EDITORIAL

EMBRACING A WIDE PERSPECTIVE ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Francesca Maria Cesaroni
University of Urbino
francesca.cesaroni@uniurb.it

Serena Galvani
University of Urbino
serena.galvani@uniurb.it

Article info

Abstract

Purpose: This article explores the shift from a 'narrow' to a 'wide' conceptualization of Entrepreneurship Education, emphasizing its role in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets beyond business creation. It discusses key challenges in evaluating 'wide' Entrepreneurship Education programs, integrating technology, and engaging students.

Design/methodology/approach: The study is based on a review of contemporary Entrepreneurship Education literature, highlighting evolving theoretical frameworks, performance evaluation methods, and technological integration in Entrepreneurship Education programs.

Findings: The transition to 'wide' Entrepreneurship Education requires new assessment methodologies, pedagogical innovations, and adaptive educational strategies. Traditional business-centric evaluation frameworks are insufficient for measuring mindset development and long-term impacts. Technology plays a dual role, both enhancing and challenging Entrepreneurial Education implementation. Additionally, social values and global challenges can serve as entry points to engage students in Entrepreneurship Education programs.

Practical and social implications: A broader Entrepreneurship Education approach can better equip students with competencies applicable across various social and economic domains. Insights into effective program design, student engagement strategies, and assessment methods can inform educational policies and institutional practices. Moreover, integrating digital tools and aligning Entrepreneurial Education with societal challenges can enhance its accessibility and relevance.

Originality of the study: This paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on 'wide' Entrepreneurship Education by synthesizing recent scholarly perspectives and identifying critical areas for future research. It highlights the need for new theoretical models, educator training strategies, and comprehensive evaluation frameworks to support the evolution of Entrepreneurship Education in contemporary educational contexts.

1. The scope of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship Education (EE) is a quite recent research topic, even though not in its infancy. Literature on EE expanded consistently over the last decades, leading to a great proliferation of articles and books exploring this pedagogical path from various standpoints. The growing interest in the EE field led to two main consequences. On the one hand, significant contributions have been achieved that enrich knowledge on EE in terms of pedagogical approaches, learning techniques, and expected outcomes – to mention a few. On the other hand, though, the lack of a structured approach to analyze the topic ended up in highly fragmented research outputs (Fayolle, 2013; Tiberius & Weyland, 2023), without a cohesive and widely accepted theoretical foundation.

The growth of the EE field is evident not only in academic research but also in educational practice. As Hägg and Gabrielsson (2020) emphasize, EE has experienced exponential growth in recent years both in terms of scholarly investigation and classroom implementation (Bitetti & Huber, 2023). This expansion is manifested in the increasing number of EE-based courses, the establishment of dedicated Ph.D. programs, the development of specialized research centers, and the implementation of tailored programs at every educational level - from elementary schools to universities or even after (Kuratko, 2005).

Historically, early EE research was primarily focused on the goal of new venture creation. This perspective, which dominated EE studies for years, was grounded in a narrow understanding of EE, where the primary objective was to equip students with the skills necessary to start a business. Over time, scholars recognized the need to extend EE's objectives beyond venture creation, prompting a broader reflection on the general goals and dimensions of EE, including 'what' should be taught, 'why', and 'how', as well as by 'who' (Fayolle, 2013). Gabrielsson *et al*. (2020) provide a chronological framework to understand this shift, identifying three key phases in the evolution of EE research. The first phase, in the 1980s, was characterized by traditional pedagogical approaches that emphasized the relevance of course content and theoretical knowledge. The second phase, emerging in the 1990s, saw a shift towards problem-solving techniques and experiential learning methods. The third phase, from the 2000s onward, has placed greater emphasis on practical experiences, direct engagement with entrepreneurs, real-world case studies, and the development of individual entrepreneurial mindsets.

