

Teaching Entrepreneurship with Different Methodologies

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to prove the usefulness of practice-oriented teaching methods in entrepreneurship skills and programs at Bachelor and Master level in the newly joined EU countries. The paper put this question in historical context, since entrepreneurship as a special form of firms is quite a new form in the Central-Eastern European countries. The historical legacy of these countries pushed the talented and agile workforce into the informal, irregular economy, which is the reason why the teachers and the lecturers were challenged after the change of the regime. This backwardness started to eliminate the obstacles and the barriers in front of the practice-oriented teaching methods.

Keywords: blended learning, case study learning, practice-oriented teaching, participant-centred learning, entrepreneurship teaching

JEL codes: A20

Introduction

Practice-oriented teaching methods do not have a long history in Hungary. To begin with a personal experience, I would like to share the 20 years of teaching experience that we gained during teaching entrepreneurship in different programmes. The establishment of the Department of Entrepreneurship took place in 1991. In this place, me and my colleagues owe a lot of gratitude to our founder Peter Szirmai, who was a visionary and changed our mindset about entrepreneurship teaching. He was dedicating all his time and effort to help students in several fields of life. He was wise and patient with young talents like me. Also, our other fortune lies in the fact that one of the greatest entrepreneurship professor, János Vecsenyi has been with us in the last 20 years. His creativity and innovative mindset "*pushed the envelope*" further beyond most other university courses in Corvinus University of Budapest. Without his books, course materials, basic

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principles, matrices and models, we would not exist as we do, and would not earn excellent feedback from thousands of satisfied students. Before the paper turns to the rigorous and strict scientific methods, me and my colleagues would also like to say thank you to all the former colleagues¹ who contributed to our teaching process in the courses. All of them added a bit from year to year, left her/his fingerprint on the subject. Without them, the knowledge of the Department of Entrepreneurship would not have so much intellectual property, it would be just a course copied from foreign universities, as can be said about other departments in this region.

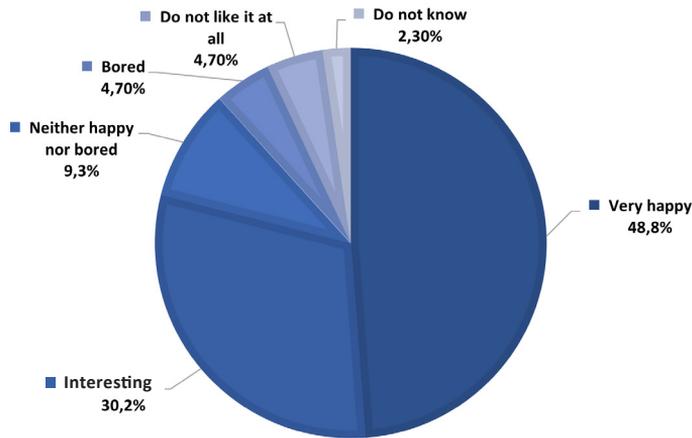
The history of the teaching methods of entrepreneurship in CUB started as an elective course and this tradition remained until now. The students had the freedom to choose whether they want to attend courses about entrepreneurship or not, since these special kind of courses cannot be evaluated as a situational disadvantage. Only those students applied for the classes who were interested and motivated to study entrepreneurship. This self-selection process supports the teaching methods at the Department. Efforts were made to switch the elective course into compulsory from academic leaders of the university, but these efforts were not successful. The reason for this is the capability of the entrepreneurship, the strong motivation from the entrepreneurs of the future, which is unavoidable.

There is a strong debate among the scholars in this field on how much the teaching process adds to entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. The evaluation of our students from the last 20 years gathered by the Students Evaluation System organized by the university, and the alumni experience of the Department shows the necessity of the courses. Besides, the growing need by students for these courses should be noted here, which was the reason why the Department tried to increase capacity to meet the demand. Some courses were offered in English as well. At this point, we must make some remarks about the Bologna-process, which was introduced in 2004 in Hungary. The new system, which split the whole educational program into two levels, Bachelor and Master level, forced the Department to rethink the teaching process. Due to this, the Department decided to offer two courses, one for the 3rd years at Bachelor level and one for the 2nd year students at Master level.

