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Introducing enterprise education into vocational education and training

A practical guide for teachers

National Institute for Vocational Education and Training
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Who and what is the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training

The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training is the central development and advisory institution for VET in Slovenia. The basic tasks of the Institute include creation of professional bases and methodogy platforms, competence-based occupational standards, development of contemporary modular educational programmes and other activities leading to increased quality of VET and integration of education and work sphere.

Promotion and development of enterprise traits as well as the introduction of Enterprise Education into secondary VET also represent one of the most important activities conducted by the Institute. The Guide for Teachers is the result of cooperation with SME representatives, secondary vocational and professional school teachers, the Chamber of Craft of Slovenia and external associates from Durham University, Business School in Great Britain. The Guide is also designed for secondary vocational and professional school teachers as an aid and support in promotion and dissemination of enterprise culture in VET in Slovenia.

Introduction

The development documents of the European Union refer to entrepreneurship and innovation as the basis for high-quality life. In this context, the education sphere has been entrusted with the essential task of imparting knowledge about and for entrepreneurship at all levels of education. Having adopted the Programme of Measures, Slovenia also opted for this course of action, which makes it essential to translate it into direct activities.

As early as the beginning of 90-ies, Slovenia paid a lot of attention to entrepreneurship in secondary schools. It was secondary VET which put into effect modern forms of Enterprise Education closely linked to excellent foreign experience. This level of education is extremely important for achieving the objectives of Enterprise Education as many students at this level of education obtain views, awareness and direct knowledge making it possible in their career to set up a new manufacturing and service company, continue the family company tradition or be creative associates in such companies. A large portion of students conclude their formal education at this level, hence a positive acceptance of companies and entrepreneurship is very significant for their future life and career decisions.

Entrepreneurship undoubtedly poses a big challenge to people of every age. The youth can have the advantage as they are less burdened with numerous risks abounding in the entrepreneurial path; they are open to embrace state-of-the-art technology challenges and are willing to cooperate in joint projects. Thus, it is of utmost importance that a secondary school provides them with such experience, gives them professional support when executing enterprise projects, and links them to the best enterprise practice in their environment. Such environment can be created by a school devoted to entrepreneurship and employing competent and creative teachers who cooperate with the enterprise environment and parents.

The expectation that all young people will turn into entrepreneurs is certainly not the essence of Enterprise Education. The development of enterprise competencies and knowledge simply constitutes one of the basic competencies of the young in the 21st century as they have a bigger choice of life options, their self-confidence and self-respect is heightened, and respect for creativity, achievements and work of others is developed. All these features are essential for the creation of a relaxed, creative and knowledge-based society.

These are well grounded reasons for promotion of this model for introduction of Enterprise Education into Slovene secondary VET schools. The model enables various forms of transfer so that schools, teachers and students will be able to adapt them to their desires, needs and objectives.

