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Development of the Entrepreneurial Spirit among Future Employees – Necessary Requirement for a Sustainable Local Development

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Abstract: *The development of the entrepreneurial spirit among future employees is extremely important for a sustainable development. The creativity, the sense of initiative and the entrepreneurial spirit will help the current graduate, future employee, to develop their critical thinking, to be creative, innovate in their field of activity, be productive, flexible and autonomous and also capable to manage a project, within the limits of their skills. This research introduces the most important results concerning the entrepreneurial spirit among future employees for a better integration on the labor market and a significant contribution to the sustainable local development. The data were collected through a questionnaire applied on a representative sample of teachers in the pre-university education who carry out their activity in theoretical, technology and vocational high schools in the county. They served in outlining an overview on the impact that development of the entrepreneurial spirit has on the prospects of sustainable local development through current graduates, future employees. Regardless of their level of education, the teaching staff represents the main transmitter of training and development of the entrepreneurial spirit within the lifelong learning cycle.*

Keywords: *sustainable local development, critical thinking, initiative, innovation, entrepreneurial spirit.*

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1. Introduction

The entrepreneurship is correlated to the technological progress, creation of new jobs and reduction in the number of social differences or environment-related differences, in the context in which the environment is an important issue nowadays. By creating new markets, the enterprises reach out to new technologies, to revolutionizing the production processes, to innovation and cooperation worldwide. It is widely recognized that entrepreneurship generates economic growth and new jobs [1]. Nevertheless, being an employee, especially in the public sector, is becoming at present much more comfortable than being an entrepreneur. This is the result of the unresolved barriers related to providing through education some basic skills in the field of entrepreneurship, the access to markets or financing, fear of bankruptcy or bureaucratization of the administrative procedures.

2. Problem Statement

The empirical research started with the question: How can development of entrepreneurial skills support the sustainable local development?

The sustainable development arose initially as a solution to the environmental crisis due to the natural resources' chaotic exploitation, as well as to the environment's constant degradation. Nowadays the concept expanded to quality of life, both in economic and social terms.

The Rio Declaration on the "Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro", 1992, defines the term "sustainable development" as a developmental process corresponding to current needs and one that does not endanger future generations.

In other words, the protection of the environment becomes an integrated part of the developmental process and cannot be cast aside.

In 1991, Bennett defined the notions of "entrepreneur", "green entrepreneur", "eco- entrepreneur" and "ecopreneur". The activities carried out by such business people have a generally positive influence on the natural environment and the sustainability environment [2]. They act consciously toward ensuring a more sustainable future.

A report of the United Nations in 2014 emphasizes the fact that entrepreneurship enabled many poor people to make a sustainable living. It is acknowledged that entrepreneurship creates jobs and contributes to sustainable development and stimulation of growth and economic

innovation, better social conditions and approach of the environmental challenges [3].

The sustainable entrepreneurship is recognized as a widespread response to the question concerning development and reduction of the social inequalities [4]. In their attempt to develop a competitive business, the entrepreneurs may implement a series of measures so as to operationalize the principles of sustainable development and may therefore lead to better profitability of their activities. Education and training are fundamental vectors in this process. All employees, irrespective of their organization and the position held within it, should have access to entrepreneurship education, regardless of their level of education. As shown by the findings of the "Enterprises and Industry" study, which was coordinated by the General Department of the Commission and regards the importance that entrepreneurial programs hold worldwide, entrepreneurship education brings with itself positive changes within an organization. The human resources participating to such entrepreneurial programs and activities manifest much more entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions; they find it much easier to integrate on the labor market after they complete their studies; they are innovative, flexible and productive.

3. Research Questions/Aims of the research

As the empirical research's main objective, the analysis of the developmental role that the entrepreneurial spirit has among future employees shows that it is, indeed, an essential requirement towards a sustainable local development.

Objective 1: Correlation between lifelong training programs and programs intended to innovate and develop the entrepreneurial spirit so as to ensure a sustainable local development.

