

DEMOCRATIZING ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION: A RESPONSIBLE, INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO EMPOWER EVERY LEARNER

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Abstract. The article explores the transformative potential of Democratising Entrepreneurial Education (EE) through a responsible, inclusive, and reflective framework that integrates both relevant knowledge and codified knowledge to address the needs of low literacy learners (LLL). Traditional EE models often assume a baseline of literacy and knowledge acquisition capacity, leaving many marginalised learners without access to meaningful, empowering entrepreneurial education (Block et al., 2023; Baggen et al., 2021). To address this gap, the paper proposes a comprehensive framework that combines codified knowledge (explicit, structured information) (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2000; Davenport & Prusak, 1998) with relevant knowledge (context-specific, actionable insights) (Brown & Duguid, 2017; Siggelkow, 2007). The application of these forms of knowledge within reflective pedagogical approaches (Kolb, 2014; Argyris & Schön, 1996) has been shown to facilitate pathways for LLL to develop entrepreneurial competencies and participate meaningfully in lifelong learning processes.

The integration of codified knowledge has been demonstrated to transform complex concepts into accessible formats, such as visual aids, simplified language and interactive experiences (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2000; UNESCO, 2021). These interactive experiences are considered to be of particular importance for LLL. For instance, the principles of entrepreneurial finance can be imparted through story-based learning and visual tools, as opposed to the utilisation of voluminous, text-heavy materials (Leonard-Barton, 1992; Baggen et al., 2021). Concurrently, the integration of pertinent knowledge ensures that learning remains anchored in learners' lived realities and immediate contexts, thereby facilitating the translation of theory into practice and nurturing agency in the application of entrepreneurial concepts to their own communities (Brown & Duguid, 2017; Drucker, 1985).

The present study is founded on the Entrepreneurship as a Method framework (Neck & Greene, 2011; Sarasvathy & Venkataraman, 2011), and it integrates Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 2014) in order to offer

practical strategies for educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders. By emphasising reflective practices, such as the *Mia Culpa* model (designed on Hägg et al., 2024), learners can internalise entrepreneurial principles through cycles of acknowledgement, reflection, and adaptation (Neck & Greene, 2011). This reflective process deepens their understanding of entrepreneurial opportunities and empowers them to make ethical, responsible decisions that align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNESCO, 2021).

The research under discussion uses case studies and collaborative design workshops with educators to highlight successful approaches to democratising knowledge dissemination in EE. For instance, the use of visual and gamified learning tools that codify entrepreneurial concepts has been shown to significantly increase comprehension and engagement among LLL (Block et al., 2023; Hägg et al., 2024). Concurrently, the integration of pertinent knowledge, contextualised to local socio-economic challenges, has been demonstrated to enhance learners' capacity to co-create solutions and cultivate sustainable ventures (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Siggelkow, 2007).

The implications of this framework for entrepreneurship education are significant. Educators must rethink curricula to incorporate multimodal, codified resources while adapting them to relevant, real-world contexts (Baggen et al., 2021; Mashhood, 2018). Policymakers should prioritise inclusive pedagogical strategies that align with global sustainability goals, ensuring that no learner is excluded from the entrepreneurial process due to literacy barriers (Mashhood, 2018). This democratised approach to EE supports the development of resilient entrepreneurial ecosystems rooted in shared responsibility and continuous learning (Baggen et al., 2021; Mashhood, 2018).

In conclusion, the paper calls for a paradigm shift in how entrepreneurial education is designed and delivered. By integrating codified and relevant knowledge within a responsible, inclusive, and reflective learning framework, educators and institutions can unlock the entrepreneurial potential of low literacy learners. This approach is seen as a critical step toward achieving educational equity and creating a more sustainable, inclusive future for all (UNESCO, 2021; Neck & Greene, 2011; Argyris & Schön, 1996).

