

## **New Schools for Entrepreneurs and Managers: Education for Female Entrepreneurship**



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### ABSTRACT

*Education and training help to build human capacity for both men and women. It is a key priority area for poverty reduction. The development of contemporary technologies, especially the Internet, on the one hand and changes in management practice, communication and work organization in companies on the other hand, have in recent years brought about changes in the kinds of knowledge and ways of acquiring it. In keeping with these, new educational programs, as well as new modes of studying, everywhere in the world the existing education system is being redefined and educational programs that have to closely relate to practice are being improved. For that sake, "new schools for entrepreneurs and managers" are founded, which are based on modern programs and courses meant for various groups of business people. In this article, the author tried to explain advantages and disadvantages of e-learning with a stress of special benefits for women.*

**KEW WORDS:** *education, educational programs, e-learning, female entrepreneurship*

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## **Introduction**

There is no doubt that the progress made by women in entrepreneurship activities worldwide is an important factor to be taken into consideration when studying economic development and social progress. Namely, entrepreneurship represents an appropriate opportunity for women all over the world, as entrepreneurship responds flexibly to entry, change and innovation. It is for this reason that a lot of countries see women entrepreneurs in SMEs as a hope for providing new blood to the economy. At present, women represent more than one third of all people involved in entrepreneurship activities around the world. Different theoretical approaches to female entrepreneurship show that this field of research is considered very broad. According to different theoretical approaches, different perspectives are offered through which we can expand and challenge our understanding of the women's entrepreneurship and education.

The need to understand entrepreneurial learning and education is critical (Cope, 2003; Gartner and Birney, 2002; Mitchell et al., 2002; Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs, 2003; Rae, 2000) in order to support acquisition of knowledge and skills required for sustainable business development. Yet, research that examines the "complex interactive learning relationship that exists between the entrepreneur, her business and the wider environment" (Cope, 2003: 26) is still in the early stages (Cope, 2003; Minnitti and Bygrave, 2001; Ravasi and Turati, 2005).

## **Education for Female Entrepreneurship**

### **Research and e-Learning Initiatives**

Until recent time's entrepreneurship education, training and development programmes have been gender neutral. Common criticisms of such programmes are that they tend to be male dominated and dismissive of women (Carter, 2000). These programmes are frequently "starts your own business" courses which, in the main, cater for service type industries and micro-enterprises rather than for growth oriented businesses. The current research shows that the level of women entrepreneurs engaging in incubation type programmes, and/or entrepreneurship programmes geared

for high-growth, high-tech sectors is still less than 10% (Elaine Aylward, et. al.2006)

The new educational programs have appeared, as well as new modes of studying. Accordingly, everywhere in the world the existing education system is being redefined and educational programs that have to closely relate to practice are being improved. For that sake, “new schools for entrepreneurs and managers” are founded, which are based on modern programs and courses meant for various groups of business people men and women. Very popular are virtual faculties which are founded all around the world and which enable connection between business people and business students with lecturers from all around the world, no matter where they actually might be. Participating in courses and testing over internet, essentially change previous way of gaining knowledge in classical classrooms.

The above way of learning contributes to fast information exchange, more access to the newest knowledge and experiences in this domain and save the time and money. Consequently, in this millennium the classic way of education will be slowly substituted with some other forms of education. Interactive education should provide a completely new dimension of gaining knowledge. In this context, in many countries there is a variety of research and evaluation around the impact of e-Learning practices in education. Mentioned research and evaluation of e-Learning aims to:

1. Assess the impacts of e-Learning initiatives across the education sector to strengthen planning and implementation
2. Explore e-Learning practices that make a positive difference to learning
3. Support educators to make critical and reflective pedagogical decisions about their use of e-Learning.

### **E-learning Empowers Women**

A study conducted by the World Bank has recently shown that if women in the field of agriculture had the same education as men did, the agricultural yield in developing countries would increase by 6 to 22% (Radović Marković, 2007b). This example, as well as similar ones, invites every rightful reason to focus greater attention to further development of educational programs aimed at women, but also to enhancing contemporary technologies that will improve e-learning.

