

ENTRE

Your inspiration on coaching in VET Entrepreneurship Education

TRAINING FOR EDUCATORS IN VET ENTREPRENEUR PROGRAMS

CASE STUDIES



PREFACE

The case studies were developed within the framework of the C-ENTRE project (project number: 2024-2-HU01-KA220-VET-000294403), implemented under the Erasmus+ Programme Cooperation Partnerships in Vocational Education and Training (KA220-VET).

The project aims to support VET educators in developing coaching-oriented approaches to entrepreneurship education. Through training materials, practical exercises, and case studies, the project promotes teaching methods that empower learners to develop entrepreneurial thinking, experiment with ideas, and reflect on their learning processes.

The resources included in this publication are designed to support educators in applying experiential learning, structured reflection, and coaching methods in entrepreneurship-related courses. They provide practical tools and examples that can be adapted to different educational contexts.

The materials were developed collaboratively by the project partners based on their expertise in entrepreneurship education, coaching methodologies, and vocational education and training.

For further information contact us via the project website c-entre.eu.

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of case studies presents practical examples of how entrepreneurship education and coaching-oriented teaching methods can be implemented in Vocational Education and Training (VET). The cases were developed within the C-ENTRE project to support educators in applying the concepts introduced in the training programme.

Each case describes a real educational situation in which educators or trainers faced a challenge related to entrepreneurship learning. The cases show how these challenges were addressed through concrete pedagogical methods, experiential activities, or coaching approaches. In addition to describing the situation and solution, each case highlights the relevance for the training unit, key lessons learned, and practical implications for educators.

The case studies are organised according to the six thematic units of the C-ENTRE training framework:

Empowering, Mindset, Goal Setting, Structuring, Experiencing, and Coaching. This structure allows readers to easily connect the cases with the concepts and methods presented in the training materials.

These examples are intended to inspire educators and trainers, providing ideas that can be adapted to different VET contexts. Rather than presenting a single “correct” approach, the cases illustrate how educators can experiment with methods that encourage reflection, active learning, and entrepreneurial thinking among students.

By sharing these experiences, the C-ENTRE project aims to support the development of coaching-oriented entrepreneurship education and contribute to more engaging and practice-based learning environments in VET.

UNIT 1 - EMPOWERING

1.1 – CASE STUDY: STRUCTURED EMPATHY IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

1.1.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

The setting is a vocational high school (VET) in Hungary, where students participate in a semester-long entrepreneurship project to develop their own business ideas. During group work, the interpersonal dynamics became increasingly strained. The root of the problem lay in how feedback was handled: students either completely avoided constructive criticism to avoid hurting each other's feelings or, when they did speak up, their comments were often blunt, offensive, and personalized.

The traditional "Feedback Sandwich" (praise-criticism-praise) proved ineffective in the classroom. Students saw through the technique, perceiving the initial praise merely as a mandatory, insincere introduction to a negative comment. This led to a climate of distrust. When a student heard a peer say, "This logo is not good" or "This idea is boring," they immediately entered a defensive mode. They were unable to separate their personal identity from their work; therefore, any critique felt like a direct attack on their personal competence.

The educator observed that project progress had stalled, student motivation was declining, and intergroup conflicts were consuming valuable class time. The goal was to introduce a communication protocol that allowed for the honest exploration of mistakes without damaging students' self-esteem or group cohesion. A framework was needed that placed psychological safety at the center while maintaining professional rigor and accountability.

1.1.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THE TRAINING UNIT

This case study is linked to Unit 1: Empowering. The topic of this training unit is that an emotionally safe and inclusive environment is the cornerstone of effective entrepreneurship education. For the C-Entre project, it is crucial that educators do not just understand empathy in theory but possess concrete techniques to manage conflict and build trust.

The relevance stems from the fact that entrepreneurship is inherently tied to uncertainty and risk-taking. If a learner does not feel safe among their peers, they will not experiment or propose innovative ideas. This module positions the teacher as a facilitator capable of creating a "psychological safety net" where failure is not a source of shame but a vital part of the learning process. The practice of structured empathy directly develops the educator's feedback strategies and fosters student self-regulation.

1.1.3. WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF THE CASE, THE SOLUTION THAT CAN CONSIDER AS A GOOD PRACTICE?

The essence of the solution was the adaptation of the "I like, I wish, I wonder" method, originally developed by the Stanford d.school, into the Hungarian vocational context. The core of this good practice is providing strict linguistic frames for feedback, which helps channel emotions and maintain a constructive direction.

The method in practice:

1. I like: Every piece of feedback must begin with a positive, specific observation. This is not a general compliment (e.g., "You did well") but a pointer to a specific element of the project (e.g., "I like how you used real market data in the presentation"). This reinforces trust and opens the recipient to further input.

2. I wish: This is where the critique resides, but framed as a desire or a goal. Instead of saying "This is wrong," the student says, "I wish the colors in the next version would harmonize better with the logo." This phrasing focuses on future action and growth rather than past mistakes.

3. I wonder: This is the most innovative part, where the person giving feedback asks questions or proposes alternatives without giving a direct command (e.g., "I wonder what would happen if you included an older age group in your target audience?"). This encourages brainstorming and respects the autonomy of the project owners.

Before implementation, the educator conducted active listening exercises where students had to simply repeat what their peer said before reacting. This "slowing down" helped ensure that reactions were conscious rather than impulsive. The key to the method's success was that the teacher also used this language in every classroom interaction, modelling the expected behaviour consistently.

1.1.4. LESSONS LEARNED, FOLLOW UP, ASSESSMENT OF THE CASE

The most important lesson from this case study is that developing entrepreneurial competencies is impossible without developing a culture of communication. Trainers can learn that a "safe space" does not mean the absence of conflict, but rather a framework where conflicts can be transformed into professional discourse.

Lessons learned:

Structure provides freedom: Strict sentence starters may seem artificial at first, but they actually liberate students from anxiety because they provide a reliable map for expressing opinions without causing offense.

The role of teacher: Students only adopt the method if they see the educator providing feedback respectfully and structurally—not just to students, but also when asking for feedback from them.

EQ as a marketable skill: Participants realized that this type of communication is a valuable asset in the labour market, as teamwork and conflict resolution are basic requirements in any modern workplace.

Assessment and follow-up:

The implementing educator requested feedback via a survey at the end of the semester. 85% of students stated that the "I like, I wish, I wonder" method helped them not feel attacked when receiving criticism. The quality of project work improved because teams underwent more iterations—they were more willing to change their ideas because they did not fear the reactions of their peers. As a follow-up, the school management decided to integrate this feedback format into other technical subjects (e.g., IT project work) and presented it at parent-teacher meetings as a tool for "positive discipline."

1.1.5. RESOURCES, LINKS.

Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (d.school). (2018). The Design Thinking Bootleg. https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources/design-thinking-bootleg

Edmondson, A. C. (2018). The Fearless Organisation: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth. Wiley.