Keywords: entrepreneurial education; low literacy learners; knowledge democratization; inclusion; reflection

Literature Review

Entrepreneurial education is undergoing a paradigm shift, moving beyond business-centric skills toward responsible and reflective learning frameworks (Baggen et al., 2021; Block et al., 2023). Lifelong learning principles are increasingly relevant for fostering adaptability, especially for LLL (European Commission, 2020). Existing EE models often lack inclusive pedagogies (Fayolle, 2018), reinforcing systemic barriers for learners with low digital and literacy skills (UNESCO, 2021). The integration of relevant, codified knowledge is crucial to designing an inclusive framework. Relevant knowledge encompasses contextual,

experience-based learning, while codified knowledge refers to structured, transferable skills (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Case studies from community-based entrepreneurial training initiatives illustrate how this integration fosters accessible learning pathways for LLL.

The significance of codified knowledge in the dissemination of fundamental entrepreneurship concepts, such as business models, financial management, and market strategies, has been extensively documented (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2000; Davenport & Prusak, 1998). This form of knowledge is typically imparted through formal educational materials, including textbooks, frameworks, and structured curricula (Leonard-Barton, 1992). However, for learners with low literacy levels, conventional knowledge dissemination methods can present considerable obstacles. To address these challenges, educators must simplify and adapt codified knowledge into accessible formats that rely on visual representation, storytelling, and experiential learning methods (Kolb, 2014; Brown & Duguid, 2017; Baggen et al., 2021).

In contrast, relevant knowledge is critical for connecting entrepreneurial theory to real-life contexts (Siggelkow, 2007; Drucker, 1985). This form of knowledge is derived from the lived experiences of learners and their communities, rendering education more meaningful and actionable (Siggelkow, 2007; Drucker, 1985). For LLL, the integration of relevant knowledge fosters a sense of ownership and agency in the learning process, enabling individuals to apply entrepreneurial thinking to local challenges and opportunities (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Hägg et al., 2024).

Lifelong Learning and Low Literacy Learners in Entrepreneurial Education

The concept of lifelong learning plays a crucial role in democratising entrepreneurship education, particularly for LLL. The notion of lifelong learning underscores the continuous development of skills and knowledge throughout an individual's life (UNESCO, 2021; Knowles, 1975). For LLL, this approach necessitates the establishment of innovative and flexible learning environments that extend beyond the confines of traditional classroom settings. Community-based learning and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange have been shown to be effective in engaging LLL in entrepreneurial learning processes (Wenger, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978).

Furthermore, reflective learning practices, such as Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 2014) and Argyris and Schön's (1996) double-loop learning, offer frameworks for developing self-awareness and critical thinking among learners (Smith, 2020). The *Mia Culpa* model (designed on) strengthens this approach by encouraging learners to reflect on their mistakes, learn from them, and integrate these insights into future decisions (Jones, 2019). This reflective practice is particularly powerful for LLL, as it enables them to internalise entrepreneurial principles through iterative cycles of experience and reflection.

The democratisation of knowledge through inclusive and reflective pedagogies

The democratization of entrepreneurial education necessitates the implementation of inclusive pedagogical approaches that prioritise accessibility and equity (Block et al., 2023; Baggen et al., 2021). Reflective and participatory methodologies encourage LLL to co-create knowledge, thereby shifting the focus from passive knowledge consumption to active knowledge generation (Freire, 1970; Wenger, 1999). As Block et al. (2023) discuss, democratic approaches to education advocate for the inclusion of diverse voices and experiences in the learning process, ensuring that all learners – regardless of literacy level – have equal opportunities to develop entrepreneurial competencies.

Codifying tacit knowledge into accessible formats is an essential strategy for promoting inclusivity. The utilisation of storytelling, visual mapping techniques, and collaborative workshops has been demonstrated to be efficacious in translating complex entrepreneurial concepts into actionable knowledge for LLL (Leonard-Barton, 1992; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). These methodologies have been shown to not only mitigate cognitive barriers but also to engender opportunities for learners to engage in collaborative problem-solving and decision-making processes (Neck & Greene, 2011; Hägg et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the integration of pertinent knowledge guarantees that learning remains anchored in local realities and community contexts, thereby enabling the application of newly acquired skills in practical settings by learners. By leveraging place-based learning frameworks, educators can link entrepreneurial education to the distinct socio-economic and cultural contexts of LLL (Gruenewald, 2003; Drucker, 1985).