> >> Miroslav Glas, PhD

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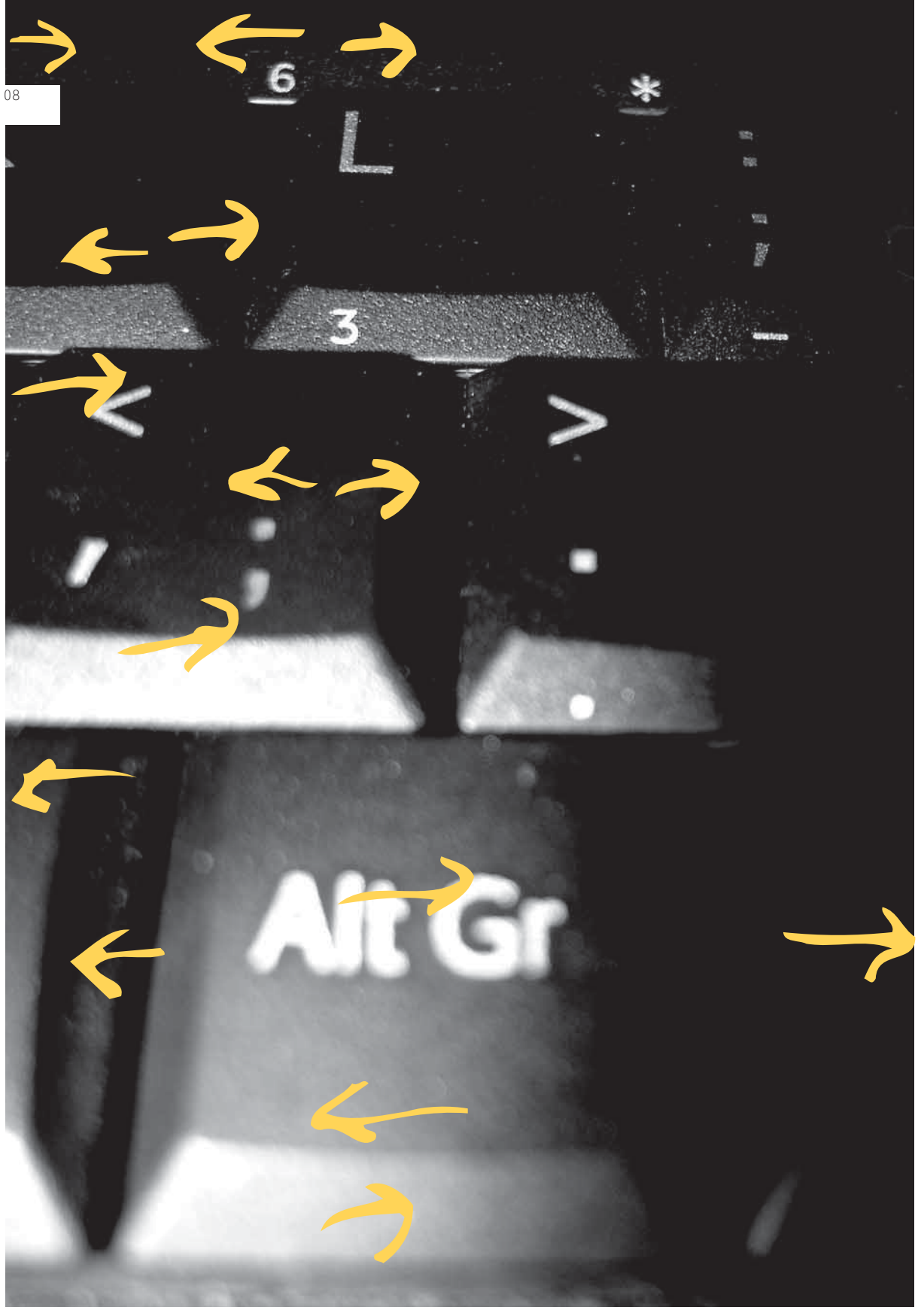


1. Why Enterprise Education is important

We are living in a society that is constantly changing, in which there is much greater uncertainty and complexity; as a result there is an increasing demand for enterprising skills, behaviours and attributes, particularly from young people.

Enterprise Education can provide a positive response to these challenges:

a) It helps young people to cope with changing labour market conditions

It is unlikely in today's changing labour market that young people will remain in the same job for all of their working life; they will probably change jobs and location several times, and experience many different types of work. The priority is therefore to develop in young people the capability to cope with, and even enjoy, the uncertain and complex environment in which they live.

b) It helps young people to become more effective employees

The growth in the number of small and medium enterprises in recent years means that it is extremely likely that the majority of young people who will work in the private sector will experience employment in a small or medium business at some time in their working life. They will therefore need to be versatile and flexible, capable of demonstrating independence and autonomy. Modern industry cannot rely on 'genius in the boardroom'!

c) It benefits society

Society can benefit from its members who are enterprising in a social or environmental context as well as a commercial one; enterprising young people are assets in all areas within the community whether or not they are self-employed. A person who sets up and runs a sports team, or a club for senior citizens, or an environmental project is a social asset.

d) It enhances personal development

Enterprise enhances personal development; it helps develop greater self-awareness in students, making them aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses, and encourages the development of certain attributes which will be of benefit to them in adult life. These include: the ability to cope with failure; to cope with, and even enjoy, uncertainty; to co-operate with a wide range of people; to take responsibility for individual and group actions, all of which are important at school, at home, at work, and in society.

2. What it is

Enterprise means different things to different people; to some it brings to mind business development and wealth creation, while to others it provokes unpleasant thoughts of greedy unscrupulous individuals. Neither of these scenarios is accurate when one considers the role of Enterprise in the field of education, where it is recognized by many education practitioners as having a real and unique contribution to make to the development of students and teachers.

