

Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA)  
Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK)  
Confederation of German Retailers (HDE)  
German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH)  
Federation of German Industries (BDI)  
Federation of German Wholesale and Foreign Trade (BGA)  
German Federal Association of Liberal Professions (BFB)  
German Farmers' Association (DBV)



## Educational Task:

### Entrepreneurial Thinking and Acting

#### Importance

Entrepreneurial competence has always been a basic skill of successful people in the trades and in all professions. An evaluation of future labor markets confirms that the application of entrepreneurial competence must increase dramatically. Structural market changes suggest that the emerging service sector will favor entrepreneurial inventiveness.

During a cycle of massive unemployment, successful self-employment becomes particularly attractive.

European and national committees have urged the encouragement of entrepreneurial competence at all educational levels. Therefore, such training should also increase at vocational schools.

#### Spectrum of Required Qualifications

Entrepreneurial competence requires specific knowledge, a variety of skills, judgment, and the ability to manage the associated work. To foster these abilities, **education in general** must convey a basic understanding of economics. In addition, students must learn how companies act and interact as well as the function and value of different organizations. This education must also inculcate a positive regard for independent work.

**Vocational training** must convey an appreciation of the employer's position. This includes the understanding that all jobs in a

given enterprise contribute to its success. The ability to appreciate the employer's perspective is particularly helpful in those trades that allow early self-employment. Here, apprentices learn important future skills by observing and by helping with their employers' activities.

**Continuing education** should also further entrepreneurial thought and action. Particularly useful is employer-sponsored management and leadership training which leads to promotion within the company. Seminars that teach the basics of running an independent business should be available to interested students and to independent masters of the various crafts.

## Entrepreneurial Competence in Vocational Education and Training

Companies benefit when **skilled employees work independently**. When acting in their employers' best interest, these employees exhibit entrepreneurial skills which long have been the focus of vocational training. However, self-directed, independent actions must be joined by risk acceptance, a sense of responsibility, the will to work and to succeed, and the ability to grasp the initiative when occasion demands it. This broad spectrum of basic skills and attitudes may be taught in many different ways. Training guides can offer a formal path to the different educational goals.


Individually owned firms and small companies teach these concepts as an **inherent part of doing business**. Here, observation of the employer's business conduct is an integral part of each trainee's daily experience. Medium and large companies are developing concepts and methods that give their trainees a similar experience.

## Major components of such training are:

- Role playing
- Strategic planning games
- Designing descriptive abstracts
- Case studies
- Creation of pseudo companies
- Junior- or student-led enterprises

Desirable basic qualifications for independent thought and action cannot be conveyed in a vacuum. Best use and retention of the above-described exercises result when they indicate clear connections to the trainee's current or future work. Vocational schools should include such exercises in their basic curricula.

Value and need for independent thought and action varies materially between different types of work. Because opportunities are plentiful in retail establishments, in the crafts, in farming, and in the service sector, a trainee's ability to think and to act independently can be encouraged from the outset.

		<h3>An Educational Mandate: Encouraging Entrepreneurial Thought and Action</h3>	
Achieve Entrepreneurial Thought and Action with...		Required Actions	
General Schooling	Coach to achieve a favorable basic attitude	Add economics to students' curriculum and to teacher training	
General	Encourage students and employees to view the workplace from the employer's perspective	Promote key competences and integrate them with course content	
<b>Training</b>		Encourage suitable plans and methods	
Specific	Offer job-specific guidance to independent work	Offer vocational courses with an option of alternate goals and additional training	
Continuing Education	Demonstrate entrepreneurial behavior Model management skills/ leadership/ability to succeed with self-employment	Provide continuous training for specialists	
		Train managers for further advancement	
		Help master craftsmen succeed their trade	
		Offer seminars to aid self-employment	

## Methods for amending current educational policies

1. Building a basic understanding of economic realities to induce a positive view of entrepreneurship through the following concepts:
  - **Curricula** of vocational- and general schools that include courses about the economy and role of small and large firms.
  - Greater focus on **cooperation between schools and employers** after a trainee's transition from school to work.
  - Improved focus on the economy's function during **teacher training**.
  - Development and counseling of **student-formed companies**
2. Tasks of supervisors and trainers:
  - In the context of any given enterprise, entrepreneurial thought and action must become a **basic component** of continued training.
  - A display of basic entrepreneurial skills such as independent actions, willingness to work and contribute, a sense of responsibility, and assumption of reasonable risks should be **acknowledged and rewarded**.
  - An exchange of information between employers and vocational schools intensifies understanding and application of **appropriate concepts and methods**.
  - **Continued education of vocational teachers and company trainers** must focus on entrepreneurial competence.

Curricula and training schedules should not include standardized codes of specific entrepreneurial thoughts and actions. Desirable basic qualifications cover such a complex spectrum that specifics must be selected to suit each training schedule.

This caution applies especially to training for commercial positions and in the service sector. Accommodating all possible facets of entrepreneurial thought and action would unnecessarily dilute course content.

3. There should be no specific instructions for establishing an individually owned business or for the take-over of existing businesses.
  - When specific jobs offer the chance to exit into self-employment, workers may be retained by offering job-specific training that qualifies for promotion.
  - It may be necessary to increase training requirements for merchants in the retail trades.
4. There must be an increased focus on all facets of entrepreneurial competence in on-the-job training, even for employees below the upper management tier.

For those who want to achieve self-employment or those who plan to establish a company, comprehensive training must prepare them for an endeavor.

### Find additional information and sources about this topic at:

Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln (Hrsg.): Jugend innovativ. Köln, 2006

Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft SCHULE WIRTSCHAFT (Hrsg.):  
Unternehmergeist in der Schule. Köln, 2004

Thüringer Institut für Lehrerfortbildung, Lehrplanentwicklung und Medien (Hrsg.):  
Wenn Schüler zu Unternehmern werden: Schülerfirmen. Erfurt, o. J.

Eickhoff, M. Th.: Handwerksmeister als Unternehmer:  
Lösungsvorschläge für ein handwerkspädagogisches Schlüsselproblem. Hamburg, 2006

Kuratorium der Deutschen Wirtschaft für Berufsbildung (Hrsg.):  
Jugendliche, Unternehmen, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft. Bonn, 1984