This progression mirrors a fundamental transformation in how EE is conceptualized: from a 'narrow' to a 'wide' perspective. The 'narrow' approach is focused on teaching technical skills and methodologies necessary for venture creation. This traditional perspective dominated early EE pro-

grams and research, shaping how scholars and practitioners approached the fundamental questions of 'what' to teach and 'why' (Lackéus, 2015). The emerging 'wide' perspective emphasizes the development of individual entrepreneurial mindset and capabilities, rather than solely focusing on venture creation outcomes. This shift is reflected in recent literature, which demonstrates increasing attention to psychological aspects of entrepreneurship. As noted by Shabbir *et al*. (2022), there is a clear transition from teaching methodologies to personal outcomes, including entrepreneurial intention, motivation, and mindset development. Similarly, Tiberius and Weyland (2023) identify two main areas in contemporary EE research: psychological aspects of entrepreneurship (including attitudes, motivation, and volition) and measurable entrepreneurial dimensions (such as behavior, skills, and business creation).

This evolution from 'narrow' to 'wide' conceptualization of EE has profound implications for all dimensions of EE - the 'what', 'why', 'how', and 'who'. Particularly, in the context of this 'wide' perspective, the 'how' dimension has emerged as a critical area of focus (Nikou *et al*., 2023). As Baggen *et al*. (2022:531) note, "in order to make entrepreneurship available to all, the 'wide' EE practice and research should focus on the 'how' question (the design) thereby facilitating the development, implementation, and comparison of 'wide' EE programs across disciplines and educational levels."

This reconceptualization of EE from a 'wide' perspective is particularly relevant in current times, characterized by profound changes and continuous dynamism that create a complex context where educational needs are necessarily reassessed. Understanding the 'how' to effectively deliver EE programs that align with this 'wide' perspective - while simultaneously reconsidering the 'what', 'why', and 'who' dimensions - represents a crucial challenge for contemporary EE.

2. From a 'narrow' to a 'wide' perspective on Entrepreneurship Education

What does it mean to develop a 'wide' approach to EE? The field of EE has undergone significant transformation in recent years, shifting from a narrow focus on business creation to a broader perspective encompassing entrepreneurial mindset development. This evolution reflects a growing recognition that entrepreneurial capabilities extend beyond venture creation to include broader competencies valuable across various contexts.

The concept of 'wide' EE, introduced by Lackéus (2015) and supported by subsequent researchers like Baggen *et al*. (2022), represents a paradigm shift from 'becoming entrepreneurs' to 'becoming entrepreneurial'. In particular, the 'narrow' definition of entrepreneurship embraces as key concepts "opportunity identification, business development, self-employ-

ment, venture creation and growth" (Lackéus, 2015:9); this is what we can consider as 'becoming entrepreneurs'. At the same time, a 'wide' definition of entrepreneurship refers to 'becoming entrepreneurial', that is stimulating an entrepreneurial mindset and building on "personal development, creativity, self-reliance, initiative taking, action orientation" (Lackéus, 2015:9). Although many scholars acknowledge that the decision to launch a new venture often stems from an individual's entrepreneurial mindset, having such a mindset does not necessarily translate into entrepreneurial intention and the creation of a new business. An entrepreneurial mindset is described as a way of thinking that enables individuals to generate value by identifying and seizing opportunities, making decisions with limited information, and navigating uncertainty (Daspit *et al*., 2023:27; Shepherd *et al*, 2010:62). This broader conceptualization aligns with the European Union's 'EntreComp' framework, which offers a holistic view of entrepreneurship. From this perspective, entrepreneurship extends beyond the business world and can be regarded as a 'transversal key competence', pertaining to all spheres of an individual's life (Bacigalupo *et al*., 2016). It can be understood as a mental approach characterized by the ability to take initiative and autonomously manage one's learning path and professional development, elements that are particularly relevant in today's context of high uncertainty and complexity (Baggen *et al*., 2022; Carpenter & Wilson, 2022; Loi & Fayolle, 2021).

Depending on the conceptualization of entrepreneurship that educators have in mind, a variety of educational approaches should be applied in EE, based on differentiated teaching methods and design of programs (Mwasalwiba, 2010).

A 'wide' approach to entrepreneurship acknowledges that EE's value extends beyond fostering new business creation to encompass personal development and social impact. It recognizes entrepreneurship as a transformative experience that develops transferable skills applicable across various life contexts.