Entrepreneurship is defined as the process in which the entrepreneur or entrepreneurial group puts in appropriate time and effort to create something new, at the same time being exposed to financial, psychological and sociological risks, with the ultimate result taking the form of a cash reward, personal satisfaction and independence (Glas, 2002, p. 101).

This is important because it has implications for the place of Enterprise in the curriculum. It does not only have relevance for Economics and Business related subjects, or for selected students, but can add value to all parts of the curriculum and to the learning of all students.

The process entails the promotion of certain personal abilities forming the basis for entrepreneurial actions which might ultimately lead to a career choice. Thus, entrepreneurship represents the key competence enabling individuals to be more creative, independent and responsible, and to consequently take on various roles in the society as a whole.

Some definitions:

a) A teaching and learning strategy which can apply to the whole curriculum. It involves the student in taking responsibility for individual learning, and the teacher in facilitating the learning, working alongside the student, guiding and suggesting rather than directing the learning process.

b) A process in which students set up and run projects as a vehicle for learning. This involves the creation of an idea that can be turned into reality through careful planning and organization. The context for learning may or may not embrace business, but is relevant to any subject within the curriculum.

c) A bold or challenging undertaking about making things happen, often in an exciting and creative way, addressing challenges and solving problems creatively, and taking 'risky' decisions in uncertain circumstances. It can involve: starting a business; organizing a school based activity such as a sports' day or drama production; raising funds for charity; creating a wild life area to support and protect the environment.

Three major views of Enterprise Education

It is clear from the above, that there are different views of Enterprise Education, depending upon one's objectives:

- >> **Education THROUGH Enterprise** – using Enterprise Education to promote personal skills and qualities in individuals. By engaging in various activities, the learning process can promote creativity, communication skills, ability to resolve problems, negotiation and persuasion, planning, assumption of risks and responsibility.
- >> **Education ABOUT Enterprise** – using Enterprise Education to increase business understanding, particularly of the culture and operations of the very small business. The students are encouraged to seek and develop business ideas and are in this way guided through the entrepreneurial process.
- >> **Education FOR Enterprise** – Using Enterprise Education to raise the Entrepreneurial option as a career alternative, thereby encouraging more entrepreneurs.

3. The concept of Enterprise Education

At the heart of the concept is the overall objective to provide a learning environment in which students can learn to be enterprising and use their enterprise in a variety of contexts. It involves:

e) A classroom learning environment which simulates that of a very small company.
f) The management of a project under uncertain conditions.
g) An enterprise learning mode.

Overall, the model is based on a number of assumptions about the nature of enterprising behaviour and its distribution in the population, as follows:

- >> There are recognizable enterprising skills, behaviours and attributes
- >> Everyone can demonstrate these to some degree
- >> Some persons will be more 'enterprising' than others
- >> Each will have a different 'mix' of enterprising attributes
- >> Enterprising behaviours /skills can be demonstrated in a variety of contexts (not just business or small business)

> >> Behaviours will be stimulated or otherwise by the environment according to the degree of uncertainty and complexity
> >> Different environments demand different ‘coping’ behaviours
> >> The basic conditions under which small and medium businesses operate stimulate enterprising behaviour
> >> Enterprising behavour can therefore be learned

The above distinctive features of the model set it apart from most other initiatives in the field of Enterprise and Entreprenurial / Entrepreneurship Education; although the model simulates the entrepreneurial climate and learning processes via the project, the context and content does not at all need to be that of a commercial and profit-seeking venture. It has been applied to a variety of learning objectives depending upon the subject content. It therefore follows that this model has relevance for all teachers regardless of subject specialism, and this guide moves on to consider some of the key issues involved in the development of Enterprise Education within the school.

4. The key issues in developing Enterprise Education in schools

When seeking to develop Enterprise Education within a school, there are a number of issues to be considered:

a) The organization and culture of the school

It is difficult to imagine the successful development of Enterprise Education within schools that are not entrepreneurial in their organization or culture. This does not mean that the school operates as a ‘business’, but rather creates a culture in which there is:

> >> strong individual ownership of activities;
> >> responsibility to see things through;
> >> encouragement to develop one’s own stakeholder networks and see things through the eyes of stakeholders;
> >> emphasis on the importance of personal trust;
> >> encouragement to develop a degree of ‘overlap’ between departments.