1.2 – CASE STUDY: THE "FAILURE WALL" AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

1.2.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

The scenario takes place in a Danish Vocational Education and Training (VET) institution focusing on business and innovation. While the students were technically skilled, the educator noticed a persistent lack of engagement during "ideation" sessions. Students were reluctant to share unconventional ideas, and the atmosphere was characterized by a "culture of the perfect answer." When asked to brainstorm, students would wait for the "smartest" person in the room to speak first, or they would only offer safe, low-risk suggestions.

The underlying problem was a lack of psychological safety. Students perceived the classroom as a high-stakes environment where being "wrong" resulted in a loss of status among peers or lower evaluations from the teacher. This fear of judgment stifled the very creativity required for entrepreneurship. The students were emotionally "braced" against the possibility of failure, which led to passive learning and a lack of original project development. The educator realized that simply telling students to "be creative" was ineffective without first addressing the emotional fear of looking foolish or incompetent.

1.2.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THE TRAINING UNIT

This case is a cornerstone for Unit 1: Empowering because it demonstrates the practical application of creating an "emotionally safe and inclusive learning environment." The C-Entre project emphasizes that before students can embrace the uncertainty of entrepreneurship, they must feel supported and respected.

This case illustrates the module's objective of fostering an classroom culture where risk-taking is encouraged. It highlights the educator's role in shifting the focus from academic concepts to a practice of listening and trust-building. By addressing the psychological barriers to participation, the educator directly fulfills the Unit 1 goal of establishing the emotional conditions necessary for entrepreneurial thinking to flourish.

1.2.3. WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF THE CASE, THE SOLUTION THAT CAN CONSIDER AS A GOOD PRACTICE?

The solution was the implementation of the "Failure Wall" (Danish: Fejlvæg), a practice supported by the Fonden for Entreprenørskab. The essence of this good practice is to make failure visible, shared, and celebrated as a data point for learning.

The steps of implementation:

1. Teacher modelling: To break the ice, the educator started by posting their own "failures" on a physical wall in the classroom. These weren't just trivial mistakes, but actual pedagogical errors (e.g., "I explained the business model canvas poorly today, which confused you"). This vulnerability shifted the power dynamic and signaled that no one is exempt from error.

2. Weekly rituals: Every Friday, 15 minutes were dedicated to the "Failure Wall." Students were invited to write down one thing that didn't go as planned on a post-it note.

3. The learning shift: The rule was that you couldn't just post a failure; you had to write the "lesson learned" on the back. For example: Front: "Our survey got zero responses." Back: "We realized our link was private; next time, we test the link on three different devices first."

4. Zero-judgment zone: The educator facilitated a discussion where the focus was strictly on the "Back" of the post-it (the learning). This reframed failure from an emotional burden to a professional asset.

This practice successfully decentralized the educator's authority and empowered students to take ownership of their mistakes, turning the classroom into a laboratory rather than an examination hall.

1.2.4. LESSONS LEARNED, FOLLOW UP, ASSESSMENT OF THE CASE

The primary lesson is that psychological safety is not a "soft" skill but a hard requirement for innovation. Trainers and stakeholders can learn that the educator's vulnerability is the most powerful tool for student empowerment.

Lessons learned:

Vulnerability is leadership: When the teacher admits mistakes, the "cost" of student failure drops significantly.

Normalization vs. Glorification: The goal isn't to celebrate failing itself, but to normalize the process of failing and recovering. This builds the resilience needed for real-world entrepreneurship.

Quantitative results: The educator assessed the impact through project output. Within one semester, the number of "pivot" moments (where a team changes direction based on a failed experiment) tripled. This indicated that students were actually testing their ideas rather than just trying to please the teacher.

Follow-up: The institution integrated the "Failure Wall" into the student portfolio system. Students now include a "Failure & Pivot" section in their final business plans, which is graded based on the quality of the reflection rather than the success of the initial idea. This assessment shift ensures that the cultural change is sustained by the grading criteria.

1.2.5. RESOURCES, LINKS.

Edmondson, A. C. (2018). The Fearless Organisation: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth. Wiley.

Fonden for Entreprenørskab. (n.d.). Entrepreneurship in Education: Tools and Methods. https://ffe-ye.dk/

UNIT 2 - MINDSET

2.1 – CASE STUDY: SHIFTING FROM "TECHNICAL EXPERT" TO "ENTREPRENEURIAL FACILITATOR"

2.1.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

At a technical VET college in Portugal, a veteran automotive engineering instructor, "Joao," faced a decline in student engagement. While his students were technically proficient, they struggled to apply their skills to market needs or problem-solving. The initial situation was a rigid, teacher-centered environment where students waited for instructions rather than seeking opportunities. Joao realized that while he was teaching them *how* to fix a car, he wasn't teaching them *why* a customer might need a specific service or how to innovate in a changing green-energy market.

2.1.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THE TRAINING UNIT

This case is directly linked to **Mindset** because it addresses the transition from a "fixed" mindset (mastery of existing syllabus) to a "growth" and "entrepreneurial" mindset. It is relevant as it demonstrates that entrepreneurship education in VET is not about business administration, but about a way of thinking and seeing problems as opportunities for value creation.

2.1.3. ESSENCE OF THE CASE: THE GOOD PRACTICE

Joao implemented "The Open Garage" initiative. Instead of giving students broken engines to fix with a manual, he invited local residents to bring in vehicles with undiagnosed issues. Students had to interview the owners (customer empathy), diagnose the problem (critical thinking), and pitch the most cost-effective, sustainable solution to the "client". This shifted the classroom from a laboratory to a value-creation hub.

2.1.4. LESSONS LEARNED AND FOLLOW-UP

- **For Trainers:** Shifting mindset requires moving from "lecturer" to "coach".
- **Assessment:** The implementer noted a 40% increase in student-led projects and better performance in work-based learning placements.
- **Future Implications:** The school is now integrating "Mindset Evaluation" rubrics alongside technical grades.

2.1.5. REFERENCES

- Bacigalupo, M., et al. (2016). *EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework*. Publication Office of the European Union.
- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Random House.

2.2 – CASE STUDY: THE "FAILURE FAIR" - NORMALIZING RISK IN TECHNICAL VET

2.2.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

In a specialized VET centre in Portugal focusing on electronics and robotics, students often abandoned innovative ideas because they feared failing their final practical assessment. The initial situation was a "play-it-safe" culture where students chose basic, repetitive projects to guarantee a passing grade. This created a deficit in problem-solving skills and a lack of resilience when technical errors occurred during development.

2.2.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THE TRAINING UNIT

This case is intrinsically linked to **Mindset** as it addresses the "Fear of Failure," a primary barrier to entrepreneurial thinking. This is relevant because it demonstrates how an educational environment can be restructured to reward the *process* of learning and pivoting rather than just the final, error-free product.