In this expanded view of EE, being entrepreneurial means developing a mindset oriented toward value creation, which can manifest in economic, social, cultural, and ecological domains: "Infusing value creation experiences across the entire curriculum can be one of the most important contributions entrepreneurship can make to education in the future" (Lackéus, 2015:16). The development of an entrepreneurial mindset through inclusive educational programs enables individuals to approach entrepreneurship as a daily practice, enriching their lives and actively contributing to addressing societal challenges (Baggen *et al*., 2022; Blenker *et al*., 2011; Lackéus, 2015, 2020).

3. Indeed, 'How to' design Entrepreneurship Education programs in a 'wide' perspective?

The adoption of a 'wide' perspective in EE requires a fundamental rethinking of how EE programs are structured, who should deliver them, following which type of educational methods (ranging from traditional lectures to technical-pragmatic or participating approaches) and which competencies educators should develop - essentially addressing the 'how' component of EE. While the existing literature exploring these aspects remains relatively limited, available contributions propose various methodological approaches and frameworks that could address the need to investigate the individual dimension of entrepreneurship focused on value creation.

Contemporary entrepreneurship literature encompasses various frameworks for value creation processes. Recent theoretical developments have shifted from traditional venture creation models toward broader models based on value creation, making them more applicable in general educational contexts. A significant theoretical perspective in this domain is effectuation theory (Sarasvathy, 2001) which conceptualizes entrepreneurial decision-making as an iterative process characterized by continuous refinement of decisions without predetermined outcomes. Complementary methodological approaches, including the Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010) or the Design Thinking approach (Brown, 2008), provide practical frameworks that emphasize creativity, collaborative work, and strategic planning in the entrepreneurial process, making them particularly suitable for comprehensive EE programs.

The transition to 'wide' EE requires abandoning traditional transmissive educational models in favor of more dynamic, experiential approaches. This shift poses challenges for programs design and delivery, particularly given the unpredictable, complex, and iterative nature of entrepreneurial value creation (Baggen *et al.*, 2022). Despite the growing interest toward 'wide' EE approaches, fragmentation is visible in the available studies. Several aspects of the 'how' dimension of EE require attention and represent promising research topics that could help sharpen the broader EE debate. Although these open questions have persisted in entrepreneurship literature for some time, they still represent a blue ocean for research, as there remains substantial scope for clarification and development in this field. In consideration of the state of the art on EE literature and the ongoing challenges related to such a research topic, we believe that there are great opportunities for EE researchers to further contribute to this theme. The following sections outline key unresolved issues in EE that present valuable opportunities for future research directions.

3.1 Converging on a theoretical framework for 'wide' Entrepreneurship Education

Regarding theoretical frameworks for designing EE programs that fully embrace a 'wide' perspective, there are several open issues that offer interesting opportunities to enrich the existing debate. For instance, there is a lack of theoretical frameworks that systematically integrate the role of context in EE design, which can assume varied meanings. Thomassen *et al.* (2020) emphasize the importance of considering context in the analysis of EE, proposing a three-level categorization. The macro-level of context is defined by national and international factors, including policy, economy, and culture. The meso-level pertains to regional and institutional factors, primarily university strategies and local ecosystems. Finally, the micro-level focuses on individual and course-related factors, such as pedagogy, teaching methods, and educator-student interactions. In general terms, the field needs coherent theoretical frameworks that integrate general education principles with 'wide' EE philosophy (Mohamed & Ali, 2021). These frameworks should guide educators in structuring comprehensive programs that develop entrepreneurial mindsets rather than merely technical business skills.

Baggen *et al.* (2022) propose a framework for developing EE programs based on a 'wide' conceptualization through the identification of eleven design principles, which illustrate the entrepreneurial process, its associated tasks, the context, and the relationships to be developed during an EE program. Although the framework proposed by the authors is highly valuable in better understanding how to address the 'how' dimension of EE, there is still a lack of consensus regarding its validity and adoption. Therefore, there remains room for contribution to this topic. Specifically, key questions remain to be addressed in detail, such as: how can faculty be guided in structuring 'wide' EE (Tiberius & Weyland, 2023)? Which theoretical approaches best support this process?