¹ I cannot list all of them, but I want to mention by name: Gábor Kerékgyártó, Krisztián Csapó, Dániel Béza, Zoltán Sipos, Judit Filep, Ágnes Kiss, Katalin Szakács, Pál Breuer, Gábor Kazár, Balázs Csóri, László Csepregi, Loretta Huszák, Geirge F. Hemmingway, János Moll, Gergely Freész,

Figure 1: In year 2006, after the change, we asked student how they did find the course

Source: anonym feedback of 318 students



Nearly half of the students (48,8%) were very happy, one third (30,2%) found it interesting, one tenth (9,3%) neither happy nor bored, and around 5% did not like it at all.

These 20 years were full of ups and downs, it was a rather bumpy road, and the Department received several bad feedbacks on ideas which were not welcomed by many students. In 2023, we will have a fresh restart of the course, and there is a list of all the pros and cons of different teaching methods.

1. Evolution of the last 20 years of the methodology of the Department

1.1. Standard frontal teaching

At the very beginning of this subchapter, I would like to start personal experience once again. As a university student in 2002, I had the pleasure of listening to the first entrepreneurship course taught by professor Szirmai and Vecsenyi together. The word for students in Hungarian means “*to listen*”, which represent quite an old form of teaching methods. It represents an old culture, in which the students’ only duty at the university was “*to listen*” and not disturb the professor. At the end of the semester, the second duty of the student was to pass the exam, whit information he/she has memorised from the book. I did not expect anything different. There was a book written by Janos Vecsenyi, Entrepreneurship, in the syllabus, it was in editorial version just before publication, which we got as handout material. I think this was where magic happened. Peter Szirmai was not only talking

about theory, but brought plenty of stories and real-life examples. I started my first business in 1999, and the class, I realised, provided answers for most of my business problems. What I learned there was something useful, and it opened my eyes and mind, left me wanting more and more. János Vecsenyi was a real showman, a fantastic actor, who was a trainer/mentor, and used his skills to make the class as entertaining as possible. He made role-plays in class, challenging students with questions, sharing his fantastic experience from his managerial business life.

The first era of the Entrepreneur course can be characterized by a traditional, standard frontal teaching class, with all the cons like formal classes, final exams from the book, student who are supposed to be listeners only. Because of the first two professors' teaching skills, it became an immediate success and triggered the development of the subject. They had to figure out how to keep up with the demand. They changed the model that can be described with the two parts rooted back to the medieval times: lectures and seminars. This form fits for the humanities perhaps, but in the case of such a vibrant and practice-oriented subject as entrepreneurial skill, it is useless. This was the reason why the two professors aimed to reorganize the whole teaching method.

1.2. Educate the next generation of teachers

The second part of the development was to educate the next generation of teachers. As it was mentioned before, the growing need among the students for this course, and the capabilities made it inevitable to increase the capacity of the Department. Professor Szirmai and professor Vecsenyi had to teach lecturers leading seminars, in light of the need to standardise quality and assure that at each seminar, the same problems are touched and the same knowledge transfer happens, by and large. They developed teaching handouts for all classes. However, it became quite clear from the beginning that this is not enough to ensure equivalent quality. In the next step, they invited seminar leaders to take part in the development of the course. Their plan was based on the idea that if somebody takes part in study material development, they will own the course, and this common work produces a special feeling, enthusiasm among the teachers to teach better. Recently, this method seems quite straightforward, but it was not so easy in those times. The practice at that time was quite rigid and harsh, there was a strong hierarchy between the professors and the other teachers. One of the anecdotal evidences was when a professor asked the assistant professor to erase the board behind her at another department. Professor Szirmai and Professor Vecsenyi teared this kind of method and looked at other members of the Department as partners, which was quite a brave step at the university. Due to these methods, the course was quite

a great success, the teachers were more involved and more motivated. Within 3 years, the class grew to 250-300 students / semester with 2 professors and 7 seminar leaders (most of whom were active entrepreneurs from businesses.)

