

A THEORETICAL GAP IN DESIGNING AND ASSESSING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR ADULT LEARNERS IN JAPAN

Aim of the Study

Entrepreneurship education (EE) has become a major policy priority in Japan as the government seeks to foster innovation, strengthen the startup ecosystem, and cultivate individuals capable of creating social and economic value. Over the past decade it has been gradually introduced into universities and high schools through national initiatives led primarily by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Yet it has lacked a common framework for curriculum design and assessment, so objectives, methods, and evaluation criteria varied across institutions.

To address this, the Japanese EntreComp v1 (hereafter J-EntreComp) was released by the working group of educators designated by MEXT in March 2025 as the first shared framework for designing, implementing, and assessing EE in Japan. Rather than reproducing the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (hereafter EntreComp), it streamlines that model into three core competencies and ten core skills tailored to Japanese teachers. MEXT describes the guide as provisional and designed for revision within a few years.

This focus on schools is significant in light of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM). In its national expert assessments, Japan's "entrepreneurial education at school" is among its weakest framework conditions—scored at 2.6 in 2025/2026, near the bottom of upper-income economies. This is why MEXT now promotes EE in elementary and secondary schools. "Entrepreneurial education post-school" scores higher (4.7 in 2025/2026), but GEM defines this condition broadly around post-secondary provision—primarily colleges and universities—and does not separately resolve EE for working-age adults engaged in reskilling outside formal institutions. Adult entrepreneurial intent is likewise low: in GEM 2022/2023, Japan's most recent "adult population survey", entrepreneurial intentions ranked 48th of 49 economies. Entrepreneurship is thus an adult-population concern that neither the weak school stage nor the higher-education measure fully captures. Within this policy context, adult learners appear only occasionally and in passing, and neither the framework nor surrounding policy explains how EE for adults should be designed or assessed. Adult education here is increasingly framed through recurrent education and reskilling, which aid professional development but differ conceptually from EE, whose aim is entrepreneurial rather than merely occupational competence.

Against this background, this study asks how adult learners are positioned within Japan's EE frameworks, and whether a theoretical perspective for designing and assessing EE for adult learners exists. Rather than criticizing the J-EntreComp, it examines the framework's policy scope to ask whether the apparent absence of such a perspective constitutes a gap.