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FROM OUTSIDERS TO INSIDERS: EMPOWERING UNIVERSITY EDUCATORS ACROSS DISCIPLINES THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Aim of the Study: This study investigates how university educators from diverse disciplinary backgrounds can be effectively supported in becoming entrepreneurial educators or “entrepreneurial insiders” (Neergård & Roald, 2024). In recent years, entrepreneurship education (EE) has shifted towards a democratic model that promotes entrepreneurial competencies for all learners, not just those traditionally identified as 'entrepreneurs' (Baggen et al., 2022; Block et al., 2023; Crişan et al., 2023). Scholars advocate for a wide approach to entrepreneurship education to broaden its reach and impact across disciplines (Baggen et al., 2022). Achieving this goal would require university educators to become entrepreneurial teachers (European Commission, 2014) and integrate entrepreneurial thinking into their pedagogy across diverse disciplines. Scholars emphasize that educators and practitioners should embody entrepreneurial qualities to effectively inspire and develop these competencies in their students (Block et al., 2023; European Commission, 2014). Empowering educators across all fields to be entrepreneurial teachers can thus be a powerful mechanism for democratizing entrepreneurship education.

However, many university educators feel unprepared to meet this challenge, particularly in non-business disciplines where the relevance of entrepreneurship education is often misunderstood or undervalued, which has been referred to as the outsider position (Neergård & Roald, 2024). This highlights a pressing need for professional development models tailored to educators, equipping them with mindset, the skills, and pedagogical strategies required to integrate entrepreneurship meaningfully into their teaching. While existing design principles for broad entrepreneurship education (e.g., Baggen et al., 2022; Löbner, 2006; Moberg et al., 2015) offer valuable insights, these are primarily student-focused and may not address the specific needs of educators. The paper explores how professional development initiatives can address this challenge by presenting an educational model that empowers educators to integrate entrepreneurship into their pedagogical practices. The central research question is: How can we provide multidisciplinary university educators with accessible and effective professional training to empower them as entrepreneurial insiders?

Theoretical Framework: The study is grounded in experiential learning theory, primarily drawing from Kolb's (1984) work, emphasizing "learning by doing", reflection, and connecting education to real-life contexts. The design also incorporates the principles constructive alignment (Biggs, 2003) and entrepreneurial inspiration (van Ewijk et al., 2021). These foundations support a pedagogical approach that centers on emotion, cognition, and action—collectively engaging the head, heart, and hand to foster holistic learning (Johnson, 2023). The model acknowledges that motivation, context, and emotional connection to

entrepreneurship are essential for educators to internalize and teach entrepreneurial principles effectively.

Methods: This is a single case study of a teacher professional development training, titled Entrepreneurship Education for Better Learning, developed and delivered at a large university in Norway. The training has a short-course format, requiring participants to commit approximately 20 hours, including a pre-assignment. The training model weaves together three pedagogical elements, namely, inspiration, immersion, and implementation, throughout the entire learning experience. Inspiration is continuously cultivated through storytelling, peer learning, exposure to inspirational talks by entrepreneurial educators, and reflective exercises that prompt participants to relate entrepreneurship to their own disciplines. Immersion is integrated across activities in which participants actively engage with entrepreneurial tools, challenges, and ecosystems. Through peer collaboration, hands-on problem-solving, and interdisciplinary teamwork, educators simulate entrepreneurial practices. Implementation is threaded into the training from the start. Participants begin by reflecting on how entrepreneurship could be relevant to their teaching, pitching the importance of entrepreneurship in their own discipline, and gradually co-develop concrete teaching plans. This interwoven structure fosters a dynamic learning environment where emotional engagement, active participation, and pedagogical reflection mutually reinforce each other. Over three years, the course was delivered 13 times in both Norwegian and English, and in physical and digital formats, with a total of 212 participants. Data were collected from pre- and post-course surveys administered during each course edition (144 pre-survey responses; 175 post-survey responses). The research analyzes participant demographics, learning experiences, learning outcomes, and reflections on teaching practice.

Results: Quantitative analysis showed that participants found the course inspiring, enjoyable, engaging and relevant to their disciplinary contexts. Paired-sample t-tests revealed statistically significant increase in both competence, $t(117) = 7.70, p < .001$, and confidence, $t(87) = 5.67, p < .001$ regarding the integration of entrepreneurship into their teaching practice. Participants also reported a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial principles and their application, which has the potential to foster entrepreneurial mindsets in their students. Pearson's correlation analyses found no significant associations between participants' demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, years of professional experience, prior exposure to entrepreneurship education, and experience teaching entrepreneurship-related courses) and the primary outcome variables. However, a positive course experience was significantly correlated with enhanced competence ($r = .245, p < .001$), increased understanding of entrepreneurial principles ($r = .780, p < .001$), and anticipated changes in teaching practice ($r = .573, p < .001$). Furthermore, independent-samples t-tests revealed no statistically significant differences in participant outcomes between those who completed the course in physical versus digital formats. This finding suggests that the course is robust across delivery modes, indicating its potential for flexible and scalable implementation without compromising effectiveness.