Distance learning is becoming increasingly attractive for women, as shown by some research studies. Namely, more than 60% of those over 25 years of age and female opt for this type of development and education in the world (Radović Marković, 2006a). The reason for this lies in the fact that this method of learning offers numerous advantages. Among the most prominent benefits, the following may be pointed out:

- a) The flexibility of the learning process (learners study at the time most convenient to them).
- b) Achieving a better balance between personal and other commitments (they may spend more time at home with their families).
- c) Minimizing costs (both time and money savings are made).
- d) A deeper sense of self-fulfillment (acquiring relevant and useful knowledge and achieving professional goals).

Furthermore, women at a certain age, over the age typical for learners (18-22 years of age), consider virtual classrooms to minimize the embarrassment and alienation factor (Capogrossi, 2002). Having in mind that due to fast changes in techniques and technology especially in the last decade of 20th century, new kinds of business and jobs emerged, the need for new knowledge became very clear. Accordingly, everywhere in the world the existing education system is being redefined and educational programs that have to closely relate to practice are being improved. For that sake, “new schools for entrepreneurs and managers” are founded, which are based on modern programs and courses meant for various groups of businesspeople. Very popular are virtual faculties, which are founded worldwide and allow for the connection between businesspeople and business learners and lecturers from all around the world, no matter where they actually might reside. Participating in courses and testing via the Internet, essentially change the previous way of gaining knowledge in classical classrooms. This way of learning contributes to a fast exchange of information, more access to the newest knowledge and experiences in this domain and saves the time and *money*. Thus, in this millennium, the classic way of education will be slowly substituted by some other forms of education, in which learning from homes and offices with the help of computers will be a viable solution. Interactive education should provide a completely new dimension of gaining knowledge making learning faster and easier for those who attend certain courses. It also enables women to choose a certified course, offered by more than 90% of faculties in the

world (Radović Marković, 2007b). Accordingly, women are given the opportunity of choosing some of the programs from a broader range, the ones that best suit their professional interests and goals, without the requirement to move geographically. In other words, women are no longer limited to the local educational institutions, but have at their disposal a more comprehensive choice of educational programs offered worldwide. Studying over the Internet ensures women a permanent development thus reducing the educational gap in comparison to men. At the same time, the social status and life quality of women are being improved. Higher qualifications enable women to contribute more to their community.

The goal of my own work in this area is to offer more ways of encouraging entrepreneurship, including the role of the education system, developing positive attitudes and an active approach towards female entrepreneurship. It is well known that a correlation exists between entrepreneurship and economic performance. But entrepreneurship brings more than this correlation to our societies, because the science is also a vehicle for personal development. In spite of the importance of entrepreneurship for personal and social development, all potentials are not fully being exploited particularly in the European Union (EU). The EU has failed to encourage an enormous number of people to become entrepreneurs. According to the *Eurobarometar*, although 47% of Europeans prefer self-employment, only 17% actually realise their ambitions (European Commission [EC], 2007). As regards the new entrepreneurial initiative, only 4% of Europeans said that they desired to be engaged in setting up a business, and 29% of Europe's SME declared growth as their main ambition (EC). Europe, unlike the United States, suffers from low expansion rates after the start-up. As a rule, women everywhere in the world are starting businesses in the service sectors which are most attractive for them. Also, women, for example, find it much easier to manage companies in the developed countries, while keeping financial stability of business is more difficult in the countries with lower GDP and a "lifetime" of women's enterprises is shorter. According to the age criteria, the usual age of the women who start their own business range from 25 to 34 in less developed countries, and they are not likely to achieve any greater success and respect until they are 35 to 44 years old. In the developed countries the situation is even worse; women choose to start with their own business from age 25 to 44, reaching

the climax of their careers only between the ages of 35 and 54 (Radović-Marković et.al., 2009)..

### **Learning Processes: Online and Face-to-Face Methods**

The number of higher educational institutions that offer online courses has grown significantly (Allen & Seaman, 2005; Maguire, 2005). Carr-Chellman (2005) strongly believe that online education is the fastest growing market segment of adult education today and that growth expectations in future are extraordinary.