For example, in 2011, the students' feedback proved that even when the methods and course material is the same for every seminar, lecturer performance does make a huge difference. Students evaluate courses on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is excellent and 1 is failed.

Table 1: Students' feedback

Source: Autumn semester of academic year 2011/2012, Halvel feedback

Seminars Leader name	Student number attended seminar	Enjoyed class	Lecturer was prepared	Summary grade of lecturer
Pál Breuer	40	3,7	3,7	3,76
László Csepregi	39	4,26	4,71	4,53
Gábor Kerékgyártó	27	4,09	4,5	4,18
Gábor Kerékgyártó	22	4,19	4,31	4,31
Ágnes Bernadett Kiss	19	3,92	4,38	4,08
Orsolya Melicher	40	4,18	4,44	4,18
Katalin Mihalkovné Szakács	40	4,53	4,75	4,6
Katalin Mihalkovné Szakács	39	4,58	4,95	4,76
Attila István Petheő	40	4,93	4,85	4,8
Attila István Petheő	39	4,82	4,95	4,82

1.3. Practice-oriented classes

The third step in the history of the teaching methods at the Department and the aim of this new and exciting course was to develop not only an understanding of business and its supporting theories and concepts, but to stimulate and encourage entrepreneurial thinking and development.

The Department was surrounded by entrepreneurs developing new concepts and ideas, stimulating others to follow them or to stand and ad-

mire their achievements. Every member of the Department is surrounded by opportunity. The key is to realise that when “*opportunity knocks*” you, as an individual, have the ability and knowledge to unlock its value.

The main objectives of this learning experience were to create an understanding of the nature of entrepreneurship and the contributions entrepreneurial ventures make to the economy. It also aimed to identify and evaluate characteristics of prospective entrepreneurs, their industry and competitive environments. All of this was in order to appraise their chances for success, assist course members to evaluate their own entrepreneurial potential and probable levels of commitment. The course also provided practical knowledge on starting and managing new ventures, and tried to refocus career objectives for becoming job creators instead of job searchers.

The whole program was designed to be very practice based, where students will be actively encouraged to develop their ideas in a series of workshops that will be run throughout the course. The course provided lectures, case discussions, and experiential learning opportunities around four major issues:

- The Entrepreneurial Perspective focuses on the individual (the entrepreneur), the organization (the entrepreneurial venture), the process and the environment (the international arena).
- Creating and starting the venture provides an insight on collecting and creating business ideas and making a business plan.
- Financing new venture presents the business model of a new venture and gives tips to finance the new venture.
- Managing, developing, and ending the new venture deals with issues of interest of most entrepreneurs such as launching the new venture, establishing the management structure, coping with crisis, and driving for growth.

In order to provide a more sophisticated viewpoint, the Department expanded perspectives and entrepreneurs were invited as guest speakers. These entrepreneurs embraced all kinds of industries and activities. It was part of our strategy not to link a special industry, but to give a broad spectrum of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. The members of the Department knew the riskiness of this kind of strategy, since the acknowledgment of an industry could be very important. However, our standpoint was that the Department had to get involved in the distribution of labour within the university and the task of other departments to give specific industrial knowledge.

The focus of the department was the development of teaching methods, which meant to incentivise the students to take part in the courses. The

goal of the improvement was for the students to break away from the listener position. For the sake of this target, they got plenty of assignments to keep them busy all the time. The list of assignments is as follows:

- Collecting business idea (Individual assignment)
- Creating business concept (Individual assignment)
- Collect and present information on the procedure of starting a new venture in your home country (Individual assignment)
- Preparing a case study in writing about an entrepreneur and his/her venture. (Individual assignment)
- Create a business plan for a company (Group assignment)

Thanks to the many seminar leaders who actively took part in the assignment, the subject became more colourful. It must be mentioned here that there was a healthy competition among seminar leaders, and the fruitful result of the competition was a better evaluation by the students at the end of the semester, not just for the whole course, but for the leaders of the seminars as well.