As a result there will be greater flexibility in the school, including timetable flexibility, and teachers will be given the support they need from senior managers and other staff to teach 'Enterprise' effectively, not in isolation but in partnership with other like-minded colleagues, thus creating a 'critical mass'.

b) The teachers and external stakeholders

Developing Enterprise Education successfully in schools demands enterprising teachers who:

> >> are creative and innovative;
> >> enjoy trying out new ideas and approaches;
> >> are capable of working in teams with other colleagues;
> >> are motivated, confident and enthusiastic;
> >> are able to cope with uncertainty;
> >> do not fear challenges but are 'solution-orientated'.

Successful teachers of 'Enterprise' understand that it can be 'disengaged' from business and are clear about what they wish to achieve for their students from using enterprising teaching approaches in the classroom. They also appreciate that the objectives of Enterprise Education are indeed synonymous with those of 'good' education; they will be able to mix 'progressive' teaching methods with more 'traditional' approaches when necessary. Nevertheless, there is a need for relevant and meaningful teacher training programmes in order to support teachers and address some real concerns relating to student-centred approaches, for example, a perceived loss of control of the learning process.

There are a number of stakeholders outside the school who may well have an interest in students' involvement in programmes of Enterprise Education, and whose perceptions and interests have to be taken into account. These include:

> >> parents, who may consider programmes seeking to develop 'soft' skills and behaviours a distraction from the 'real', somehow loftier purpose of education;
> >> owner managers of local businesses, particularly small businesses some of whom perceive that schools are not adequately preparing students for the reality of working life;
> >> school governors with an interest in the organization and management of the school;
> >> and the local community which the school serves, but which has no real understanding of, or interest in, the 'what and why' of current trends.

c) Teaching and learning modes

It is important that all those with an interest in Enterprise Education development have a clear understanding of its place alongside traditional modes of learning, the ways in which it links with wider educational objectives and can be integrated into a broad range of subjects, and, importantly, how it can be assessed / accredited. There are references to these issues elsewhere in this guide.

Practical teaching and learning resource materials are also needed as a focus for successful development, together with some 'good practice' case studies, and training for teachers.

5. Competencies required of teachers

The dominant role of the teacher is one of facilitator and enabler, a partner in the learning process rather than owner or controller. It follows therefore that to develop enterprising approaches to learning teachers themselves require particular sets of skills involving

a) project management skills
b) pedagogical skills
c) personal skills

a) Project management skills

At the heart of Enterprise Education is the setting up and running of a project by the students, and teachers require the skills to support students throughout this process. This includes:

> >> the initial planning and preparation of the project, including the setting of objectives, what exactly is required and how it can be carried out;

> >> the anticipation of students' needs at each stage of the project;
> >> the setting of personal targets and goals throughout the project;
> >> and the final evaluation.

b) Pedagogical skills

The emphasis is on pedagogies that encourage learning: by doing; by exchange; by experiment; by risk taking and 'positive' mistake making; by creative problem solving; by feedback through social interaction; by dramatizing and acting the part; by exploring role models; and by interacting with the outside / adult world.

This involves the teacher in suggesting and guiding rather than giving instruction, asking 'open' questions that do not necessarily lead to one correct answer, learning alongside the students, helping to resolve conflicts and difficulties that may arise and persuading students to face up to things they may initially resist or avoid.

c) Personal skills

Much of the success of the facilitation process depends upon a range of communication skills, including that of active listening, the ability to negotiate and work in teams with other colleagues and the ability to create a learning environment in which students can be open and frank, and feel confident and secure.

The teachers should cultivate the following personal skills:

> >> teamwork
> >> communication
> >> resolving conflict situations
> >> resolving problems
> >> creativity
> >> assuming responsibility.

6. The role of teacher training in developing enterprise education

Teacher training has value for teachers in a number of ways:

> >> It provides them with an opportunity to meet with other teachers and learn from them.
> >> It increases their confidence and motivation to try new approaches and techniques.
> >> It gives them new knowledge and ideas.
> >> It gives them the time to plan the implementation of what has been learned.

An effective programme of teacher training requires certain components:

> >> **Support from senior management.** Senior staff can help by supporting teachers in informing other colleagues of the Enterprise approach and by working together in teams. This necessitates some flexibility of the timetable so that there is sufficient time in which to plan and 'teach' Enterprise.

> >> **The use of teaching methods appropriate to Enterprise Education.** The focus is on learning by doing and by experience; this active learning approach places the student at the centre of the learning process, and teaching methods employed in teacher training need to reflect this. It is a reasonable expectation therefore that there will be a minimum amount of lecturing and giving of information, without encouraging feedback from participants. Group work, learning from the experience of all participants, debate and discussion, role play, and the use of exercises and activities are some of the techniques that can be employed by the workshop facilitator.