2.2.3. ESSENCE OF THE CASE: THE GOOD PRACTICE

The institution implemented a "Failure Fair" mid-semester. Students were required to present a prototype that *didn't* work as intended. They had to explain the logic behind the failure, what they learned about the materials or code, and how they planned to "pivot" their strategy. This practice shifted the mindset from seeing a mistake as a dead end to seeing it as a necessary data point in the entrepreneurial cycle.

2.2.4. LESSONS LEARNED AND FOLLOW-UP

- **For Trainers:** Educators learned that by de-stigmatizing errors early, students were more likely to attempt complex, high-value innovations for their final exams.
- **Assessment:** Faculty noted that students who participated in the "Failure Fair" showed higher levels of persistence and collaborative problem-solving.
- **Future Implications:** The school is now exploring "Risk-Taking Credits," where a portion of the grade is based on the complexity and novelty of the attempt.

2.2.5. REFERENCES

- Cope, J. (2011). Entrepreneurial learning from failure: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Business Venturing, 26*(6), 604-623.
- Shepherd, D. A. (2003). Learning from Business Failure: Propositions of Grief Recovery for the Self-Employed. *Academy of Management Review, 28*(2), 318–328.

UNIT 3 - STRUCTURING

3.1 – CASE STUDY: THE "REVENUE STREAM" REVELATION

Business Model Canvas and Sustainable Value Cycles

3.1.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

In a vocational secondary school specializing in Hospitality and Tourism, a group of students identified a local problem: high-quality food waste from nearby bakeries. Their creative solution was "The Surplus Sweet Cart," a mobile pop-up shop that would sell day-old pastries at a discount to students and local office workers.

The students were passionate about the social mission—reducing waste and providing cheap snacks. However, their initial plan was purely "transactional": buy low, sell slightly higher. When they began to list their projected costs (cart rental, health permits, transport, and packaging), they realized that selling a croissant for a few cents profit would never cover their fixed costs. They were stuck in a "hobbyist" mindset. They had a great activity, but they didn't have a sustainable Business Model. They were discouraged, thinking that social entrepreneurship meant they were destined to lose money or rely on donations forever. They lacked the ability to structure their idea into a model that could actually scale or even break even.

3.1.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THE TRAINING UNIT

This case is a perfect fit for Unit 4: Structuring as it addresses the objective of "building confidence in using basic business modelling methods such as the Business Model Canvas (BMC)." It specifically targets the Knowledge requirement of understanding Revenue Streams and Cost Structures.

In the C-Entre project context, this case demonstrates that "structuring" is the bridge between a good deed and a viable venture. It shows educators how to move students from a simple "product-price" focus to a holistic view of value creation. It fosters the Attitude that structure does not kill the social mission—it protects it by making it financially resilient.

(Shutterstock)

3.1.3. WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF THE CASE, THE SOLUTION THAT CAN CONSIDER AS A GOOD PRACTICE?

The solution was a "Revenue Innovation" workshop where the educator used the right-hand side of the Business Model Canvas (Customer Relationships, Channels, and Revenue Streams) to spark new thinking.

The Solution in Practice:

1. Diversifying Revenue: The educator challenged the group to find three different ways to make money without just raising the price of the pastry.

2. B2B Structuring: The students discovered a new Customer Segment: local event planners. They restructured their model to offer "Sustainable Coffee Break Kits" for seminars. The revenue from one corporate event (B2B) subsidized the lower prices for students (B2C).

3. Key Partnerships: By mapping Key Partners, they realized the bakeries would pay them a small "disposal fee" because the students were saving the bakeries the cost of organic waste collection.

4. Value Proposition Expansion: They realized they weren't just selling "old bread"; they were selling "Carbon Footprint Reduction." They began selling advertising space on their cart to local eco-friendly brands.

The essence of this good practice is "The Pivot through Structure." By using the BMC, the students stopped seeing themselves as "pastry sellers" and started seeing themselves as "waste management partners" and "sustainable caterers." This structural shift changed their financial outlook from a deficit to a surplus.

3.1.4. LESSONS LEARNED, FOLLOW UP, ASSESSMENT OF THE CASE

Lessons learned:

Structure reveals hidden assets: Mapping the model showed the students that their "waste" was actually a "service" for the bakeries.

Social + Structural = Sustainable: Educators learn that teaching business modelling is the most "empowering" thing they can do for social-minded students.

Iteration is non-linear: The students had to go back and forth between the "Value Proposition" and "Revenue Streams" four times before the numbers made sense.

Assessment & Follow-up: The educator assessed the case by having students present a "Cash Flow Simulation." The "structured" model showed a path to break-even within three months, whereas the "unstructured" model showed permanent loss. The follow-up involved a "Business Model Stress Test," where external mentors purposely "broke" one part of the model (e.g., "What if the bakeries stop paying the fee?") to see if the students could use the BMC to find a structural solution.

3.1.5. RESOURCES, LINKS

- Osterwalder, A., & Pigneur, Y. (2010). Business Model Generation: A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers, and Challengers. Wiley.
- Yunus, M., Moingeon, B., & Lehmann-Ortega, L. (2010). Building Social Business Models: Lessons from the Grameen Experience. Long Range Planning, 43(2-3), 308-325.

3.2 – CASE STUDY: THE "PAPER PROTOTYPE" PIVOT

Lean Canvas and Rapid Idea Validation

3.2.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

A group of IT students in a vocational training programme developed a complex idea for a "Smart Wardrobe" app. The app would use AI to suggest outfits based on the weather and the user's calendar. The students spent weeks discussing features, databases, and coding languages. They were convinced they needed a massive investment and six months of development before they could show it to anyone.

The problem was "over-engineering" without validation. They were building a massive "structure" (the app) without knowing if the "opportunity" (the user need) was real. They were operating on assumptions. When the educator asked, "Does anyone actually want this?", the students replied, "Of course, it's AI!" They were at risk of spending an entire semester building a tool that nobody would download, leading to a major "failure" that wasn't educational, but simply wasteful.

3.2.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THE TRAINING UNIT

This case directly supports the **Skills** section of Unit 4: "Facilitate simple research and feasibility assessments." It emphasizes the unit's goal of moving from "idea generation to structured planning" using Lean Canvas methods.

In the C-Entre project, we want to teach that structuring isn't just about the *end* plan; it's about the *process* of testing ideas. This case shows how an educator can use structuring tools to prevent "feature creep" and focus students on Value Propositions and Unfair Advantages. It fosters an attitude that values "critical thinking and iteration as part of the entrepreneurial process."

3.3.3. WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF THE CASE, THE SOLUTION THAT CAN CONSIDER AS A GOOD PRACTICE?

The solution was a **"Lean validation sprint."** The educator forced the students to stop coding and fill out a **Lean Canvas**, specifically focusing on the **"Problem"** and **"Early Adopter"** boxes.