Recent research has compared online learning to face-to-face learning (Hoben, Neu, & Castle, 2002), explored the effectiveness of online tools such as discussion boards and chat rooms. Spatariu, Hartley, & Bendixen (2004), addressed evaluating effective online instruction. Graham, Cagiltay, Lim, Craner, & Duffy, (2001) Wentling & Johnson (1999) assessed the value of online courses in specific fields of study. Online courses require participants to take on new and different teaching/learning behaviours; students are empowered to learn on their own. Online courses are usually far more writing-intensive than traditional classes have ever been. In an online course, general discussions, requests for elaboration or assistance, answers to directed questions, group projects, most assignments, and many tests and quizzes are in writing. In addition, online education fosters self-motivated education, giving precedence to the autonomy of the learner. University of Phoenix's FlexNet goes one step further by using a common model (1/3 classroom, 2/3 online) to maximize utilization of its classroom facilities. This improves access by increasing the number of available courses and thus number of students served (Table 1,annex).

Course management and design, the delivery of materials, communicating with students through the use of multimedia, providing an interactive online environment, and the way in which course participants use instructional technology within the course is different from traditional face-to-face instruction.

Distance education teams include administrators, instructional designers, technologists, and instructors/facilitators (Miller, 2001; Williams, 2003). The functions of instructors and facilitators then include being a “facilitator, teacher, organizer, grader, mentor, role model, counsellor, coach, supervisor, problem solver, and liaison” (Riffee, 2003,

Roberson, 2002; Scagnoli, 2001). In other words, the thinking, planning, research, learning, and effort of constructing and teaching an online course rejuvenate many faculty members.

It would seem on the basis of a series of interviews conducted over the past year with women in a number of many US universities who received training via the Women's Entrepreneurship programmes that they improved their skills and knowledge *which is fundamental to business success*.

### **Will Traditional Education Be Replaced by New Modalities of Education?**

Open communication and management approaches will become the driving techniques to enhance learning skills in virtual environments, which will meet new requirements of societies. High quality traditional entrepreneurship education can be used as a means to obtain new skills for entrepreneurs or necessary to foster alternative ways of education. Self-motivation, as a means for people to acquire computer skills, seems to be the major educational component to emphasize when devising an academic entrepreneurship programme.

Future research might determine the effects of mandating computing courses in educational program as a prerequisite to other virtual courses, which may minimize embarrassment. It can be concluded that computer assisted learning (e-learning) through the Internet is the most significant mode of entrepreneurial education particularly for women in managerial positions who tend to be as busy as their male counterparts. In some European countries, such as Serbia and Western Balkan countries, e-learning has evolved; therefore, it is very difficult to consider the cons and pros of the process in this country.

### **Conclusion**

The proponents of educational technology have for years stated that faculties need to focus more on teaching "21st-century skills," such as problem solving, critical thinking, and collaboration. The 21st century learners will need to meet the complex demands of the new economy and society in a globalized form (Radović Marković, 2006-2007). The workplace of tomorrow will increasingly require 21st century learners to

work in teams, collaborating across companies, communities, and continents. Certain skills cannot be developed solely by simple multiple-choice exams. New education programmes for entrepreneurs must be based on exchanging good practice through studies and networks among strategic partners (researchers, entrepreneurs, financiers, advisors, policy-makers, and so forth). To address individual needs of learners, attention must be paid to the adaptability of the curriculum and the learning environment. A worthy institution views quality issues as primary and integral throughout the conceptual design of its education programmes. True quality institutions must govern their curricula, instruction, and support services by policies and standards established to assure future success of the participants (Capogrossi, 2002). In many occasions, the assessment and examination vehicles have been evaluative measures of knowledge and competencies of learners measured against learning objectives derived from the needs of the industry and professions. Successful institutions must design their learning objectives to serve the demonstrated needs of the desired student audience. The academic and professional needs of the student audience will be at the foundation of the curriculum, and the subject matter objectives will become the focus of a quality control process (Capogrossi, 2007).