> >> **The provision of relevant experience of the entrepreneurial process.** It is important that teachers are taken through the same learning process as they will use with their students, e.g. creating an idea and carrying it out, debriefing the learning, assessing the skills and knowledge developed, and evaluating the entire process. Throughout the process, emphasis is placed on learning from one another, copying (but improving it!), being creative and innovative.

> >> **The provision of adequate field support.** Teachers might require ongoing support or contact with workshop providers, via telephone or e-mail, so as to maintain a high level of confidence and motivation. In the absence of such contact, teachers might be tempted to give up if problems or difficulties arise.

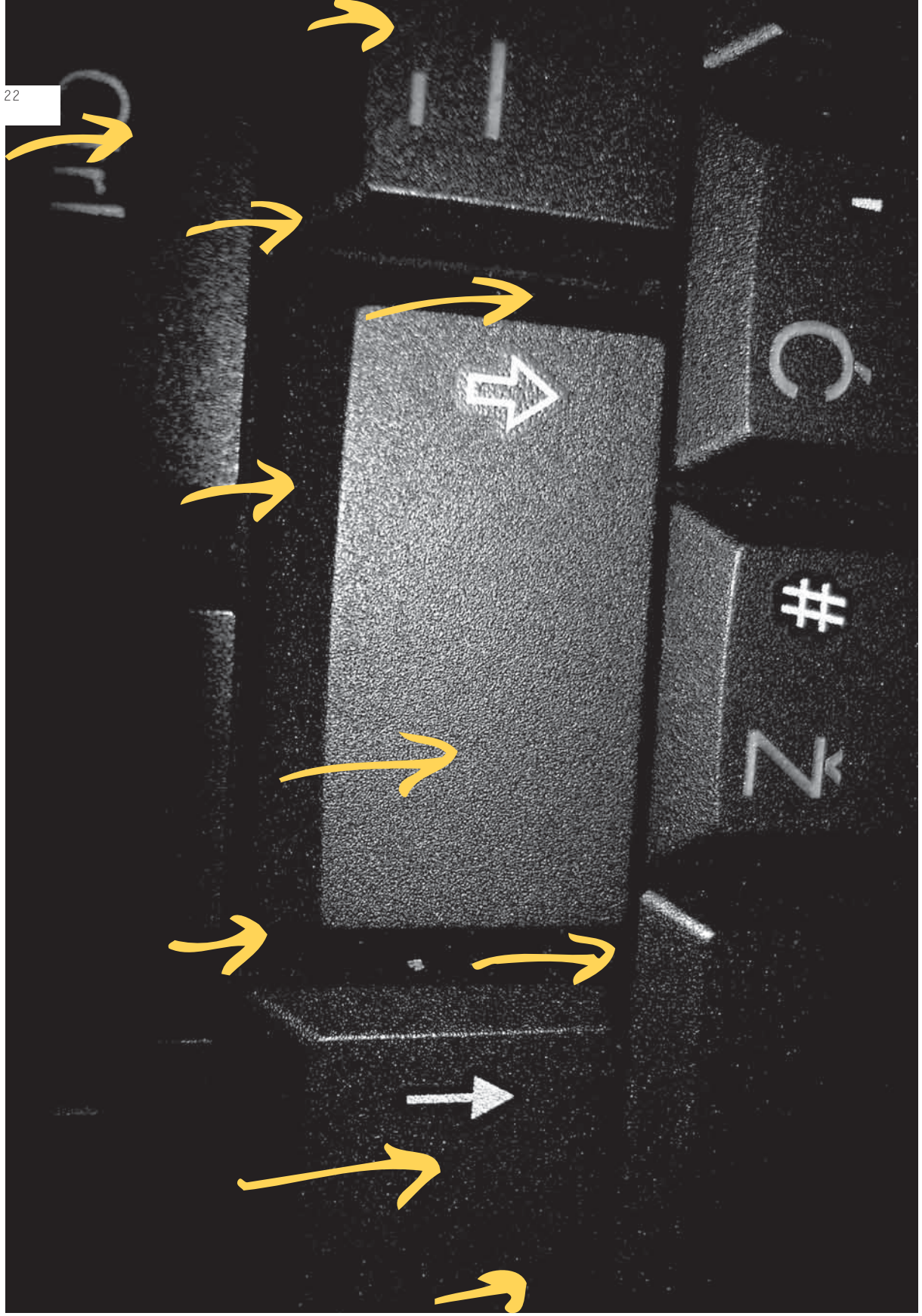
> >> **The encouragement to implement what has been learned.** Research has demonstrated that people will remember 90% of what they have learned if they teach others or immediately use the learning, so for maximum effectiveness teachers are encouraged to immediately try out with their students what they have learned during a training workshop.