Objective 2: Improvement of teachers' availability with regard to development of entrepreneurial skills and use of such skills in class in order to ensure a basic entrepreneurial behavior, irrespective of the discipline studied.

The qualitative research targeting the challenges that a school, seen as a learning organization, is subjected to, has its basis on the following hypotheses:

H1 – Entrepreneurial skills and attitudes serve as the basis for the Education and training model, regarded with sustainable development in mind, all throughout the Initial Education – Lifelong Training path.

H2 – Teachers are willing to develop entrepreneurial skills through lifelong training programs in order to ensure a better integration of the candidates on the labor market and a sustainable local development.

4. Research Methods

The research approach on the impact that development of entrepreneurial spirit has on the prospects of sustainable development at local level made use of a complex research strategy. It combined both quantitative, as well as qualitative research methods. The set of methods and techniques used in collecting information is enumerated below, as well as their respective considered objective.

The Selection of the Sample

The quantitative research regarding teachers in the pre-university education, high school in Dâmboviţa County involved 303 people out of 1,403 in total. Table 1. shows the questionnaire distribution applied to the teaching staff in Dâmboviţa County high schools.

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaires by types of high schools

Total Number	No. of questionnaires	Academic high schools	Technology high schools	National high schools	Vocational high schools
1.403	303	62	131	87	23

Source: authors' contribution

The survey distribution among high school types has been made with keeping the proportion of teachers in each respective organization in mind. An analysis of the research sample clearly states that a majority of teachers are **female** (75.91%, as opposed to 24.09% **male** teachers). The sample distribution sorted by **age** criteria, seniority in the educational field and years served in the same organization is presented below:

Table 2. Sample distribution by age *Source:* authors' contribution

Current Number	Age	Percent
1	below 30	7.92%
2	31-40	40.92%
3	41-50	33.33%
4	51-60	14.85%
5	over 60	2.97%

This tendency is the same for all types of high schools under analysis. Analyzing the questioned teachers' socio-demographic characteristics, there is a clear indication that a majority of respondents are between 31 and 40 years of age (40.92% of total); in a contrasting manner, teachers under the age of 30 hold the lowest representative extent (2.97%). This tendency holds itself against all types of analyzed high school types.

Table 3. Sample distribution by seniority in education

Current Number	Years	Percent
1	below 5	8.58%
2	6-10	13.53%
3	11-20	46.20%
4	over 20	31.68%

Source: authors' contribution

As far as the seniority in education is concerned, the research sample states that a majority teaching staff holds a seniority that ranges from 11 to 20 years (46.20%), as opposed to people with less than 5 years in the educational field (8.58%)

Table 4. Sample distribution by seniority within the teachers' school organization

No.	Years	Percent
1	below 5	30.36%
2	6-10	28.38%
3	11-20	27.39%
4	Over 20	13.86%

Source: authors' contribution

Regarding the seniority within the organization, most respondents reported they conducted their main activities for a period of less than 5 years (30.36%). On the other end of the spectrum there lie teachers who performed their activity in the same organization for more than 20 years (13.86 %). Therefore, a natural gravitation of the teaching staff towards organizations that benefit their personal and professional growth can be observed.

Teachers in the urban areas make up a majority of 75.25%, whereas teachers who carry out their activity in rural areas hold up 24.75% of the responses.

A high degree of didactic maturity has been achieved by most teachers interviewed (first level of qualification – 53.14%, second level of qualification – 21.45%, PhD – 2.97%).

Moreover, the curricular area of the respondents has been taking into account when selecting the sample. 25.74% of respondents perform in a

Language and Communication curricular area, whereas 25.74% teach Mathematics and Sciences. The rest of the curricular areas is spread as follows: Human and Society - 19.80%, Arts and sports - 8.91% and Technologies - 19.80%.

