and/or 2 leadership, or level 3 leadership in some cases. Thus, it would seem that apprentice-students develop leadership skills within Druker's meaning (2016), who defines the "real leader" common link through eight rules:

<sup>4</sup> Designed as part of the learning supervision of apprentice-students from University Apprenticeship Training Centre apprentices (CFA UNIV), Corsica.

1. Ask yourself what needs to be done
2. Ask yourself what's good for the business
3. Develop action plans
4. Assume responsibility for decisions
5. Assume responsibility for communication
6. Focus on opportunities, not on issues
7. Conduct productive meetings
8. Think and use “We” instead of “I”

While a sandwich course system helps develop leadership, it also helps develop entrepreneurship. The table<sup>5</sup> below lists all entrepreneurs graduates from the University through sandwich course programmes in the 6 months following completion of the course. To date, none of these entrepreneurial projects has been abandoned; this shows, at least intrinsically, a real managerial capacity of apprentice-students.

Year	Number of students surveyed	Number of businesses started or taken over by students	of which # apprentice-students who started/took over a business
2012	134	9	6
2013	149	12	4
2014	93	4	4
2015	106	6	2
Average	120.5	7.75 or 6.43% of students	4 or 51.6% of young graduates entrepreneurs completed a sandwich course

Apprentice-students represent on average 8% of students over the last 4 years, while they count for more than half of young entrepreneurs graduates.

It was found that half of businesses created/taken over by young graduates have been created/taken over by students who have completed a sandwich course. This reality is even more striking when we look specifically at students enrolled in a Bachelor of Professional Entrepreneurship (BPL) at the University of Corsica.

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Number of applications	87	88	83	105
Number of students enrolled in the course <sup>6</sup>	22	23	25	21
Number of graduates	95%	87%	100%	100%
Number of pedagogical enrollments in sandwich course	9 (40%)	16 (69.6%)	17 (68%)	19 (90%)
Number of students with the 'Entrepreneur Student' status (created in 2014)				1
Number of new businesses identified	3 (13.6%)	5 (21.7%)	4 (16%)	7 (33%)

It was found that while students in entrepreneurship have become aware of the sandwich course challenges, the proportion of apprentice-students in LPE has more than doubled to reach 90% in 2015. At the same time, the proportion of new businesses/ businesses taken over by young people (graduates less than 6 months ago) increased from 13.6% to 33%. Young people enrolled in this sandwich course develop more quickly their entrepreneurial skills, especially their leadership skills with corporate immersion, as they are in direct contact with entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial challenges to which they need to propose solutions.

Indeed, according to Shapero and Sokol (2005), the entrepreneurial intention results from two variables, the desirability and feasibility perceived:

<sup>5</sup>See Storai & Rinieri (2016) for more details on this point CFA UNIV annually conducts 10 ministerial surveys on sandwich placement training system students (follow-up on employability in March N+1, of outgoing students (graduates or not) through the sandwich course system).

<sup>6</sup>A pedagogically enrolled student is a student enrolled administratively and enrolled in a course module for the year. He is then considered pedagogically enrolled student for this course year.

- Entrepreneurship desirability refers to individual value systems. It is built through the influence of culture, family, peers, and professional and education environments.
- Feasibility refers to accessing the necessary resources: financial, human and relational resources

The environment may be facilitator or inhibiting instead. Entrepreneurial behaviour is therefore intentional and start in the mind of the entrepreneur although not fully aware of it. The identity of the individual impacts the entrepreneurial intention. The characteristic elements of identity are not stable data, they change based on the experiences of the individual (Fisher 2015). Different mechanisms contribute to the identity change, including the identification concept which is to assess others referring to social and cultural models guiding behaviours and leading the entrepreneur to meet social demands; identity referents who are the individuals, specifically mark the image that we have on ourselves. For example, regular meetings with a company manager will change the entrepreneur. Considering entrepreneurial activities is therefore easier when identity referents lead the individual to demystify the Entrepreneur, including through discussions with company managers. Furthermore, the individual education and culture may encourage initiatives, creativity and the desire to entrepreneurial activities.

## 2. FINDINGS

It was found that the proportion of young people starting an entrepreneurial process is higher after a sandwich course and that the proportion of apprentice-students among young people choosing an entrepreneurship course, increases.

In the end, the benefits of the sandwich course policy based on entrepreneurship, can be grouped into two interlinked categories:

- *Knowledge on entrepreneurship and 'Intrapreneurship'*: apprentice-students work with company managers during their apprenticeship period, these people are therefore trained to support a leader in expressing and implementing initiatives and in managing multiple (and interdisciplinary) involvements within the company.
- *Initiative management*: apprenticeship boosts entrepreneurial skills referring to anticipating (prospective logic), developing a strategic vision, creativity, as well as developing and specifying the strategy in the daily management (strategic management). By training independent human resources and giving them empirical knowledge of the business world, apprenticeship develops cognitive skills that help take initiatives and create a business.

Gaining those skills strengthens leadership and may lead young people to turn to entrepreneurial activities more quickly. This observation which should be sustained, logically boosts the path to building a *knowledge economy* adapted to the needs of the island territory. With the concurrent increase of qualification and employability of students generated by the development of the sandwich placement training system in higher education in general and at the University of Corsica in particular, structuring, creating and taking over businesses in Corsica are thoroughly consolidated. This trend, now well established in Corsica, is vital to the development of an ever-changing region.

Finally, besides the transfer of skills and intellectual stimulation from that specific training system, its purpose is to meet economic challenges with business development perspectives (business creation and takeover, internal development), but above all, to meet HR challenges by strengthening organisations. To this context, the empirical framework presented by Corsica, a small island economy, is most exemplary.

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