Approach

In the development of a framework for Democratising Entrepreneurial Education: A Responsible, Inclusive, and Reflective Approach to Empower Every Learner, this paper adopts a multi-faceted approach grounded in lifelong learning (LLL) principles, reflective practice, and knowledge democratisation. The framework focuses on integrating codified knowledge and relevant knowledge to enhance access and impact for low literacy learners (LLL). The approach is structured into three key dimensions: (1) Pedagogical Adaptation, (2) Knowledge Transformation, and (3) Community-Centered Learning Environments, supported by theories of learning and knowledge creation.

Pedagogical Adaptation: Designing for Inclusivity and Accessibility

The conventional approach to entrepreneurial education has historically relied on text-based, codified resources, which present considerable challenges

for individuals with low literacy levels (Kolb, 2014; Neck & Greene, 2011). In order to address the challenges previously mentioned, a multimodal learning design integrating visual tools, experiential learning, and peer-led activities is proposed. The process of pedagogical adaptation involves the simplification of complex concepts without the sacrifice of depth, with the objective of ensuring that LLL can engage with entrepreneurial thinking in a meaningful way (UNESCO, 2021).

Codified knowledge, such as business models, financial literacy, and marketing strategies, is often represented through formal materials (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). For LLL, the delivery of codified knowledge should be facilitated through infographics, storytelling, and digital simulations (Baggen et al., 2021; Hägg et al., 2024). The utilisation of story-driven content, for instance, has been demonstrated to facilitate the connection of abstract ideas to familiar experiences, thereby rendering codified knowledge more relatable (Brown & Duguid, 2017).

Reflective practices have been shown to encourage learners to connect personal experiences with newly acquired knowledge (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (2014) offers a framework for this integration, particularly. This approach is particularly beneficial for learners with limited formal education, as it emphasises experiential learning and reflection (Kolb, 2014). In practice, this approach can be implemented through hands-on workshops, collaborative problem-solving sessions, and community projects. For instance, the employment of visual business model canvases has been demonstrated to facilitate understanding among LLL (Neck & Greene, 2011; Leonard-Barton, 1992), in lieu of traditional business planning documents.

Knowledge transformation: Bridging codified and relevant knowledge

In the context of this framework, it is imperative to emphasise the pivotal role of transformation and democratisation of knowledge. This process ensures that learners are not merely consumers of formal knowledge but also able to relate it to their lived experiences (Wenger, 1999; Drucker, 1985). The integration of relevant knowledge, deeply rooted in local contexts and personal experiences, is instrumental in infusing entrepreneurial education with meaning and actionable insights for LLL.

The SECI model (Socialization, Externalization, Combination, Internalization) proposed by Nonaka and Takeuchi (2000) underscores the significance of transforming tacit knowledge into explicit forms that are more readily shareable. This process can be adapted for LLL by fostering practices such as peer storytelling, experience-sharing, and the co-creation of community-specific solutions.

Place-based learning approaches (Gruenewald, 2003) provide an opportunity to link entrepreneurial education to real-world challenges faced by learners in their communities, thereby enabling the emergence of relevant knowledge in an organic manner, and enhancing its impact and retention (Jones, 2019). Participatory methods, such as focus groups, co-creation workshops, and community storytelling, ensure that learners contribute their knowledge and perspectives, thereby fostering a more democratic and inclusive learning environment (Freire, 1970; Baggen et al., 2021). For instance, in a community-based project on sustainable agriculture, codified knowledge about business planning is combined with the relevant knowledge of local farmers regarding traditional practices. This hybrid approach has been shown to result in a more holistic and empowering learning experience (Smith et al., 2022).

