



TELE

Teaching Entrepreneurship – Learning Entrepreneurship

Research of entrepreneurship teaching and learning in Iceland



**SÍMENNTUNARMIÐSTÖÐIN
Á VESTURLANDI**



Erasmus+

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1 Entrepreneurship workshops/courses in Iceland

In Iceland the emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurship started to grow pretty fast at the same time. Milestones are e.g. a national wide business plan competition, organized by the New Business Venture Fund and some other major organizations in the Icelandic business environment. This competition went over five years. A little later, there was founded the “Entrepreneurship foundation”, a non profit foundation, also run by major organizations with the goal to enhance entrepreneurship in Icelandic secondary schools and universities. In the years 2003 and 2004 the west Icelandic business development organization (www.ssv.is) participated in a NPP project called “Young Entrepreneurship Factory” in cooperation with some other Nordic countries.

1.1 Lifelong Learning Centers (LLC)

As result of the big economic collapse in Iceland end of the year 2008, unemployment in Iceland went from basically zero up to about 10% in just few months. To minimize the damage, the government decided to put much effort and money to fight this new situation. One of the means that was decided was, that unemployed people should be obliged to attend various seminars. E.g. were many sent to computer seminars, seminars to strengthen the self confidence, migrants were also sent to language seminars and so on – all financed with governmental money under the umbrella of the Ministry of Welfare (where the directorate of labor www.vmst.is belongs to). In this situation, the LLC in west Iceland (Símenntunarmiðstöðin á Vesturlandi) and the Directorate of labor in Akranes, West Iceland, had discussions with the Minister and CIO of the Directorate of labor in Reykjavik and presented the idea of using entrepreneurship workshops as a seminar that could help unemployed individuals to set personal goals and strengthen the self confidence in looking for a job. This was argued with the fact, that such workshops had been held for years all over Iceland and had been very successful. The ministry and the Directorate of labor accepted that the LLC center and the Directorate of labor for West Iceland in Akranes should plan and implement such workshops as a pilot project.

Since then, here have been held about 15 workshops in the area with 150 participants. What are their methods?

Most of the LLC’s in Iceland offer workshops and seminars in Entrepreneurship or related issues on a regular basic.

1.1.1 Methods and content of the workshops/courses

Methods are theoretical inputs, lectures, presentations, interactive learning e.g. group work, cooperative work, learning by doing, visits to companies and organizations, visits from guest lecturer. The most active LLC in this field is the one in West Iceland (TELE partner) but most of the LLC’s around the country every now and then offer such workshops.

Entrepreneurship Workshops aim to strengthen each individual and help him or her to set clear goals.

Entrepreneurial work is both enjoyable and challenging. Each group puts together a simple business plan that is presented in a power point presentation at the end of the workshop. The groups usually prepare promotional materials such as brochure and website and if possible, they also make a simple "online" poll.

The main topics of the workshop are: searching and developing ideas, goal setting and planning actions, product development, market research and marketing, finance, administration and management, promotion and sales techniques.

The main benefits to participants in the workshops are:

- Understanding of the life and work of entrepreneurs
- Insights into the world of business and the basic methods of how to start and operate an own business.
- Techniques on how to make a good business plan.
- Methods on how to set personal- and business goals and how to put them in action.
- Work together with creative and positive people.

Work in entrepreneurship workshops is basically practical and not theoretical – it is about learning by doing with the assistance from the coach. Participants identify and develop a small business or NGO, often related to their field of interest and within the own community. Many of them discover own abilities that they didn't even know they had.

1.1.2 Are they successful?

There is an ongoing intensive evaluation where each participant is called and interviewed. First results show very positive results and this despite the fact, that the participants were obliged to attend the workshop. Almost 70% were very happy or happy with the seminar and the coach. Asked what they believed to have learned, most mentioned better organizing ability, more initiative, learning how to build a simple homepage and in general knowledge on how to start and run a business. Asked if the workshop had strengthen the participant in finding a job, 20% answered with very much or much, but the ways majority was neutral. Almost 50% would have had a second, advanced workshop. Over 60% expressed the opinion, that the workshops would help and strengthen unemployed people in looking for a job. From all the attendants that were reached, 80% already had found a job or started own business (3). This is though not to be seen as direct result of the workshops! About 35% said, they had came on a business idea in the seminar that they would like to work on later.

The evaluation also includes personal comments from participants, and far most of them aver very positive.

1.2 Innovation Center Iceland

1.2.1 Methods and content of the workshops/courses

Innovation Center Iceland offers a variety of courses in the fields of management, innovation and service provision. Online courses are also offered to participants free of charge. Just to mention the most important courses related to entrepreneurship:

- A course for women with a business idea that want to bring them to fruition and for women that are already in business and want to extend their operational knowledge.
- Extended course for women in business, where they get instruction, personal guidance and help to deepen their knowledge on the operation of their business.
- Women looking for foreign expansion. A course on foreign expansion with a special emphasis on product development.
- A practical course on running a business with an emphasises on development of ideas, marketing, management and financing.
- A course about the fundamental aspects on establishing and managing a business, for example; sale, marketing, business plans and tax issues.
- A project aimed to support diverse job creations out in rural Iceland
- Entrepreneurs and management. A course that is a co-operative venture between Innovation Center Iceland and Directorate of Labour for job applicants.
- A course for individuals that work in retailing and those who plan to establish a business or import products.
- A course where participants are trained in strategic thinking. It is for those who want to discover creative ideas and get a chance to work with them, and get to know the work and life of entrepreneurs.
- Online course about the making of budget- and business plan. The course is for free and open to everyone.