It should also be kept in mind that relevant and credible resource materials are required alongside teacher training if real curriculum change is desired. One without the other will not effect change.

7. Placing Enterprise Education in the curriculum

There are a number of possible ‘homes’ for Enterprise Education in the curriculum depending upon the overall objectives and outcomes that one wishes to see:

a) If the objective is to develop the knowledge and capability of the student to set up and sustain a small business at some time in the future, the most appropriate slots are in business- related subjects, project weeks, project work and the open curriculum.
b) If the objective is to develop students’ insight into the culture and operations of the small business, then business / economics, project weeks, project work, school-based companies and the open curriculum provide some options.
c) If the objective is to develop enterprising skills, behaviours and attributes in the students, there are a wide range of possibilities, e.g. any core subject such as History, Geography, Languages, Science or Mathematics, and the open curriculum.
d) Alternatively, Enterprise Education can be introduced as an extracurricular activity.



8. A view from teachers with experience of Enterprise Education

Teachers who have had considerable experience, over time, in trying out a range of Enterprise related approaches with their students have contributed views on the following issues:

a) Some common challenges and how they can be overcome

CHALLENGES	HOW TO OVERCOME
> Ensuring that all students are motivated and interested.	> Isolate those who are disinterested, but ensure that they observe the excitement and interest of those who are participating. Good experiences spread to others – success breeds success.
> Some students are unsure as to what they are learning.	> Always remember to debrief after an activity or at the end of a lesson.
> Some clever but lazy students don't like this approach because it calls for more energy and effort.	> Suggest this approach as a challenge to these students.

> Some students are too ambitious in their choice and size of project leading to insufficient time in which to complete it properly.	> Keep it short and simple – do not overcomplicate and it will be easier to manage.
> It is tempting for teachers to try and use all parts of the materials, giving rise to time problems.	> Try limiting the experiences at first – use only parts of the materials, and then gradually build up to a full project or to using all parts of the materials.
> Many students prefer to have a conventional exam with a given mark.	> Develop an assessment model based on the original learning objectives. The model could comprise two sections, formal (knowledge based in which the knowledge is identifted via an exam) and informal (skills and behaviours learned and identified via debriefing and / or self-assessment).
> Lack of support, or outright criticism from some colleagues who have no understanding of the approach and believe that it lacks 'gravitas'.	> Explain the concept and approach to all colleagues so they have a better understanding of the benefits to students. It will probably be the case that, over time, as changes occur in the education system; and more is learnt about 'new' teaching and learning approaches, confusion and misunderstanding will disappear.

b) Student reactions to Enterprise Education

These tend to vary depending on whether students have experienced a similar approach to learning elsewhere. It is important to make clear to students at the outset that this is not about playing games and having fun at the expense of 'real' learning, but is a serious approach in its own right, acknowledged by successful and experienced teachers to be of benefit to all students.

> >> Students particularly enjoy the active learning approach if they have experienced it at primary school.
> >> Once they have participated in project work and active learning approaches they are pleased to do more.
> >> Some of them appreciate the benefits of this approach later in their school career, i.e. they realize that they can remember more if they have learnt by doing rather than by being lectured to in a traditional manner.

There are a number of perceived benefits to students including:

> >> contact with the outside world, particularly real small businesses in which they may work at some time in the future;
> >> wider career options resulting from links with local companies;
> >> learning (knowing how as well as knowing what) that is more relevant to their future needs;

> >> an awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses, thus providing them with greater self-confidence and self-belief;
> >> the practice of a variety of skills required in real life.

c) Some "dos and don'ts"