In summary, education and training play an important role in human development by empowering people to improve their well-being and participate actively in nation building. Education and training help to build human capacity for both men and women. It is a key priority area for poverty eradication and reduction. However, lack of appropriate skills cannot lead directly to prosperity. The development of contemporary technologies, especially the Internet and GSM, on the one hand, as well as changes in management practice, communication and work organization in various contemporary organisations on the other hand, have in recent years brought about changes in the kinds of knowledge and ways of acquiring it.

In keeping with the above, new educational programs have appeared, as well as new modes of studying. Accordingly, everywhere in the world the existing education system is being redefined and educational programs that have to closely relate to practice are being improved. For that sake, “new schools for entrepreneurs and managers” are founded, which are based on modern programs and courses meant for various groups of business people men and women. Very popular are virtual faculties which are founded all around the world and which enable connection between



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The above way of learning contributes to fast information exchange, more access to the newest knowledge and experiences in this domain and save the time and money. Consequently, in this millennium the classic way of education will be slowly substituted with some other forms of education, in which learning from homes and offices with the help of Computers were true. Interactive education should provide a completely new dimension of gaining knowledge and to make it easier for those who attend certain courses to learn faster and easier. By using ICTs a university can delight students of deferent ages with flexibility learning tools and atmospheres.

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**Annex***Table 1: Comparison of Online and Face-to-face Learning*

	<b>Online</b>	<b>Face-to-face</b>
<b>Instructors sense of control</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Less sense of instructor control</li> <li>2. Easier for participants to ignore instructor</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More sense of leadership from Instructor</li> <li>2. Not so easy to ignore instructor</li> </ol>
<b>Condition of meeting</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No waiting for participants to arrive</li> <li>2. No latecomers or early leavers, etc.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Often have to wait for others to arrive</li> <li>2. People leave during the meeting, etc.</li> </ol>
<b>Mode</b>	Discussions through text only; can be structured; dense; permanent; limited; stark	Verbal discussions: a more common mode, but impermanent
<b>Physical context</b>	Don't meet in a room; no shared physical context	Meet in a room; strong physical context
<b>Work/discussion</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work on multiple issues at the same time</li> <li>2. Work not condensed-fluid and interweaved with other activities</li> <li>3. Group contact continually maintained</li> <li>4. Depth of analysis often increased online</li> <li>5. Discussion often stops for periods of time, then is picked up and restarted</li> <li>6. Members sometimes lose sense of where they are in the discussions over long periods of time (information overload)</li> <li>7. Level of reflection high</li> <li>8. Able to reshape conversations on basis of ongoing understandings and reflection</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Usually work on one issue at a time and advance through agenda item by item</li> <li>2. Work is condensed and focused</li> <li>3. Little group contact in-between meetings</li> <li>4. Analysis varies, often dependent on time available</li> <li>5. Discussions usually completed during meeting</li> <li>6. Discussions occur within a set time frame, therefore less likely that members will lose sense of where they are</li> <li>7. Often little time for reflection during meetings</li> <li>8. Less likelihood of conversations being reshaped during meeting</li> </ol>

<b>Group dynamics</b>	1. Group dynamics not same as face-to-face; participants have to learn how to interpret them online	1. Dynamics 'understandable' to most participants because they have experienced them before
	2. Less sense of anxiety	2. Anxiety at beginning/during meetings
	3. More equal participation, especially for females; participants can take control of this	3. Participation unequal and often dominated by males, but group may try to share time equally among members
	4. Less hierarchies, etc.	4. More chance of hierarchies
	5. Dynamics are 'hidden' but traceable	5. Dynamics evident but lost after the event
	6. No breaks - constantly in the meeting	6. Breaks between meetings
	7. Can be active listening without participation	7. Listening without participation may be frowned upon
	8. Medium (technology) has an impact on dynamics	8. Medium (room) may have less impact
	9. Different expectation about participation	9. Certain 'accepted' expectations about participation
	10. Slower - time delays in interactions/discussions	10. Quicker - immediacy of interactions/discussions
	Total effort of group	Greater using online learning

*Source: McConnell, D. (2000) Implementing Computer Supported Cooperative Learning. London: Kogan Page Limited (Adopted to Requirements of this Paper)*

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