Of course, the development process had some hiatus, and there were several cons as well. Firstly, students felt that there was too much burden on them, that there were too many and too difficult assignments. Because of this, group works had a lack of happiness and joy. Even when students received detailed guidelines for homework, they did not feel comfortable. Moreover, group work was not common at the university, so they found it difficult to form groups and work together on regular basis.

The other problem encountered during the courses was the frequent change of the materials. As a result of the learning process of the lecturers, the optimum solution was not changing more than 3 class materials in a semester. The greatest disaster happened when the teachers sent out students to banks for collecting financing opportunities. Branch offices of banks around university block received 500 similar inquiries in one week. Finally, bank employees solved all the assignments, giving the students ready-made solution, so the only work left for the students was to hand it in.

We, at the Department, firmly believe that the best assignment is to prepare a case study about a real entrepreneur. This assignment forces students to leave the safe environment of the university walls - they have to find an entrepreneur and make an interview them. It develops communication skills and opens their eyes and mind when they hear a real entrepreneur's story. While they prepare the case study out of entrepreneur's story, they usually find the takeaway alone.

What we experienced was the students growing need to listen to guest entrepreneurs (guest speakers) for every class. The teachers, however, perceive the guest speakers as a little dull. In order to make students pay

attention to the guest speaker, they have to write a thank you notice to the entrepreneur after class. This helps learning from the guest, as they have to write about what was surprising, what was meaningful for them, and how good was the presenter.

1.4. Participant-centred learning

The Department, in developing its teaching methods, strictly followed the leading American business schools, particularly the Harvard Business School, which is ahead of all schools in teaching. The HBS changed their flagship course from General management to Entrepreneurial management. They prepared cases from a large budget, and the prepared time plan for every class included a detailed board plan. The professors were very experienced and professional, with a lot of help from teaching assistants, who were taking notes and minutes of the class.

Our department also tried to implement some study elements with limited success. We also formed study groups (3-5 students) in which students had to read the case and prepare for the class together, answering questions, working out solutions. Also, the case studies were translated into English, and some Harvard cases were bought to use in class. The textbook used as a basic reading was written by Robert D. Hisrich (2005), titled "*Entrepreneurship*". Compared to European and local cases, we did not have success teaching Harvard cases. Frankly speaking, the reason for this was that the staff was not familiar enough with the method of teaching Harvard cases. Most of the Harvard cases were above the level of Master programs, and students without working experience are not the right audience for this case methodology.

Besides, another cause for the decline in the number of students attending our courses should be mentioned. The Entrepreneurship titled course became common in many programs, so it was not so "sexy" for students anymore. Therefore, less students were selecting entrepreneurship course as elective.

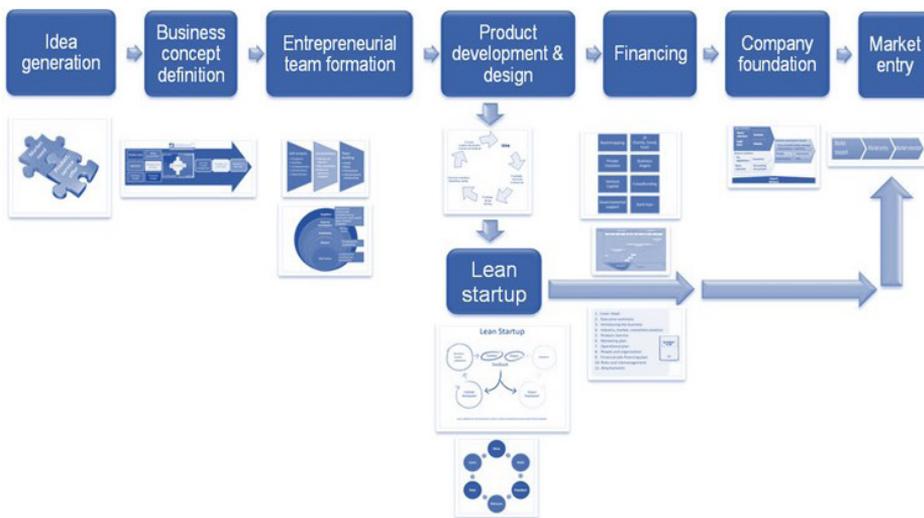
The response of the Department was to shift the focus of the course in order to gain more students again. The two types of courses, the English and the Hungarian ones, were separated, not just in language but in scope as well. The English version became a start-up navigator, and most of the course is about start-up ecosystems. Start-ups are very trendy, so many students wanted to learn about them. On the other hand, the Hungarian course shifted from getting to know an entrepreneur towards the aspect of developing a new business. Vecsenyi – Petheő (2017) prepared a new course book, titled "*Start new venture smart*". 12 steps from the idea to market (Vállalkozz okosan. 12 lépés az ötlettől a piacig). Beside our text-