The Solution:

1. **The riskiest assumption:** The educator asked: "What is the one thing that, if false, kills your business?" The students realized it was: *"People are willing to spend 20 minutes photographing their clothes to put them in an app."*
2. **Low-fidelity prototyping:** Instead of an app, the students had to create a "Paper Prototype"—a set of cards representing clothes. They asked 10 classmates to "use" the paper app for three days.
3. **The structural pivot:** The feedback was unanimous: "I love the suggestions, but I will NEVER photograph my clothes."

4. **Reframing the opportunity:** Using the Lean Canvas, the students restructured the idea. Instead of a "manual entry" app, they pivoted to a "Style Newsletter" for people who already shop at certain online retailers (where the photos already exist).

The essence of this good practice is **"Structuring for Validation."** The Lean Canvas acted as a scientific framework. It moved the students from "We believe" to "We know." By structuring their research into "Validated Learning," they saved months of useless work.

3.2.4. LESSONS LEARNED, FOLLOW UP, ASSESSMENT OF THE CASE

Lessons Learned:

Structuring is a filter: A good business model tool filters out bad ideas before they become expensive failures.

Fall in love with the Problem, not the Solution: Structuring helps students stay focused on the "Problem" box of the Lean Canvas.

The "Build-Measure-Learn" cycle: Educators learn that "Structuring" is an iterative loop, not a one-time document.

Assessment & Follow-up: The educator assessed the case by the "Speed to Pivot." The faster a group can change their model based on evidence, the higher their "Structuring" grade. The follow-up involved a "Validation Log" where students had to document every change they made to their Lean Canvas and *why* (based on what interview or test). This turned "uncertainty" into a structured, manageable process.

3.2.5. RESOURCES, LINKS

- Ries, E. (2011). *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses*. Crown Business.
- Maurya, A. (2012). *Running Lean: Iterate from Plan A to a Plan That Works*. O'Reilly Media.

Blank, S. (2013). Why the Lean Start-Up Changes Everything. *Harvard Business Review*, 91(5), 63-72.

UNIT 4 - GOAL SETTING

4.1 – CASE STUDY: FROM VAGUE DREAMS TO MICRO-MILESTONES IN CREATIVE ARTS

4.1.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

In a Portuguese VET programme for Graphic Design, students often struggled with the "Final Year Project". The problem was "Scope Creep": students set overly ambitious goals (e.g., "launching a global brand") but failed to make progress because they lacked a roadmap. The initial situation was high student anxiety and low completion rates due to poor time management and unrealistic expectations.

4.1.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THE TRAINING UNIT

This case connects to **Goal Setting** by highlighting the necessity of the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) framework within a VET context. It is relevant because it teaches educators how to coach students in breaking down long-term entrepreneurial visions into actionable, short-term professional goals.

4.1.3. ESSENCE OF THE CASE: THE GOOD PRACTICE

The school introduced "Scrum-based Goal Setting". Educators taught students to use a "Backlog" of tasks and "Sprints" (two-week goals). Every Monday, students set one specific goal for the week (e.g., "Complete 3 logo iterations") and every Friday, they held a peer-review session to assess if the goal was met. This externalized their goals and made them accountable to their peers, not just the teacher.

4.1.4. LESSONS LEARNED AND FOLLOW-UP

- **For Trainees:** Learning that a "failed" weekly goal is a data point for better planning next week, not a personal failure.
- **Assessment:** Completion rates for final projects rose by 25%, and students reported lower stress levels.
- **Future Implications:** The faculty plans to digitize this using project management tools (like Trello or Asana) to mirror real-world industry standards.

4.1.5. REFERENCES

- Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist, 57*(9), 705–717.
- Sutherland, J. (2014). *Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time*. Crown Business.

4.2 – CASE STUDY: THE "BIRD IN HAND" APPROACH IN VET HOSPITALITY

4.2.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

In a Portuguese professional school specializing in regional tourism, students often became paralyzed during the goal-setting phase because they felt they lacked the capital or "perfect" market conditions to start a project. The initial situation was a "wait-and-see" attitude, where students set goals that were entirely dependent on external funding or permissions that were unlikely to materialize in the short term. This led to a lack of agency and a sense that entrepreneurship was only for those with existing wealth.

4.2.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THE TRAINING UNIT

This case is a cornerstone for **Goal Setting** because it introduces **Effectual Goal Setting**. Instead of teaching students to pick a far-off target and find the means to reach it (Causal logic), this case teaches them to look at their "means" first and set goals based on what is currently possible. This is a critical pedagogical shift for VET students who may have limited financial resources but high technical skills.

4.2.3. ESSENCE OF THE CASE: THE GOOD PRACTICE

The instructor implemented the **"Bird in Hand" principle**. Students were asked to list three things: *Who they are* (traits/tastes), *What they know* (technical skills), and *Who they know* (networks). Based only on this list, they had to set a "Next-Step Goal" that could be achieved within 48 hours without spending any money. For example, a student with baking skills and a contact in a local cafe set a goal to pitch a "weekend-only" local pastry trial rather than writing a 5-year business plan for a bakery.

4.2.4. LESSONS LEARNED AND FOLLOW-UP

- **For Trainers:** Goals should be "means-driven" to build immediate momentum and student confidence.
- **Assessment:** The educator observed that 80% of students who used this method made tangible progress within the first week, compared to 20% using traditional planning.
- **Future Implications:** This "affordable loss" and "means-based" goal setting is being integrated into the early modules of the VET curriculum to reduce student dropout rates.

4.2.5. REFERENCES

- Sarasvathy, S. D. (2001). Causation and effectuation: Toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency. *Academy of Management Review, 26*(2), 243-263.

Fisher, G. (2012). Effectuation, causation, and bricolage: A theoretical comparison of emerging theories in entrepreneurship research. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 36*(5), 1019-1051.

UNIT 5 - EXPERIENCING

In this chapter you will find case studies who show how entrepreneurship can be experienced in VET-programmes. They describe real situations, challenges, and solutions where students practice entrepreneurial skills through hands-on activities like simulations and Shark Tank-style pitches.

Each case highlights good practices, lessons learned, and how these experiences connect to this training units. They offer insights for future educators and trainers on how to support students in developing practical entrepreneurial skills.

5.1 – CASE STUDY: INTEGRATING REAL COMPANIES WITHIN EDUCATION (DUTCH JA EUROPE)

5.1.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

The Student Company programme offered by Stichting Jong Ondernemen (Dutch branch of JA Europe) is an established entrepreneurship education initiative in The Netherlands that enables vocational and higher education students to experience real-world business creation. The programme, targeted at VET and university students, supports teams in establishing and operating an actual company over the course of one or two semesters. Participants develop a business idea, create a business plan, manage financial administration, design branding and communication, and sell their product or service in a market context. This immersive, "learning-by-doing" approach emphasizes practical experience over purely theoretical learning, aligning with contemporary pedagogy in entrepreneurship education.