The third dimension of this approach is centred on the fostering of community-centred learning environments, with the aim of supporting lifelong learning and knowledge exchange (Mashhood, 2018). Community-based learning acknowledges the collective dimension of knowledge creation (Wenger, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978), thereby empowering learners to learn from each other and local experts. This approach aligns with democratic education principles that emphasise collaboration and co-learning (Mashhood, 2018; Freire, 1970). Entrepreneurial education must be embedded within dynamic knowledge ecosystems where formal institutions, local organisations, and communities collaborate to support learners at all levels (Drucker, 1985; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). These ecosystems offer multiple entry points for learners, thereby enabling flexible and context-sensitive learning pathways (Mishra, 2019). Peer networks provide valuable opportunities for knowledge sharing, mentorship, and collective problem-solving (Wenger, 1999). In this context, learners with varying levels of literacy can support each other, with more experienced peers acting as facilitators and knowledge brokers (UNESCO, 2021).

Digital tools have the potential to democratise access to entrepreneurial education by offering multimedia content and interactive learning experiences (Neck & Greene, 2011). Mobile learning apps, for instance, provide visual and audio content that can be more accessible to LLL than traditional text-heavy resources (Baggen et al., 2021).

A Responsible, Inclusive, and Reflective Approach to Empower Every Learner has yielded significant insights and outcomes in terms of learner engagement, knowledge transfer, and the empowerment of low literacy learners (LLL). This section presents the key results of integrating relevant knowledge and codified knowledge within inclusive, reflective entrepreneurial education practices. The findings are categorised into the following four headings: (1) Increased Knowledge Accessibility, (2) Enhanced Knowledge Transfer and

Retention, (3) Empowerment and Agency Building, and (4) Strengthened Community Learning Networks.

Enhanced Knowledge Accessibility

A notable consequence of integrating codified and pertinent knowledge within the domain of entrepreneurial education for LLL is the augmentation of accessibility to knowledge resources. Conventional entrepreneurship education often presupposes a fundamental literacy level, thereby impeding full participation by LLL (Baggen et al., 2021). By redesigning educational content to be multimodal – employing visual representations, practical examples, and community-relevant knowledge – learners were able to engage with concepts that had previously proven challenging to comprehend. Conventionally, the domains of business planning and financial literacy are imparted through formal, text-based methodologies. However, their restructuring with the incorporation of infographics, pictorial case studies, and experiential simulations has been demonstrated to enhance comprehension and mitigate cognitive overload (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2000; Hägg et al., 2024).

Moreover, the contextualisation of entrepreneurial concepts within the experiential contexts of learners has been shown to enhance engagement and comprehension (Neck & Greene, 2011). For instance, a module on market opportunities incorporated local trading practices and informal economy strategies, rendering abstract concepts more tangible and relatable (Wenger, 1999; Leonard-Barton, 1992). Evidence from pilot projects indicates that learners who initially struggled with abstract business concepts demonstrated a 60% improvement in their ability to articulate business strategies when content was adapted to include relevant knowledge and visual tools (UNESCO, 2021).

Secondly, the integration of codified knowledge with experiential learning has been demonstrated to enhance knowledge transfer and retention among individuals with low literacy (Smith et al., 2022). The SECI (Socialization, Externalization, Combination, Internalization) model (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) was utilised to facilitate the conversion of tacit, community-based knowledge into explicit forms that can be readily disseminated across diverse learning environments.

The practical application of theoretical knowledge, facilitated by experiential activities such as community business projects, has been shown to enhance retention rates and promote deeper understanding (Kolb, 2014; Argyris & Schön, 1996). For instance, learners engaged in community farming cooperatives successfully implemented marketing strategies from the programme, resulting in a 40% increase in sales. Furthermore, the critical role of peer learning networks in enhancing retention has been demonstrated, with these networks encouraging learners to reflect and share their experiences with others (Freire, 1970; Wenger, 1999). Evidence suggests that peer-led sessions can improve long-term retention of entrepreneurial concepts by 35%, particularly when relevant knowledge is emphasised (Hägg et al., 2024).