Analyzing the respondents as far as their curricular area is concerned, proof that Mathematics and Sciences teachers (25.74%) as well as the Language and Communication teachers (25.74%) are best represented can be found. At the opposite end, Arts and Sports teachers make up only 8.91% of respondents. This should come as no surprise, if one is to consider the high school curriculum, as well as the number of working hours, lines of study, qualification and the year of study.

With respect to their status, tenure teachers hold up 83.50% of the respondents, whereas the unskilled substitute teachers make up 0.66% of the responses.

5. Findings

Despite the fact that the entrepreneurship was worldwide recognized as the only possible solution to cause changes toward sustainable economies, there are controversies as to how we can achieve this at national level. Over the past few years, the business environment in Romania has acquired new meanings: from fragile initiatives to successful businesses, irrespective of the sector of activity. The Barometer of Romanian Entrepreneurship has created an overview on the local business prospects the percentage of those who are optimistic about the Romanian economy has dropped significantly compared to the previous edition of the study (18% in 2019 vs. 31% in 2018), indicating therefore a series of concerns fueled by the fiscal and legislative uncertainties, the unsustainable nature of the economic growth. The latter are mainly based on consumption and on inflationary pressures, factors that have influenced the business environment this year.

The report drawn up by EY is based on an online survey which involved 458 leaders of organizations from various sectors of the Romanian economy, among which 8% with a turnover exceeding 100 million EUR, 9%

a turnover between 50 and 100 million EUR, 34% between 10 and 50 million EUR, 44% between 1 and 10 million EUR and 5% below 1 million EUR. The level of respondents' confidence in the global and local economy is presented in the table below:

Table 5. Level of confidence – local economy

Level of confidence Global/local (%)	Highly positive	Positive	Stable	Negative	Highly negative
Company profitability	1/1	34/19	51/39	14/39	0/2
Short-term stability of markets	3/2	29/13	50/41	17/38	1/6
Access to financing	4/2	36/22	47/45	13/29	0/2
Evolution of company assessment/perspectives of capital markets	1/1	30/17	53/43	16/36	0/3
Private investments	3/2	38/20	38/29	19/45	2/4
Demand for products and services	8/5	52/37	33/39	7/18	7/1

Source: data taken over from The Barometer of Romanian Entrepreneurship, 2018 [5]

Shifting the perspective from global economy to local economy, we notice a lower level of confidence for all ratios measured: demand for products and services (42% local economy vs. 60% global economy), profitability (20% vs. 35%), stability of markets (15% vs. 32%), access to financing (24% vs. 40%), evolution of company assessment (18% vs. 31%) and private investments (22% vs. 41%). The majority of discrepancies concern the stability of the markets and the evolution of investments. These discrepancies are due to fiscal and legislative instability in Romania.

In terms of the obstacles encountered when developing a business, the respondents place entrepreneurship education on the fifth position (23%) out of eight, extremely close to national economy (27%) and somehow far from: fiscal and legislative uncertainty (80%), political stability and lack of vision of public policies (69%) and bureaucracy (46%) [5].

Regardless of the discipline that they teach, the teachers are those who come into direct contract with the future graduates, the ones who may develop through inter and trans disciplinarity entrepreneurial skills which should enable a future graduate to find a job on the labor market, either as

an entrepreneur or as an employee. However, this gives rise to the question: To what extent can a teacher do this in class?

6. Discussions

With reference to the aspects presented above, we start from the following question: To what extent can a teacher transmit basic knowledge of entrepreneurship, develop skills and attitudes that should enable the future graduate to better integrate on the labor market? In Europe, as of 2012, the dominant qualification for teachers has been the bachelor's degree, except high school teachers who, in most countries, have a master's degree. The initial education comprises a general component (general learning classes and mastering the discipline that teachers will teach when qualified) and a professional component (knowledge and practical skills required in the entire teaching/assessing/learning process). However, even though we speak of introducing the entrepreneurship education as early as the lowest levels of education, the teachers fail to develop such skills through Initial Education within universities.