The Student Company Impact Study 2023 was conducted to evaluate the long-term effects of participation in this programme, particularly on entrepreneurial competencies, career outcomes, and broader professional development. A key challenge prompting this research was the need for empirical evidence of the programme's value beyond intuitive benefits. While educators and stakeholders widely support entrepreneurship courses, quantifying their influence on student trajectories (such as employability, management opportunities, and entrepreneurial mindset) remained less documented. Thus, this impact research aimed to provide rigorous insights into outcomes that matter for both educational quality assurance and future programme development.

Participants in this study included alumni of the Student Company programme and a matched control group of graduates who did not engage with the programme. Specifically, 207 alumni from VET and university who completed the programme between 2014 and 2019 were surveyed and compared against 170 non-participating peers. These groups were evaluated on various educational and career-related indicators, including speed of employment post-graduation, incidence of management roles, and self-reported entrepreneurial attitudes. Data collection further incorporated surveys distributed via email and supported by additional qualitative insights from alumni interactions, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of both individual and institutional effects of the programme.

5.1.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THIS UNIT

This case directly relates to this training unit focused on experiencing entrepreneurship through experiential learning methods. The Student Company programme embodies the core principles of this unit 'Experiencing' by placing learners in authentic entrepreneurial situations where they must create, operate, and evaluate a real business. Rather than learning about entrepreneurship theoretically, students actively experience decision-making, uncertainty, teamwork, and market interaction, which are key elements emphasized in the C-ENTRE approach.

For VET entrepreneurship education, this experience is particularly relevant because it aligns with practice-oriented learning goals and competency-based education. VET learners benefit strongly from hands-on methods that mirror real working conditions, making entrepreneurial competences tangible and applicable. The case demonstrates how structured experiential programmes can effectively develop entrepreneurial mindset, soft skills, and employability, while also providing measurable long-term impact.

Within this unit, this case serves as a strong example of a scalable, evidence-based good practice that supports educators and trainers in designing meaningful entrepreneurship learning experiences for VET contexts.

5.1.3. SOLUTION AND GOOD PRACTICE

The Student Company programme implements a structured, hands-on approach to entrepreneurship education that allows VET students to create and manage a real business in a safe but realistic learning environment. Teams of students develop a business idea, prepare a business plan, and execute operational activities including marketing, sales, financial management, and reporting. Throughout the programme, students are guided by educators and mentors, combining supervision with autonomy, which fosters self-directed learning and practical skill acquisition.

This approach can be considered a good practice because it bridges theory and practice in a measurable way. Students are not only exposed to abstract concepts such as market analysis, revenue generation, and business strategy, but they actively apply these concepts in authentic situations. The programme also emphasizes soft skills, such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and resilience under uncertainty, which are essential for entrepreneurial success but difficult to teach through traditional lectures.

Experiential methods and tools used in the programme include collaborative project work, team-based decision-making, and role rotation. Students take on roles such as CEO, financial manager, marketing lead, and sales representative. Additionally, reflective sessions and debriefings allow students to evaluate their decisions, challenges, and outcomes critically. In some iterations, pitch competitions or "Investor Days" simulate Shark Tank-style experiences, requiring students to present their ideas to a panel of experts and receive constructive feedback. These methods create an

immersive learning environment where entrepreneurship is learned through action, reflection, and guided practice.

The Student Company programme is a replicable model that exemplifies how structured experiential learning can effectively develop both entrepreneurial competences and transferable soft skills in VET students, making it a highly relevant and scalable good practice for this unit 'Experiencing'.

5.1.4. LESSONS LEARNED, FOLLOW-UP, ASSESSMENT OF THE CASE

The implementation of the Student Company programme provided valuable insights for trainers, trainees, and stakeholders in VET entrepreneurship education. Students developed practical business skills alongside critical soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and adaptability. Coaching techniques (such as open-ended questioning, reflection prompts and autonomy-supportive guidance) helped students critically evaluate decisions, reflect on challenges, and develop problem-solving strategies independently.

Trainees reported increased confidence in presenting ideas, making decisions under pressure, and responding to challenges. Many highlighted that structured reflection sessions and mentorship conversations helped them connect experiences to theory, take ownership of their learning, and strengthen their entrepreneurial mindset. Trainers observed that balancing autonomy with guidance allowed students to make real decisions while feeling supported, reinforcing motivation and engagement beyond what traditional classroom learning provides.

An impact study conducted by Jong Ondernemen, using alumni surveys and comparisons with non-participants, confirmed positive long-term effects on employability, leadership, and entrepreneurial thinking. These findings emphasize the importance of combining authentic business experience with guided reflection, coaching, and structured mentorship.

Follow-up actions include expanding reflection and peer feedback sessions, embedding coaching techniques to support autonomy and critical thinking, and broadening mentorship opportunities with regular check-ins for goal-setting, problem-solving, and strategic guidance. Simulation-based experiences, such as pitch presentations to external panels, can be enhanced with coaching moments for constructive feedback and self-reflection. Future implications suggest scaling these experiential programmes to more VET institutions, adapting them to diverse contexts, and integrating digital tools to monitor business performance and tailor coaching to individual learning trajectories.

Areas for improvement include ensuring consistent mentorship quality, providing clearer financial tracking frameworks, and creating additional opportunities for market engagement. Overall, the lessons learned demonstrate that carefully structured, hands-on entrepreneurship experiences, supported by coaching and reflection, deliver substantial educational value and serve as a model for other VET programmes.

5.1.5. RESOURCES / LINKS

Main sources related to this case study:

- Jong Ondernemen – Student Company Programme: https://www.jongondernemen.nl/
- Impact research Student Company 2023 (PDF): https://www.jongondernemen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/JongOndernemen_Onderzoeksrapport_Impact-Onderzoek_StudentCompany_2023.pdf

Additional resources on experiential entrepreneurship learning:

- European Commission. (2016). Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp): https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/entrecomp
- Kolb, D. A. (2015). Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

Quotes and mini-interviews from trainers and mentors involved in the programme:

- Guest Educator, MBO Programme: “Seeing students take real decisions under time pressure is the most rewarding part. They develop confidence in ways traditional lessons can’t provide.”
- Mentor, Student Company Alumni Programme: “The reflection sessions after the pitch allow students to critically evaluate their own business choices and learn from peers.”
- Esther (class of 2019): “By developing together with a goal and a deadline, we focused more on the team. We noticed each other’s strengths and learned how to use them effectively.”
- Alexander (class of 2018): “Even though I didn’t continue with the business at that time, the things I learned were still useful in the job I took afterwards. Over the past few years, I’ve learned even more, but that experience was the starting point.”
- Anthony (class of 2016/2017): “Student Company was a great learning journey. I learned all sorts of things about entrepreneurship, and it also made school a lot more enjoyable.”