book, Vecsenyi prepared a Business Concept Map, a roadmap for students on how to enter the market.

The authors visited the European entrepreneurship colloquium on participant centred learning at Harvard Business School, led by Howard Stevenson, and came back with a lot of motivation and hope that is also possible to do as good as they do. The problem experienced on this study tour was that it is hard to adapt the fantastically supportive business environment the United States has to the Hungarian circumstances. The market opportunities and possibilities, the business-friendly mentality of the society on the other side of the pond is not comparable to that of Hungarians. The main task ahead of the Department was to figure out how to contribute to bridging the gap and support the development process of this part of the economy. In order to find a solution a roadmap was developed, which became the spine of the renewed course, filled with practical local examples.

Figure 2: Roadmap of the Entrepreneurship course

Source: Own construction



All the courses followed this roadmap, and students had modified assignments, like testing viability, doing market research, designing one pager and preparing for an elevator pitch. There were plenty of lessons learned in this period. With help of an IT developer, an online software was developed called startmybusiness123.com, where students had to answer questions, and from the answers, a mini business plan comes into existence.

This simple software had a lot of difficulties. We had to simplify reality, narrow down choices, and continuously correct bugs. Students were not happy with the solution, and results were hard to mark by professors. After

a time, there was a lack of support from the university, and we were not motivated to finance it ourselves. Time flies very fast over software, so it should be started from scratch again for modernisation. Guest speakers worked well, the new course book also, but the roadmap was not easy to follow, as there were different types of students in the class. Three segments of students can be identified:

- The first segment were *Future hunters* (curious, open, uncertain). They only need to get familiar with why entrepreneurship is important in your life and for society. For them, the course provides practical knowledge on starting a new business.
- The second segment were *Future riders* (wants to start business later, needs orientation, needs to prepare). For them, the course focuses to inspire and encourage entrepreneurial thinking, to learn business language and entrepreneurial behaviour, to refocus career objectives to become an entrepreneur.
- The third segment were *Start-up drivers* (wants to start as soon as possible, wants to try, wants to gain real life experience). For them, we offered extra out-of-class activity to participate in a start-up VIP program. In this program, students were working on their own idea. Doing market research, feasibility study, elevator pitch and participate in the Danube Cup competition.

This program invited students from other universities and became international thanks to the effort of a dedicated team. Most of the students are in the first two segments, so we are not allowed to concentrate only on future talents.

2022 was the last year we used this roadmap. As you can see from feedback, we were nearly perfect, so it is a hard decision to give up and start with a new, project based teaching in 2023.

Table 2: Students' feedback

Source: Halvel 2022 (Halvel is exchanged by MyView at the end of 2022.)

Seminars Leader name	Student number attended seminar	Lecturer was prepared	Suggest others the course	Learned a lot on this course	Summary grade of lecturer
István Csendes	36	4,88	4,38	4,33	4,54
Gábor Kerékgyártó	31	4,35	4,4	4,12	4,27
Gábor Kerékgyártó	27	4,62	4,35	4,45	4,5
Attila István Petheő	130	4,94	4,9	4,88	4,94
Attila István Petheő	36	4,91	4,91	4,83	4,91
Attila István Petheő	36	5	4,97	4,93	4,93
Krisztofer Szabó	36	4,95	4,95	4,86	4,95