3.2 Redesigning performance metrics for 'wide' Entrepreneurship Education programs

The evaluation of 'wide' EE programs presents unique challenges. Traditional metrics, focused on entrepreneurial intention and business creation outcomes, are insufficient and inappropriate for measuring the development of entrepreneurial competencies. As Nabi *et al.* (2017) observe, many studies rely on short-term indicators, potentially missing significant long-term impacts. Fayolle and Gailly (2015) emphasize that EE's effects often manifest over extended periods, necessitating longitudinal assess-

ment approaches. Evaluating the effectiveness of EE programs is a complex issue and a highly debated topic in literature.

For a long time, the dominant evaluation framework has been Kirkpatrick's (1959) four-level model, which assesses EE effectiveness based on: reactions - the participants' perceptions of the program (subjects, instructors, agenda, etc.); learning - the skills acquired, techniques learned, and changes in attitudes; behavior - the application of acquired skills in daily activities and professional behavior; and results - the consequences of behavioral changes in terms of activities, performance, and productivity. Measuring these aspects is particularly challenging, especially concerning the latter two dimensions, which remain underexplored in literature. Fayolle and Gailly (2015) propose an initial approach to analyzing EE program performance involving a comparison of students' perceptions immediately after the program and in the medium term. However, this approach has limitations and underscores the necessity for further research to determine more precise and universally applicable metrics.

As highlighted by Tiberius and Weyland (2023), it is essential to 'open the black box of EE' to analyze its objectives (how to implement EE in practice?), content (what exactly should be taught?), teaching approaches and methods (how should it be taught?), and, most critically, how to universally decode performance evaluation processes (how should EE program success be measured?).

Such a need further amplifies when adopting a 'wide' EE perspective, aiming at the development of an entrepreneurial mindset. As Daspit *et al.* (2023:37) note, in pedagogical studies on EE qualitative methods or survey-based methods are often used, but a clear and commonly accepted method for measuring the entrepreneurial mindset does not exist and further research is encouraged to enrich knowledge on this topic. Future research lines should therefore aim to develop more valid and reliable measurement methods and indicators that capture the broader impacts of 'wide' EE, including competency development, mindset changes, and long-term outcomes beyond business creation (Nabi *et al.*, 2017). Several open questions remain in this sense. How can the effectiveness of educational approaches aimed at developing entrepreneurial competencies be evaluated? For instance, prior exposure to entrepreneurship experiences before participating in a program could negatively affect the program's effectiveness. In this regard, differentiated programs tailored to specific student profiles could be considered, but what criteria should be used to design such programs? How should they be structured? (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). Furthermore, how does EE translate training and interventions into measurable outcomes? What variables mediate this effect? What is the long-term impact of EE? When is the most appropriate time to evaluate its results? (Loi & Fayolle, 2021). Addressing these questions is essential for refining EE

evaluation frameworks and enhancing their applicability across diverse educational and professional contexts.

3.3 Profiling educators as primary leaders of 'wide' Entrepreneurship Education

The evolution toward 'wide' EE raises questions about educator qualifications and development as well. Future research should examine what competencies educators need and how to develop them effectively. Indeed, educators are key figures in 'wide' EE since they dramatically contribute to the development of an entrepreneurial mindset in students (Nikou *et al.*, 2023). As Fayolle (2013) notes, educators must master diverse topics ranging from entrepreneurship to pedagogy while handling complex subjects like mindset development, opportunity recognition, work-life balance, failure management, or emotional management.

Research examining educators' role in enhancing EE and its outcomes remains scarce. The importance of addressing teachers' understanding of EE through appropriate knowledge and tools for integrating entrepreneurial competencies into their teaching has been highlighted in the literature (Teerijoki & Murdock, 2014), yet empirical investigations on methods to enhance teachers' perception of EE are limited. While some research has identified positive correlations between EE effectiveness and factors such as teachers' creative capabilities (Wibowo & Saptono, 2018) and their entrepreneurial background (Diegoli & Gutierrez, 2018), other potentially significant teacher characteristics and competencies remain unexplored. As noted by Jones and Underwood (2017), educators' function as mediators of EE continues to represent a significant research gap, particularly regarding classroom interaction patterns and students' emotional engagement with EE.

