

Factsheet: Company Programme

Background: The importance of entrepreneurial education

Today's job market is more competitive than ever, and employers expect high levels of entrepreneurial skills from the next generation of employees. Unfortunately, many students do not have the opportunity to learn and develop in these areas, leaving them to struggle in the real world.

Less than **5%** of young people in Europe participate in entrepreneurship education in school

(Source from European Commission)

Benefits of early-stage entrepreneurship education

- are 4-5 times more likely to start their own businesses;
- have an easier time securing a job than their peers;
- earn higher salaries;
- are more motivated in their careers than their peers;
- show more self-confidence;
- make better higher education choices;
- have higher rates of employability.

Company Programme

JA Company Program brought the theory of business to life by using volunteers, serving in the role of consultants and mentors, to help young people create and manage a mini-company. For nearly 90 years, this experience enjoyed tremendous success as Junior Achievement's signature programme offering across the globe. In Europe the Company Programme is among the most successful concepts that the EU has identified in its search for education strategies that can aid long-term growth and employability.

Oscar Lundin and Benjamin Kainz are now 23 and 22, but they started their own company two years ago. It is called **Young Care**. The company builds bridges between the older and younger generations by inspiring young people to work in the care sector, with senior citizens. 'Young Care' recruit and train students from secondary school as 'social consultants'. The company has 400 employees in 2009 and has contracts with residences for senior citizens across Sweden. Oscar and Benjamin had their first entrepreneurial experience in a mini-company programme at school.

Cuddledry Ltd. is thriving business based in Southwest England.

The owner, Helen Woodridge, started off in 2006 at age 35 with a hooded designer bath towel for babies. Now the company is international and manufactures and retails a range of organic baby and child-care products. Products are made from eco-friendly fibers and sold with minimal packaging. She says her mini-company experience in secondary school inspired her.

JA-YE mini-companies

- 37 countries - most wide spread programme in Europe
- different approaches are available for different target ages and complemented by other learning-by-doing programmes from age 6 and up.
- the largest enrolment is at the 16-18 year-old range with a full-year course at an average of 2-4 class hours per week.
- 260,000 students every year work with advisors and mentors from the business world.
- Ministries of Education endorse the programmes and determine placement in the curriculum and teachers receive training.

The teachers

- gives the class the task to form a student company—or perhaps several student companies.
- first the students go through an extensive idea-generation phase to come up with a good product/service concept. It is important that it is the students' own idea.
- they work as a team and formally create their mini-company. They plan and organize how they will produce and market their concept.
- then they have to “sell” their idea to parents, family and friends in an effort to raise start-up capital through shares.

The students

- move into production/development work, going to market and selling their concept to customers in the local community. In this sense, they are being tested by people other than their teachers.
- they have to handle standard business operations and reporting such as keeping the accounts. And throughout the year, they will participate in company fairs and competitions for a variety of prizes and awards.
- their success or failure is as much determined by their work in the classroom as their work in the neighborhood. They liquidate their operations at the end of the school year, produce an annual report and pay dividends to shareholders.

Business people

- are engaged as volunteer mentors or advisors.
- are business owners/entrepreneurs or employees from companies
- visit the school and also communicate with the students online.
- are a source of practical advice and experience as well as encouragement and motivation throughout the year.
- Act as role models

"After doing this mini- company project, I've been thinking about it. I wouldn't have achieved the grades I did in marketing and economics if it hadn't been for the mini-company. When I had to write this business plan, I had to look things up in my textbooks. I realized I had a connection with what was in the book!"



"I got something else out of it than grades. It was all personal characteristics and confidence. You get a completely different perspective on things like theory. You know—the guys who sit and lean their chairs back and are not so interested in any subjects? Suddenly they're interested because they have an important role to play."



Success factors

- there is a clear structure and framework with learning milestones throughout the mini-company experience
- the school and their teacher are fully involved
- the focus is learning-by-doing and the practical application of students' basic skills
- they see recognition and respect from the "real world"
- engagement with business people from a variety of sectors
- the mini-company is real and not a simulation or a game
- students see the connection between their studies and the world outside

What do teachers' say?



- mini-companies enhance students' skills and key competences
- students show improved problem solving ability
- their cooperation and decision-making skills are strengthened
- students apply their knowledge of math, science, technology and languages in new ways in order to succeed
- students' understanding of business and economics gets better
- their attitude towards starting their own business later on is more positive
- mini-companies move students into the 'real world'
- students are truly challenged to compete, to take initiative, to analyze information, to organize, to perform, to communicate, to take responsibility and to cope with crises