The findings indicate that the professional development initiative effectively supports educators in becoming entrepreneurial insiders by interweaving the elements of inspiration, immersion, and implementation throughout the course. The progression from inspiration to immersion to implementation, though not linear, enabled participants to gradually build

both confidence and competence in entrepreneurship education. As they engaged in reflective discussions, experiential activities, and collaborative design tasks, participants reported feeling more motivated, curious, and willing to experimenting with novel teaching approaches.

A second key finding highlights the importance of emotional connection in educator development. Consistent with prior research (e.g., van Ewijk et al., 2021), entrepreneurial inspiration emerged as a critical driver of engagement. When educators were able to connect entrepreneurship to their personal values, disciplinary aims, and intrinsic motivations, they were more likely to internalize the learning and take ownership of its application. This emotional resonance significantly contributed to shifting perceptions and reinforcing the relevance and potential of entrepreneurship in their teaching.

Third, the study confirms that experiential and learner-centered approaches—commonly advocated for student learning, are equally impactful for educators. By employing the same pedagogical approaches that participants are encouraged to adopt in their own teaching, such as action-based learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and reflective practice, the course served as a model of practice. Educators not only learned about entrepreneurship education but also experienced what effective entrepreneurship education feels like from the learner's perspective, gaining insights into both content and method.

At the population level, quantitative finding indicates that while some participants anticipated substantial changes in their teaching, the average expected impact was moderate ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.27$ on a 7-point scale). This underscores the need for realistic expectations about the scope of short-format training. Open questions remain regarding the long-term impact and transferability of outcomes: How lasting is the impact over time? Will educators implement the learning in their future teaching? How can this model be adapted to diverse institutional and cultural contexts? These are important directions for future research.

Conclusions: This study demonstrates that short, well-designed professional development courses can successfully transform educators from “entrepreneurial outsiders” into “entrepreneurial insiders.” The interwoven use of inspiration, immersion, and implementation cultivates not only cognitive understanding but also the emotional and motivational foundations needed for pedagogical transformation. The holistic, learner-centered approach allows educators to contextualize and internalize entrepreneurship education in ways that are authentic to their own teaching environments. The initiative provides a replicable model for equipping university staff with the mindset and tools needed to democratize entrepreneurship education. Its focus on professional development for educators as a critical pathway for advancing EE offers fresh insights and practical strategies for the broader field of entrepreneurship education. While promising, questions remain regarding the long-term impact and transferability of the model across institutions.

Implications: The findings of this study carry important implications for the design and dissemination of professional development in entrepreneurship education, particularly within the context of expanding EE beyond traditional business domains. First, the demonstrated effectiveness of the course in enhancing educators’ competence, confidence, and pedagogical integration of entrepreneurial thinking—regardless of participants’ disciplinary background or prior experience—suggests that entrepreneurship can be meaningfully embedded across the university curriculum when supported by well-structured educator training.

Second, the lack of significant differences in participant outcomes between those who completed the course in physical versus digital formats is especially noteworthy. This finding underscores the robustness and adaptability of the course model across delivery modes. It signals a critical opportunity for scaling entrepreneurship education initiatives to a wider audience of educators, including those in remote, under-resourced, or international contexts. Digital delivery does not appear to compromise educational impact, making the model highly suitable for institutions seeking flexible, cost-effective, and inclusive approaches to professional development.

Third, the study reinforces the value of an educator-centered pedagogy that blends inspiration, immersion, and implementation. This tripartite model enables not only the acquisition of content knowledge but also the emotional engagement and contextual reflection necessary for sustainable pedagogical change. The emphasis on entrepreneurial inspiration as a catalyst for internalization and ownership further highlights the need to design educator development programs that connect deeply with participants' values and disciplinary identities.

From a policy and institutional perspective, these results suggest that short-format, experiential training—when thoughtfully designed—can serve as an effective entry point for building entrepreneurial capacity within academic staff. Such initiatives can contribute to the democratization of entrepreneurship education by equipping educators across disciplines to act as multipliers within their own classrooms and faculties. For higher education institutions aiming to meet strategic goals related to innovation, employability, and societal engagement, investing in educator-focused EE training can be a highly impactful strategy. Finally, while the findings are promising, they also point to the importance of managing expectations regarding the depth and duration of impact that short courses can achieve. Future research and program development should explore strategies to reinforce and sustain learning outcomes over time, including follow-up support, peer communities of practice, and institutional incentives. Further studies are also needed to examine the transferability of the model across institutional, cultural, and disciplinary contexts, and to evaluate its longitudinal effects on teaching practice and student learning.

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