5.1.6. REFERENCES

- Jong Ondernemen. (2023). Impactonderzoek Student Company 2023 [PDF]. Stichting Jong Ondernemen. https://www.jongondernemen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/JongOndernemen_Onderzoeksrapport_Impact-Onderzoek_StudentCompany_2023.pdf
- European Commission. (2016). Entrepreneurship competence framework (EntreComp). Publications Office of the European Union. https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/entrecomp
- Kolb, D. A. (2015). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

5.2 – CASE STUDY: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THROUGH BUSINESS SIMULATION

5.2.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

This case explores the use of serious games and business simulations as an experiential learning method in VET entrepreneurship education. Students participate in a structured simulation where they manage a virtual company, making decisions about operations, sales, inventory, and resource allocation. The simulation creates a realistic yet low-risk environment in which students can experience entrepreneurial decision-making, practice teamwork, and apply theoretical business knowledge in practice.

The main challenge addressed by the programme is the difficulty students often encounter when trying to connect abstract concepts (such as market dynamics, financial planning, and operational processes) to real-world situations. The simulation enables students to see the consequences of their choices in real time and reflect on their strategies, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Participants in the study were undergraduate business and VET students working in small teams. They collaborated to make decisions, observed the outcomes of their actions, and engaged in structured reflection sessions after each simulation round. Surveys and self-evaluations were conducted to measure engagement, learning outcomes, and motivation, allowing educators to assess the effectiveness of the simulation as a learning tool.

5.2.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THIS UNIT

This case aligns closely with this unit on experiencing entrepreneurship because it demonstrates immersive, practice-oriented learning. Business simulations provide a realistic context in which learners engage with uncertainty, take decisions, collaborate in teams, and reflect on outcomes; key competencies for entrepreneurial education.

For VET learners, simulation-based learning is particularly valuable because it bridges theory and practice, giving students hands-on experience with business processes and decision-making. These methods develop both technical knowledge and essential soft skills, such as teamwork, critical thinking, and adaptability. The case provides a replicable, evidence-based model that future educators can use to design experiential entrepreneurship learning modules within VET settings.

5.2.3. SOLUTION AND GOOD PRACTICE

The programme uses business simulation games to engage students in experiential learning. Small teams run a virtual company in a competitive, interactive environment, making decisions on production, sales, marketing, and financial management. After each round, structured debriefings allow students to reflect on outcomes, analyze strategies, and learn from mistakes.

This approach is a good practice because it situates learning within realistic business scenarios. Students actively apply theoretical knowledge, practice decision-making

under pressure, and develop teamwork and communication skills. Immediate feedback from simulation outcomes reinforces learning and keeps students engaged.

Key experiential methods used include:

- Team-based decision-making: students adopt roles such as CEO, financial lead, or operations manager;
- Simulated business environment: interactive scenario with dynamic consequences for decisions;
- Debriefing and reflection sessions: connecting simulation experience to real-world entrepreneurial challenges;
- Gamification elements: points, progress tracking, or leaderboards to increase motivation.

This experiential model mirrors challenges that entrepreneurs face, such as managing uncertainty, interpreting data, and adjusting strategies in real time. It is therefore highly relevant for VET entrepreneurship education and transferable to other experiential activities like student companies or pitch exercises.

5.2.4. LESSONS LEARNED, FOLLOW-UP, ASSESSMENT OF THE CASE

The business simulation revealed several key lessons:

- For students: Improved engagement, deeper understanding of business processes, and enhanced soft skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and decision-making under pressure. Structured reflection sessions and guided debriefings helped students connect decisions to outcomes, promoting critical thinking and self-assessment.
- For educators: Simulations offer a safe environment for experimentation and provide immediate feedback on students' abilities. Educators play a key coaching role, facilitating reflection, asking probing questions, guiding problem-solving, and supporting team dynamics. Debriefings are essential for translating experience into learning and for helping students internalize insights from both successes and setbacks.
- Effectiveness assessment: Surveys and post-simulation evaluations showed increased knowledge, motivation, and confidence. The study confirmed that simulation-based learning is both engaging and educationally effective.

Follow-up actions include integrating simulations earlier in VET programmes, combining them with pitch exercises or entrepreneurial challenges, and extending reflection activities. Success factors included clear role assignment, interactive environment, and structured debriefings. Areas for improvement involved additional guidance for first-time participants and longer simulation cycles to deepen learning.

Overall, business simulations represent a scalable and impactful method for developing entrepreneurial skills in VET learners, especially when educators act as coaches who scaffold reflection, support team collaboration, and challenge students to think strategically, aligning strongly with the training objectives of this unit.

5.2.5. RESOURCES / LINKS

Main sources related to this case study:

- Beranič, T., & Heričko, M. (2022). The impact of serious games in economic and business education. Sustainability, 14(2), 683. https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/2/683
- ERPsim / Business Simulation Overview: https://www.erp-sim.com/

Quotes and mini-interviews from trainers and mentors involved in the programme:

- Guest Educator: "Students immediately engage with the business environment and start applying theory without fear of real-world consequences."
- Course Mentor: "Debriefing sessions are crucial; students connect simulation outcomes to strategic thinking and teamwork skills."

Representative paraphrased feedback (based on Jong Ondernemen, 2023):

- Learners reported that the simulation helped them understand how individual decisions affect overall business processes and required collaboration, with most participants rating this impact highly.
- A majority of students perceived the simulation as enjoyable and motivating, indicating they would recommend it to peers and that it could enhance engagement in future coursework.
- Teams often adjusted strategies during simulation rounds, and students noted that shared reflection after each round contributed to improved results and learning.

5.2.6. REFERENCES

- Beranič, T., & Heričko, M. (2022). The impact of serious games in economic and business education. Sustainability, 14(2), 683. https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/2/683
- ERPsim / Business Simulation Overview (n.d.): https://www.erp-sim.com/

UNIT 6 – GUIDING STUDENTS

In this chapter you will find case studies that illustrate how coaching is applied in entrepreneurship education within VET contexts. The cases describe real-life situations in which entrepreneurs and learners are supported through learner-centered guidance rather than direct instruction.

Each case highlights how coaching techniques (such as asking reflective questions, providing constructive feedback, and gradually releasing support) help learners take ownership of their development. The case studies present good practices, lessons learned, and practical insights that are directly linked to this training unit. They offer concrete examples for future educators and trainers on how to coach entrepreneurial learners effectively and sustainably.

6.1 – CASE STUDY: COACHING ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH

6.1.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

This case describes the coaching approach developed by Qredits, a European microfinance organisation that supports (aspiring) entrepreneurs through a combination of financial products, training, and coaching. Qredits operates in a context where many entrepreneurs are adults with diverse backgrounds, limited time, and varying levels of entrepreneurial experience. These entrepreneurs often need more than funding alone; they require guidance to develop skills, reflect on decisions, and take ownership of their business development.

The initial challenge addressed in this case was how to effectively support large numbers of entrepreneurs without relying on intensive, traditional coaching models that are costly and difficult to scale. Many entrepreneurs struggled to translate generic training content into their own business context and required personalized guidance without becoming dependent on constant supervision. Qredits needed an approach that balanced efficiency with personal support, while encouraging entrepreneurs to remain responsible for their own learning and decision-making.