DO	DON'T
> Develop and maintain regular contact with other colleagues so as to avoid misunderstanding and potential criticism.	> be afraid to try something different.
> Enthuse other colleagues – develop 'allies'.	> try to take too much on to begin with. Keep it short and simple.
> Take small steps and build up gradually.	> expect enthusiastic feedback immediately – it takes time.
> Think positively at all times – you CAN do it!	> forget to include senior colleagues.
> Give out unconditional approval to students.	> focus solely on classroom teaching at the expense of outside activity.
> Build up networks outside school, including other teachers.	> work completely in isolation from others.
> Invite Head Teachers into classes and to participate in working groups.	> assume that students will be successful in making appropriate contact with businesses without adequate briefing/preparation.
> Contact outside agencies/businesses prior to student contact.	
> Try and get a named contact within each of the businesses that link with the school.	
> Try to keep own knowledge and skills up to date by regularly visiting local companies.	

d) Establishing an appropriate culture within the school

The culture and ethos of a school plays an important part in helping to determine the success or failure of Enterprise Education. An enterprising school is one in which:

> >> innovation and experiment are valued and encouraged,
> >> teachers are supported in networking with external organizations and institutions,
> >> there is timetabling flexibility,
> >> teachers are encouraged to adopt a range of teaching approaches,
> >> teachers are encouraged to take responsibility and ownership for new developments.

In such a school Enterprise Education is likely to thrive, teachers will gain the interest and sup-

port of other colleagues, thus creating a critical mass within the school to drive the initiative forward, and most importantly, students will benefit greatly, not only in terms of personal development but also in their ability to approach their studies in a mature manner.

9. A view from entrepreneurs

An essential component of a successful programme of Enterprise Education is entrepreneurial involvement. Much can be learned from entrepreneurs, particularly from the ways in which they communicate and build relationships with stakeholders, how they see and do things, and indeed how they learn themselves. A small group of well informed and experienced entrepreneurs, interested in links with vocational schools, have contributed views on a range of issues.

a) The qualities they look for in their employees / what makes a good employee

An essential ingredient is the ability to understand that the actions of all employees have an impact on the finances of a small company, and that they therefore need to be focused on the achievement of common goals. Knowledge relevant to the profession or trade is also important, as are a wide range of skills, attributes and behaviours. Employees are expected to:

- have initiative and use it
- be self confident

> >> be a good communicator
> >> be capable of innovation
> >> be a team player and work well with others
> >> have a positive approach and be motivated to work
> >> be reliable and dependable
> >> be open and prepared to learn new things
> >> be capable of independent action
> >> transfer knowledge to other workers
> >> take responsibility for their own actions

b) What needs to be emphasized within the school curriculum

The above have implications for what is taught in schools. Firstly, the entrepreneurs were of the opinion that there is a major need for practical knowledge relevant to today's challenging environment, e.g. economic understanding and financial capability, to counterbalance the conventional 'academic' knowledge that tends to dominate the curriculum.
Secondly, they were strongly in favour of project work that is based on problem solving, enabling the student to carry through ideas into reality via planning.
Thirdly, they called for a greater emphasis to be placed on personal development, particularly:

> >> basic behaviours, how to conduct oneself and behave in a decent way with respect for others
> >> presentational skills
> >> goal setting and a knowledge of what one wants to achieve
> >> preparation for working with other people in teams
> >> support for the development of ambition and self-esteem
> >> confidence building, particularly in respect of geographical and social mobility
> >> how to seek opportunities and ideas and realize these in life.

c) What hinders entrepreneurs from engaging with schools

Despite the interest and goodwill on the part of many teachers and entrepreneurs to engage in linked activities, there are a number of challenges to be overcome. These include:

> >> the large number of different tasks having to be performed by staff of very small companies, leaving little time for involvement with schools
> >> the lack of mutual knowledge and understanding of each other's priorities and what each party is involved in on a day-to-day basis
> >> a possible lack of trust as a result of the above
> >> the differences in working times / hours of working
> >> the absence of a named contact, or principal point of contact within the school

In addition to the above points, it was clear that some entrepreneurs would prefer teachers to be proactive and make the first move, following this up with regular e-mails, so as to maintain ongoing enthusiasm on the part of entrepreneurs.