The courses have been run for over 10 years and have turned out to be very successful. Thousands of participants have learned the basics of entrepreneurship and many new businesses have been born. Also many of the participants already had started small businesses, but have used the courses to improve their knowledge and learn to know other entrepreneurs.

1.2.1.1 Grants and support

Specialists at Innovation Center Iceland can mentor entrepreneurs and small businesses on possible routes for financing at the first stages of implementation of their business ideas. Innovation Center Iceland oversees allocations from several funds, in addition to possessing detailed information on other funding sources. As examples we can mention:

- **Action for Job Creation:** Grants to innovation projects and marketing activities of entrepreneurial and innovation start-up businesses, which could receive further funding from funds and investors.
- **Enterprise Investment Fund:** Grants to businesses operating in regional Iceland for development of services or products, either for the domestic market or for export.
- **Support to entrepreneurs:** Grants to individuals and SMEs in regional Iceland for implementation of innovative ideas.

- **Step Ahead:** Grants to businesses in regional Iceland, whereby consultancy costs are subsidized.
- **Power to work:** Collaborative project between Innovation Center Iceland and the Labour Directorate which makes it easier for businesses to hire job-seekers.

1.2.1.2 Incubator Centers.

Innovation Center Iceland operates four Incubator Centers in Reykjavik. Around 100 companies are located there. More info in this short [video](#).

1.3 What is working in practice and what is not and why?

Both the governmental organization and the LLC's have developed very effective and good programs for entrepreneurs. The governmental Innovation Center focuses on entrepreneurs who already have ideas and partly also on entrepreneurs who already have started a business. The LLC's focus more on disadvantaged groups like unemployed people and school dropouts.

2 Best practices

2.1 Course from a formal education institution

The universities in Iceland offer entrepreneurship workshops and some of the Upper secondary schools also do. For the last five years, there has been growing focus on finding ways to increase the entrepreneurial mindset within the universities. The Reykjavik business university (www.ru.is) has been leading in this field, but also the Bifröst university, located close to Borgarnes in West Iceland, has been innovative in this field.

2.2 Course from a non-formal education institution/organization

The Innovation center and the LLC's (see above).

2.3 Pilot workshop/project where they are trying out some new ideas/methods/contents.

The LLC's in Iceland (see above)

3 Target group analysis

3.1 The needs of our target groups

3.1.1 Immigrants

The immigrants often have the entrepreneurial mindset and many of them have good education and experience. What they often need is knowledge of the local business environment and insight into the business language.

3.1.2 School-dropouts

The school dropouts usually lack basic insight into the entrepreneurial mindset and also they lack insight into the business environment. They also often need to deal with lack of self confidence.

3.1.3 Participants in Adult Education seminars

In the typical adult education seminars, people often need personal coaching, insight into the basic methodology of starting own business and marketing / financial training.

3.2 Short description of the target group

3.2.1 Immigrants

The immigrants participating in workshops that the LLC's offer are unemployed people, usually young adults and middle aged. Many of them are not motivated and have no education but another part is very motivated and good educated.

3.2.2 School-dropouts

The situation of the target group is usually, that if the situation on the labor market gets worse, they are among the first ones to be affected and loose the job they may have. If the situation gets better on the labor market, this group still tends to be overseen by the businesses. In this target group we have often noticed the following characteristic:

- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Dyslexia
- Attention-deficit disorder
- Hyperactive

3.2.3 Participants in Adult Education seminars

Here we have a very broad publicum, but many are people who already have a business idea and want to develop it or people already running a small business but want to increase the skills in i.e. marketing, financial planning and goal setting.

3.3 How can we tailor the existing methods/contents to meet their needs?

In this project flexibility seems to be very important. The main methods will be developed in the handbook, the video and in the three modules solutions. But the different target groups may have special needs that should be taken in consideration to meet the needs of different target groups.

3.4 Which methods would fit them best?

It will be a challenge to develop methods that fit different target groups but at the same time have the same basic content.

3.5 Who will be our target groups – a first idea?

Unemployed young adults as main target group, but secondary targets groups could be immigrants, school dropouts and other disadvantaged groups.

4 Existing political strategies and concepts, policies and institutions in the field of entrepreneurship and fostering business initiatives.

Enhancing Entrepreneurship is seen as priority in Iceland like in many other countries. Several non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and governmental institutions work on this field. All the biggest universities offer courses in entrepreneurship and innovation. Also some profit orientated companies offer courses and consulting to entrepreneurs and the biggest banks offer different grants for entrepreneurs, usually amounts from 5-10.000 €. It is not possible to describe, all those different organizations within the frame of this project.

4.1 Institutions that service entrepreneurs in Iceland.

4.1.1 Innovation Center Iceland (“Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands)

[Innovation Center](#) Iceland is a leading, governmental R&D and business support institute in Iceland.

4.1.2 Rannis - The Icelandic Centre for Research

Supports research, innovation, education and culture in Iceland. [RANNIS](#) cooperates closely with the [Icelandic Science and Technology Policy Council](#) and provides professional assistance in the preparation and implementation of the national science and technology policy.

4.1.3 The Regional Office of Development

The Icelandic [Regional Development Institute](#) is an institution owned by the Icelandic state.

Its operations are aimed at strengthening settlements in rural areas.

The Institute supports eight industrial regional development agencies.

4.1.4 Cultural fundings

Every region has cultural fundings available that is funded by the government and municipalities. Through this funding you can apply for everything that is connected to culture in every sense of the word.

4.1.5 Six Regional growth fundings (grants)

Contracts that the government has made with the municipalities.

4.1.6 Women entrepreneurs

the Ministry of Welfare gives grants to women entrepreneurs who have good business plans.