Participants in this approach included aspiring and early-stage entrepreneurs, experienced business coaches, and programme designers within Qredits. Coaches often had their own entrepreneurial background and were trained to guide rather than instruct. Instead of telling participants what to do, coaches focused on asking questions, encouraging reflection, and helping entrepreneurs set realistic goals. Entrepreneurs engaged with digital learning materials independently and used coaching sessions to reflect on progress, challenges, and next steps.

This case illustrates a coaching-focused model that aligns closely with adult learning principles and provides a scalable solution for entrepreneurship education and support.

6.1.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THIS UNIT

This case directly relates to this unit, as it exemplifies learner-centered guidance rather than directive teaching. The Qredits approach demonstrates how coaches can support entrepreneurial development by helping learners take ownership of their learning process, aligning strongly with the unit's objective of shifting from lecturing to coaching.

For VET entrepreneurship education, this experience is highly relevant because future educators and trainers often need to coach students who are developing real business ideas. The case shows how coaching can be structured around effective questioning, reflection, and gradual release of support, instead of providing ready-made answers. It also highlights how feedback can be goal-oriented and connected to learners' real challenges.

Within the C-ENTRE framework, this case offers a concrete example of how coaching principles such as experiential learning, the Zone of Proximal Development, and reflective practice can be applied in real entrepreneurial contexts. It provides inspiration and transferable practices for VET trainers who want to coach rather than instruct.

6.1.3. SOLUTION AND GOOD PRACTICE

Qredits implemented a blended, high-touch coaching approach that combines digital learning tools with short, focused one-to-one coaching sessions. Entrepreneurs first engage independently with online resources such as e-learning modules, templates, diagnostic tools, and dashboards. These tools generate and visualize data (such as self-assessment scores, project milestones, and performance metrics) which help learners structure their thinking, track progress, and prepare targeted questions.

Coaching sessions then focus on reflecting on this data rather than delivering content. Coaches ask open-ended questions, challenge assumptions, and support entrepreneurs in setting goals and planning next steps. This ensures coaching remains learner-centered, actionable, and efficient.

This model aligns with adult learning and experiential learning principles. Learners actively apply concepts, observe outcomes, and adjust strategies, while coaches gradually reduce support, reinforcing autonomy and ownership. For trainers, this case fits particularly well in the Reflective Observation phase of the KOLB cycle, where learners analyze experiences and coaches guide reflection on outcomes and decision-making.

Experiential methods and tools include:

- One-to-one coaching conversations focused on reflection and goal setting;
- Digital learning content (e-learning, templates, diagnostics);
- Data dashboards to visualize progress and support evidence-based reflection;
- Experienced entrepreneur-coaches to ensure credibility and practical relevance

The approach is scalable, flexible, and adaptable to different learning contexts, making it suitable for VET entrepreneurship education, where data represents self-assessment results, project milestones, or applied skills evidence.

6.1.4. LESSONS LEARNED, FOLLOW-UP, ASSESSMENT OF THE CASE

Several important lessons emerged from this case. For entrepreneurs, the blended approach increased engagement and responsibility for their own development. Participants learned to prepare for coaching sessions, articulate their challenges clearly, and reflect on their actions. This led to more meaningful coaching conversations and greater confidence in decision-making.

For coaches, the case reinforced the importance of coaching skills over subject-matter instruction. Effective questioning, active listening, and goal-oriented feedback proved more impactful than giving advice. Coaches also learned how to gradually reduce support, allowing entrepreneurs to grow independently.

Qredits assessed the effectiveness of the approach through internal monitoring, participant feedback, and outcome indicators such as business continuity and satisfaction with coaching. Results indicated that the blended model improved efficiency without sacrificing quality and supported sustainable learning outcomes.

Follow-up actions include continued investment in coach training, refinement of digital tools, and further integration of data-driven insights into coaching conversations. Future implications suggest that this model can be adapted for educational settings, including VET programmes where trainees are learning to coach students or peers.

What worked particularly well was the clear structure, the focus on reflection, and the credibility of coaches with entrepreneurial experience. Areas for improvement include ensuring consistent coaching quality across regions and supporting participants who require additional structure at early stages.

6.1.5. RESOURCES / LINKS

- Qredits. A Data-Driven High-Touch Approach to European Microfinance: https://cdn.qredits.nl/shared/files/documents/qredits-a-data-driven-high-touch-approach-to-european-microfinance.pdf
- Qredits Coaching and Training Programmes: https://www.qredits.nl
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential Learning
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in Society.
- Gibbs, G. (1988). Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods.

Representative paraphrased feedback from coachees (based on Qredits, n.d.):

- Entrepreneurs reported that the combination of online tools and short coaching sessions helped them prepare better and take more ownership of their business decisions, rather than relying on advice from coaches.

- Participants indicated that coaching sessions were most valuable when they focused on reflection and goal-setting, instead of receiving direct instructions.
- Entrepreneurs experienced increased confidence because they were encouraged to analyze their own data and translate insights into concrete actions.

Representative paraphrased feedback from coaches (based on Qredits, n.d.):

- Coaches observed that entrepreneurs who actively prepared using digital tools asked more focused questions and progressed faster during coaching sessions.
- Programme designers noted that coaches with entrepreneurial experience were perceived as more credible and better able to challenge participants constructively.
- The blended approach allowed coaches to gradually reduce support, enabling entrepreneurs to become more autonomous over time.

6.1.6. REFERENCES

- Qredits. (n.d.). A data-driven high-touch approach to European microfinance. Qredits Microfinance. https://cdn.qredits.nl/shared/files/documents/qredits-a-data-driven-high-touch-approach-to-european-microfinance.pdf
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Prentice Hall.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press.
- Gibbs, G. (1988). Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods. Oxford Polytechnic.

6.2 – CASE STUDY: COACHING SMALL BUSINESS THROUGH PRACTICE-ORIENTED LEARNING

6.2.1. CASE DESCRIPTION

This case focuses on the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses (10KSB) programme, an international initiative designed to support the growth of small businesses through education, coaching, and peer learning. The programme targets existing small business owners who aim to scale their businesses, improve performance, and strengthen long-term sustainability. Participants typically run operational businesses and face real challenges related to revenue growth, staffing, financial management, and strategic decision-making.

The initial challenge addressed by the programme was that many small business owners lacked access to structured coaching and practical business education tailored to their immediate needs. Traditional business courses often focus on theory and generic content, offering limited support for implementation in real business contexts. As a result, entrepreneurs struggled to translate knowledge into action and to measure progress effectively.

Participants in the programme included small business owners, experienced business coaches, and educators delivering the curriculum. Business owners worked on their own companies throughout the programme, supported by coaches and peer groups. Coaches guided participants through practice-oriented assignments, encouraging reflection, accountability, and goal-setting rather than providing direct instructions. Educators designed the curriculum around real business challenges, ensuring relevance and applicability.