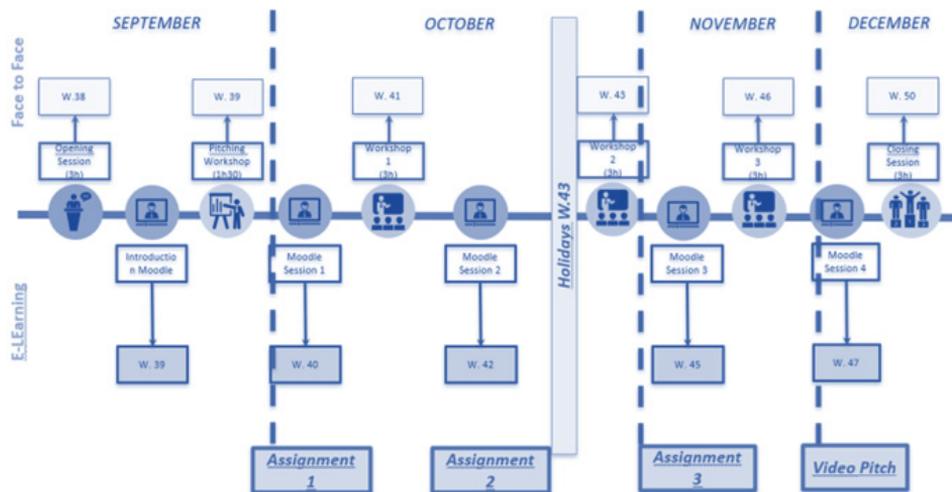
1.5. Blended learning (mirrored class) – The experience of ESSCA

The development of teaching methods got a great impetus from ESSCA works at Budapest. ESSCA has five campuses around the world, and students should study at least one semester abroad during their studies.² Every semester, plenty of French students arrive to the Budapest campus to study English courses not offered at home. It was very good traditional teaching, but because of institution accreditation, ESSCA management decided to turn several classes into the form of blended learning. This way, they can guarantee the same quality on every campus, and the courses are homogeneous everywhere. In France, a group of professors developed course material, recorded videos with ppts, selected several videos to implement into the course. After the course materials were ready, they prepared a substantial amount of multiple-choice questionnaires (MCQ) to measure student performance. They also developed guidelines for local lectures and grading forms. When it was ready, it was uploaded to Moodle and was launched for the first time.

Moodle was a very good platform for this, several features are used currently which were not used before. The professor could follow progress and summarize received points automatically. They also prepared a roadmap for the course, see below.

Figure 3: Course roadmap

Source: ESSCA



² I had the privilege that Escca University (France) invited me to teach entrepreneurship at its Budapest Campus.

Every second week is e-learning (students do not attend class) - previously these were the classes where professors had a lecture about theory. Students have to watch videos which are obligatory, and there are other videos offered if they get interested in the topic. On other weeks, students attend classes and lecturers are guest entrepreneurs who act like mentors. They are helping students to reach the course goal. The final goal is to prepare a 90 seconds long video pitch about a business idea, one that did not exist before. They have to get seed financing and have to develop a business concept during the semester.

Teaching for the first time in mirrored classes was very uncomfortable. In this special case, at the whole campus altogether, 300 students were selecting this course. In Budapest only one class had 18 students. In other campuses, the number of students vary between 12 and 30. The second semester was much easier, as lot of the initial fears were not valid. A lot of assumptions were not true at all. The small group is ideal if students are motivated, because the free-rider symptom appears in a larger class. Altogether there are 5 main reasons for using blended learning:

- Standard quality of the course is easily reached
- Inexperienced lecturers can run the class with low effort
- Professors only have the role of mentor, he/she is not the centre of the course
- MCQ and assignments force continues studying
- More Covid safe, as less contact is needed with students

It would be a mistake to forget the difficulties of blended learning that can also be experienced, and what kept us away from blended learning in post Covid times. Less contact with students makes courses very impersonal. There is also less possibility to control the process, and less opportunity to get to know them. Students do not like long and boring videos, so they watch it at double the speed, or only watch the first 5 minutes.

Only a team can develop such a big material. Videos need to be refreshed, recut, remade frequently, a lot of background material is needed, the technology used is not professional compared to commercial or studio videos. For high quality act and video cut, financing is not available at universities.