d) The type of activities that would be of interest

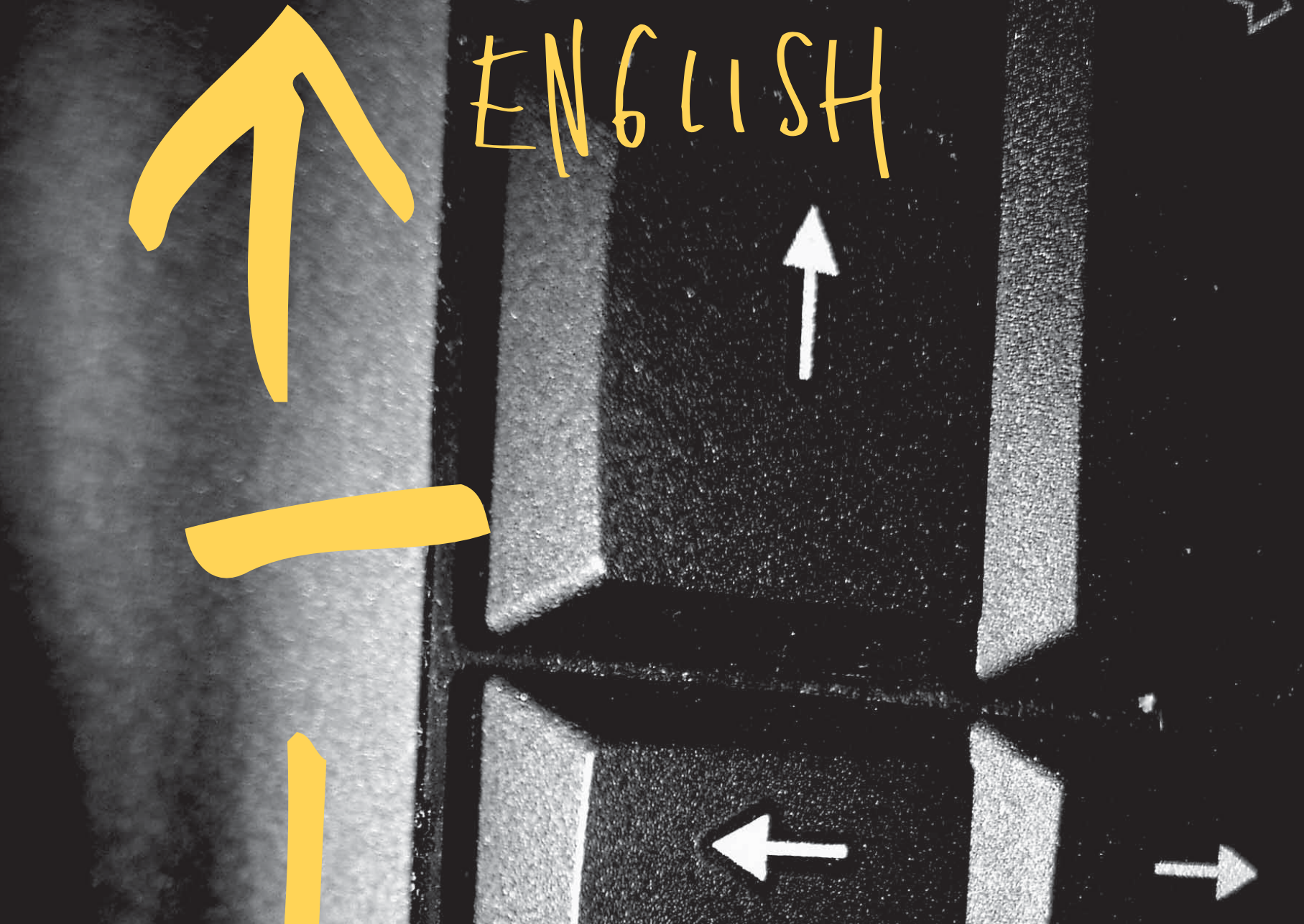
A wide range of ideas were mentioned:

> >> Problem solving projects in which students were directly involved with the small business.
> >> 'On-the-job' training for students within the small company. It was not considered important that the company should directly benefit from such training.
> >> Entrepreneurs visiting schools to listen to, and comment upon, student presentations.
> >> Some training or support from teachers for entrepreneurs in appropriate pedagogical techniques when dealing with students.

e) How initial and ongoing contact can be best established

A number of suggestions were put forward:

> >> Anything IT-based, such as e-mail and use of the Internet.
> >> Personal contact is preferable to many, particularly if it is based on a named contact within the school. In this way mutual trust can be built up.
> >> Creating favourable environment by means of a website that could contain relevant contact names and addresses.
> >> Schools might be encouraged to advertise and promote any activities relevant to partner companies, so spreading an understanding of what is possible in terms of linkages.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