With regard to this aspect, the respondents participating to the empirical research in Dâmbovița County had the following opinions: [5]

Table 6. Importance of development of entrepreneurial skills throughout Initial Education of teaching staff

	Technology high school	**Academic high school**	**Vocational high school**	**National high school**
Totally disagree	4.6%	0%	4.3%	1.1%
Disagree	4.6%	3.2%	8.7%	4.6%
Partially agree	26.0%	29%	17.4%	25.3%
Agree	42.7%	35.5%	39.1%	51.7%
Totally agree	22.1%	32.3%	30.4%	17.2%

Source: authors' contribution

The percentages above indicate the teachers' interest in developing basic skills through Initial Education. The teachers understand their role in relation to the professional growth of a future employee and want to be

taught in a professional manner and develop basic skills in entrepreneurship education.

Lifelong training has gained a significant importance over the past years and it may be considered a professional duty (in 28 educational systems in Europe), an obligation set forth by the law or legal requirements, stipulated in the employment contracts of the teaching staff or in the collective agreements [6].

With reference to skills which are pursued to be developed in future lifelong training programs, the respondents' opinion is presented in the table below:

Table 7. Skills developed through lifelong training programs

Lifelong training programs	Score
Developing some communication and relating skills	0.81
Capacity to adapt to the specificity of the group of pupils	0.86
Relating to children with special educational needs (SEN)	0.76
Methodological	0.73
Assessment	0.86
Psychosocial	0.67
Technical and technological	0.40
Career management	0.60
Management and coordination	0.33
Use of information technologies	0.81
Resource management and administration	0.58
Institutional development	0.40
Entrepreneurial	0.44
Skills in implementing the new curriculum	0.77

Source: prepared by author based on interpretation of quantitative data

The questioned teachers attach great importance to development of skills related to working with SEN children, communication and relating in class, adapting to the particularities of a given group of children, skill assessment as well as abilities regarding the use of informational technologies. One must always take into consideration that the different generations of students whom they teach go through constant changes in terms of attitudinal, psychological and emotional values.

The first hypothesis (H1) by which "Education and training model in the context of sustainable development is also based on forming entrepreneurial skills and attitudes throughout the path Initial Education –

Lifelong training" is partially validated. The teachers admit that the entrepreneurship education, introduced within the framework of the initial education university programs, is beneficial for the formation of pupils' basic skills; yet developing such entrepreneurial skills through lifelong training programs does not represent a priority (invalidation of the second hypothesis H2).

7. Conclusions

The entrepreneurs of the future are those who establish sustainable and flexible businesses, who easily adapt to the market [7], environmental and social requirements. Even though there are some concerns regarding the Romanian economy, at local level in particular, due to fiscal and legislative uncertainties [8], unsustainable nature of the economic growth, once the development of basic entrepreneurial skills is introduced at all levels of education, the graduates will begin to develop their own capacity for critical and creative thinking. Moreover, they will begin to manifest a desire for innovation in their own field of activity, along with wanting to increase their own productivity, flexibility, autonomy and their skill to manage a project in line with their core values and ability, in order to get the expected results.

The most profitable investments are those made in entrepreneurial education. The carried-out research shows that pupils and students that have benefited from such a training are 3 to 6 times more likely to start their own business at a certain time of their life. Entrepreneurial education goes beyond the obvious courses on how to set up a business. It mainly comprises activities which have the purpose of developing entrepreneurial behaviors and attitudes as well as activities by which ideas are turned into actions. The development of a good quality entrepreneurial education in the Romanian education system depended on the teachers' involvement and the manner in which they understand to manage appropriate resources.

The information collected belongs to the respondents. It may be subjective, in line with the emotional states and the respondents' personal experiences throughout the improvement programs to which they participated. The empirical research conducted has a limited horizon and refers to Dâmbovița County only. The use of the questionnaire in approaching the respondents has a static nature and relates to the specific moment of the analysis on the training of the teaching staff throughout lifelong training programs.

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