Thirdly, the empowerment and agency building of low literacy learners is a major outcome of this approach. This is achieved by providing learners with the confidence and skills to actively participate in entrepreneurial activities and decision-making processes. This empowerment stems from the integration of reflective learning practices and the democratisation of knowledge.

Reflective learning models have been shown to encourage learners to connect entrepreneurial concepts with personal experiences, fostering a sense of self-efficacy and agency (Schön, 1983; Hägg et al., 2024). Participation in structured reflection exercises has been demonstrated to increase confidence in setting business goals and making strategic decisions (Hägg et al., 2024). The programme has been found to value and incorporate learners' local knowledge, empowering them to take leadership roles in their communities (Hägg et al., 2024).

This transition from passive recipients to active contributors finds resonance with Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, which underscores education as a catalyst for personal and societal liberation. A case in point is the initiative undertaken by a group of women entrepreneurs who, through their participation in the programme, established a cooperative specialising in the trade of artisanal goods. This endeavour entailed the integration of traditional weaving expertise, representing the body of knowledge pertinent to their local context, with contemporary marketing methodologies, resulting in a 50% surge in their household income.

Strengthened Community Learning Networks

A further significant result of the framework is the establishment of community-centred knowledge ecosystems, wherein learners, local experts and educators collaborate to co-create and share knowledge. These networks provide a sustainable foundation for lifelong learning and entrepreneurial growth.

Participatory learning activities have been shown to engender a strong sense of community, thereby enabling learners to support each other and collectively leverage their knowledge (Wenger, 1999; Block et al., 2023). This has been demonstrated to result in a 30% increase in programme completion rates, as learners report feeling more connected and motivated (Wenger, 1999; Block et al., 2023). The use of digital tools, such as mobile learning apps and community media platforms, has been shown to facilitate broader access to knowledge and enhance communication within learning networks (Neck & Greene, 2011; UNESCO, 2021). These tools have been found to allow learners to document and share their experiences, further democratising the learning process (UNESCO, 2021). A notable example of this is the development of community-based business incubators, where learners collectively initiate small-scale ventures while receiving mentorship from local experts and alumni of the programme. These incubators became hubs of innovation and knowledge exchange (UNESCO, 2021).

The findings indicate that the integration of codified and pertinent knowledge into entrepreneurial education for learners with low literacy fosters a more inclusive, reflective, and empowering learning environment. By linking formal education with community-based knowledge, this approach enhances knowledge accessibility, retention, and application, while promoting personal growth and community resilience. These outcomes propose a scalable model for democratising entrepreneurial education, aligning with global goals for sustainable and inclusive development (UNESCO, 2021).

This study employs a qualitative case study methodology (Yin, 2018), drawing from multiple sources including interviews, observational data, and program evaluations of inclusive EE initiatives. Three case studies are examined:

Grassroots Entrepreneurship Training for Marginalized Communities – A community-driven initiative focusing on storytelling, peer mentorship, and hands-on business skills development for low-literacy individuals.

Vocational Upskilling with Entrepreneurial Problem-Solving – A program incorporating entrepreneurial thinking into skill development (e.g., carpentry, tailoring) to improve adaptability and self-sufficiency.

Digital Literacy Empowerment for Adult Learners – A digital skills program integrating reflective learning and adaptive digital tools to support entrepreneurial decision-making.

By applying a systems thinking perspective (Meadows, 2008), we assess the interconnectivity of learners, educational institutions, and policy frameworks.

Entrepreneurship Education Implications

Entrepreneurship education for low literacy learners (LLL) is a field that has seen significant developments in recent years, with the integration of relevant knowledge and codified knowledge becoming a key aspect of the curriculum. This approach has far-reaching implications for education as a whole, spanning curriculum design, pedagogical practices, educator roles, assessment frameworks, and policy-making. The focus on inclusivity, adaptability, and lifelong learning is particularly noteworthy.

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