The emergence of novel theoretical approaches guiding 'wide' EE program design raises fundamental questions about the optimal profile of educational figures to lead such programs and their required competencies. This brings forth several interconnected issues: what are effective approaches for faculty development, who should conduct such training, and what competencies should these trainers possess? Furthermore, Thomassen *et al.* (2020) underline the relevance of understanding what tools and frameworks can support educators in navigating and adapting to dynamic educational contexts.

3.4 Unveiling benefits and pitfalls of technological integration

The role of technology in 'wide' EE deserves particular attention, especially given the acceleration of online learning in post-COVID-19 times. Research could examine how digital tools can enhance or potentially hin-

der 'wide' EE objectives (Petrolo *et al*., 2023; Fayolle, 2013). Petrolo *et al*. (2023), in a study on methodologies and research approaches applied to online EE, pose several key questions for further investigation, including: which digital tools are most effective in fostering active student participation in online programs? What are the reactions of students and educators to the adoption of digital tools in EE programs? Which tools and theoretical approaches best support the digital transition of EE courses? Similarly, Sitaridis and Kitsios (2024), analyzing the intersection of digital entrepreneurship and EE, highlight the need to better understand how to design EE courses that effectively integrate emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. They also emphasize the importance of identifying educational methodologies that enhance learning digital competency, creating more robust frameworks for measuring educational initiative outcomes in digital contexts, and supporting female and diverse entrepreneurship in digital settings.

Basically, a fundamental question to consider is whether new technologies - already playing a key role in general education - are an ally or an obstacle in rethinking EE programs from a 'wide' perspective. In this sense, open questions include: Which technological tools can help educators navigate and adapt to evolving contexts? How can educational practices be developed to reflect the complexity of the current digital and cultural landscape (Thomassen *et al*., 2020)?

3.5 Engaging students toward Entrepreneurship Education programs

Finally, a 'wide' conceptualization of EE refers to teaching students not only the practical tools to create a new business venture but also instilling or reinforcing in them an entrepreneurial mindset (Shabbir *et al*., 2022). However, in cases when students do not have an entrepreneurial mindset and do not expect to be interested in developing it, how can such students be engaged in EE programs aimed at generating such a mindset?

A final question, therefore, concerns how to attract students to EE and help them understand the importance of entrepreneurial competencies (mindset). A partial answer comes from the study by Lackéus (2015), which highlights how the growing student interest in EE programs offered by universities, even in a non-mandatory format, may be linked to the increasing prevalence of social values among younger generations. Many young students share a common desire to proactively contribute to solving so-called 'grand challenges' - societal issues that require urgent solutions, such as climate change or reducing social and economic inequalities (Youniss *et al*., 2002).

From this perspective, it may be strategic to promote EE programs that leverage entrepreneurial competencies as a tool for actively engaging in addressing these global challenges. However, while this is one possible ap-

proach to stimulating student interest in EE programs, are there any others? On which dimensions of EE programs should educators focus? Which aspects resonate most with students? Addressing these questions is crucial for designing more effective EE initiatives that align with the motivations and values of contemporary learners.

4. Conclusions

The transition from 'narrow' to 'wide' EE represents a significant evolution in how we conceptualize and deliver entrepreneurial learning. This shift demands new approaches to program design, assessment, and educator development. Future research must address these challenges while maintaining focus on the ultimate goal: supporting individuals in becoming capable of creating value across various contexts.

As the field continues to evolve, researchers and practitioners must collaborate to develop robust frameworks, effective assessment methods, and innovative pedagogical approaches that support this broader vision of EE. Only through such concerted efforts can we fully realize the potential of 'wide' EE to foster entrepreneurial mindsets and capabilities that benefit both individuals and society.

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