The programme emphasized learning-by-doing, peer exchange, and coaching feedback, creating an environment in which entrepreneurs were responsible for applying insights to their own businesses. This case illustrates how structured coaching and practical assignments can drive measurable business growth and learning outcomes.

6.2.2. RELEVANCE AND CONNECTION TO THIS UNIT

This case strongly aligns with this unit ‘Coaching’, as it demonstrates how coaching can be used to support learners in taking ownership of their development. The 10KSB programme clearly differentiates between teaching and coaching by focusing on guiding participants through reflection, questioning, and feedback rather than delivering prescriptive solutions.

For VET entrepreneurship education, this experience is particularly relevant because many learners are developing real business ideas or already operating small ventures. The case shows how coaching can be embedded into a structured curriculum that encourages active learning, responsibility, and continuous improvement. It also highlights the importance of clear goals and measurable outcomes when coaching adult learners.

Within the C-ENTRE framework, this case provides a strong example of how learner-centered coaching, combined with practical assignments and reflection, can lead to both educational and economic impact. It offers transferable insights for trainers who aim to coach entrepreneurial learners effectively.

6.2.3. SOLUTION AND GOOD PRACTICE

The 10KSB programme applies a practice-oriented coaching model that integrates structured coursework, real-world assignments, and continuous coaching feedback. Participants work on concrete tasks directly linked to their businesses, such as developing a growth plan, improving cash flow management, testing marketing strategies, and assessing investment readiness.

Coaching plays a central role in the programme by acting as a moderator to ensure peer feedback remaining constructive and goal-oriented. Coaches support participants by asking reflective questions, challenging assumptions, and helping them translate insights into action. Rather than giving direct advice, coaches guide entrepreneurs to analyze their own data, set priorities, and make informed decisions. Peer learning further reinforces this process, as participants share experiences and feedback with fellow entrepreneurs.

This approach is considered a good practice because it combines experiential learning with structured support. Entrepreneurs immediately apply new knowledge in their own businesses, reflect on outcomes, and refine their strategies. The programme also uses clear performance indicators (such as revenue growth, job creation, customer retention, and investment readiness) to monitor progress and evaluate impact.

Key experiential methods and tools include:

- Practice-based assignments linked to participants' own businesses;
- One-to-one and group coaching sessions focused on reflection and goal-setting;
- Peer learning groups for feedback and accountability;
- Data-driven evaluation using business performance metrics

This model effectively supports adult learners by making coaching tangible, relevant, and outcome-oriented.

6.2.4. LESSONS LEARNED, FOLLOW-UP, ASSESSMENT OF THE CASE

Several important lessons emerged from the implementation of the 10KSB programme. Participants learned that structured reflection, combined with concrete action, significantly improves business decision-making. Entrepreneurs reported greater clarity in setting goals, prioritizing actions, and tracking progress. The emphasis on measurable outcomes helped them understand the real impact of their choices.

For coaches and educators, the programme highlighted the importance of aligning coaching with practical assignments. Coaching was most effective when it focused on asking questions, providing feedback, and encouraging accountability rather than

offering solutions. The use of clear KPIs enabled coaches to guide conversations toward results and continuous improvement.

The effectiveness of the programme was assessed through longitudinal data collection, measuring indicators such as revenue growth, employment growth, and business sustainability. The impact report shows that participants experienced significant improvements across these metrics, demonstrating that the coaching approach delivered both learning and economic outcomes.

Follow-up actions include ongoing alumni support, continued access to coaching networks, and refinement of curriculum content based on participant feedback. Future implications suggest that this model can be adapted to VET entrepreneurship education, particularly for learners who benefit from structured guidance and measurable goals.

What worked well was the integration of coaching, practice-oriented assignments, and performance measurement. Areas for improvement include tailoring support for participants with very different starting levels and ensuring consistent coaching quality across locations.

6.2.5. RESOURCES / LINKS

- Goldman Sachs. 10,000 Small Businesses Impact Report 2018: https://www.laguardia.edu/uploadedfiles/ce/content/business_services/10ksb/10ksb-impact-report-2018.pdf
- Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Programme: https://www.goldmansachs.com/our-commitments/10ksb/
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential Learning.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in Society.
- Gibbs, G. (1988). Learning by Doing.

Representative paraphrased feedback from coachees (based on Goldman Sachs, 2018):

- Entrepreneurs reported that working on concrete assignments, such as business plans, cash flow management, and marketing experiments, helped them immediately apply what they learned in their own businesses.
- Participants indicated that coaching sessions focusing on reflection and feedback were more valuable than sessions where instructors provided direct solutions.
- Entrepreneurs highlighted that using measurable KPIs (such as number of customer interviews or prototype iterations and even revenue) made it easier to track progress and understand the impact of their decisions.

Representative paraphrased feedback from coaches (based on Goldman Sachs, 2018):

- Coaches observed that entrepreneurs who engaged with assignments and came prepared to coaching sessions were more able to set realistic goals and implement changes effectively.

- Programme designers noted that integrating practical assignments with coaching increased engagement and ensured learning was applied directly to business challenges.
- Coaches emphasized that gradually releasing support and letting entrepreneurs take ownership of decisions reinforced autonomy and long-term learning.

6.2.6. REFERENCES

- Goldman Sachs. (2018). 10,000 small businesses impact report. Goldman Sachs. https://www.laguardia.edu/uploadedfiles/ce/content/business_services/10ksb/10ksb-impact-report-2018.pdf
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- Gibbs, G. (1988). Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods. Oxford Polytechnic.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The case studies presented in this collection demonstrate that entrepreneurship education in VET is most effective when it goes beyond theoretical instruction and creates opportunities for active experimentation, reflection, and guided learning. Across different countries and educational contexts, the cases show how educators can support learners in developing entrepreneurial competencies through coaching, experiential activities, structured feedback, and real-world challenges.

A key message emerging from these examples is that the role of the educator gradually shifts from that of a traditional instructor to that of a facilitator and coach. By creating supportive learning environments, encouraging experimentation, and guiding reflection, educators can help learners develop confidence, resilience, and the ability to turn ideas into practical initiatives.

While each case reflects a specific situation, the practices described here are adaptable and transferable to many VET contexts. They highlight that meaningful entrepreneurship education does not necessarily require complex resources, but rather thoughtful pedagogy, structured learning processes, and a willingness to embrace uncertainty and learning from experience.

We hope that these cases will inspire educators, trainers, and institutions to explore new approaches to entrepreneurship education and to continue developing learning environments where students can experiment, collaborate, and grow as entrepreneurial thinkers and practitioners.

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Project information

Project title: C-ENTRE – Coaching in Entrepreneurship Education

Programme: Erasmus+ Programme – Cooperation Partnerships in Vocational Education and Training (KA220-VET)

Project number: 2024-2-HU01-KA220-VET-000294403

Project partners:

M-Around Kft.
Hungary

Nuances
The Netherlands

Bragamob
Portugal

Project website: c-entre.eu

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