Conclusion, hybrid teaching is probably the future

We always had to keep an eye on business trends, and we did our best to implement popular tools and methodology in our course. These tools are useful, but not easy to integrate into a course. We integrated Alberto Silva (2011) - Prototype it, into the process. This was more interesting for

engineering students. We also implemented Bill Aulet's (2013, 2017) Disciplined Entrepreneurship process in the course. There are several phenomena which are widely used, but did not exist earlier, for example beach head market, life time value, cost of customer acquisition, persona etc.

We are not allowed to talk about entrepreneurship without Eric Ries's (2013) lean start-up model. Although we have our own Business Concept Map, we have to teach students how to use the Business Model Canvas by Osterwalder (2010). After we included start-ups in our programs, Steve Blank's (2012) book about start-ups became part of the course. Validation got into the highlight, so we use Robert Fitz's Mom test as well.

We accumulated large experience in entrepreneurship teaching. We are facing challenges on how to teach the next generation of lecturers. What kind of lecturers do we need? Regular PhD students or active entrepreneurs or good researchers. Which way should we go on? Should we force online teaching? What is the right class size? Should we reach out for more students or should we focus on excellent ones? Online is not good enough, therefore we need hybrid teaching. Some parts of the course should happen online like MCQ, short videos, cross boarder teamwork. But we need to meet personally, introduce them local heroes (entrepreneurs), teach them skills to gain experience in solving problems.

The entrepreneurship course needs great professors, who run the shows, and we need lecturers / mentors who drive small seminars. We also need up to date course materials, which need to be continuously developed by teams. It is impossible to develop quality material alone. Lately, we started to add new tools to the course in the form of special workbooks. These workbooks are sample forms for a real case, to drive students through processes. It contains a sample and an empty form sheet. It has a guideline as well, for example on how to do validation, how to prepare a prototype. One of the main target of the Department is to incentivise others to share their best practices, to improve quality of teaching and to be able to develop students' skills. Entrepreneurship courses should move to the category of *"need to have"* instead of *"nice to have"*.

We started with frontal lecturing, shifted towards case study Harvard Business School methodology and ended up in blended learning (mirrored classroom). Our common experience is that all methodology is suitable to teach entrepreneurship, if they are containing practice-oriented assignments. All courses should include entrepreneurial language in the study programme. In the case of mirrored classrooms, students are bored of long videos, and not meeting them every week makes it less efficient in the aspect of control and keeping their motivation during semester. The biggest advantage of blended learning compared to the other two methodologies is that different classes receive similar quality. In frontal and case study

methodology, the quality of education is largely dependent on the quality and credibility of the professor/lecturer.

The assumptions are only valid if we look at general entrepreneurship courses. Courses like business planning or social entrepreneurship require much more practice-oriented classes (including guest entrepreneurs, field trips, etc.). In my case, from the large numbers of standard frontal teaching to the blended learning in mini classes, I was trying to find the best ways to satisfy students' needs. I would like to share some of these experiences with colleagues, who likely face similar challenges in entrepreneurship teaching.

At ESSCA University small classes (10-15 students) were taught, but it runs parallel in every campus, with altogether 300 students. With mirrored classroom, video materials are on the Moodle platform with MCQs, and professors only have the role of a mentor. There is an entrepreneurial project with a video pitch at the end of the course. At Corvinus Cems international program, introduction to small businesses shifted into a start-up navigator, where students learned more about entrepreneurial ecosystems and have assignments to understand start-ups (born global companies). Teaching in small groups was easier and also popular with students.

According to the feedback of Spring 2019, Loretta Huszák, the course leader was prepared (5.0), they would advise others to take the course (4.57), and summary evaluation was 4,43.

At Corvinus BA (Bachelor) program, in the course for starting and managing a small business, the main focus shifted from getting to know an entrepreneur (case study) to the business concept map, which focuses on practical steps before registering a business entity and entering the market.

Continuous development is welcome, but I am concerned whether we are not losing a lot of value by forgetting traditional teaching.

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