

# Sustainable Impact Entrepreneurship

## Applying innovation and digitalisation in the training practices

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Key words: business education, sustainable entrepreneurship, creative steps, innovation

New urgent objective of international business training at Lapland UAS is to increase know-how of entrepreneurs (current and future), and businesses, to become more resilient to climate change with the competence to create new business models aiming to meet Sustainable Development Goals or SDG. Specific emphasis is put on creating a modern up-to-date knowledge base and learning materials for business education to shift entrepreneurial thinking towards environmental consciousness and sustainability. Current sustainable business education approach directly contributes to SDGs and EU's sustainability agenda. Climate change is an unprecedented threat happening right now on our planet and it has an ongoing impact on all of us. Climate change is being listed as one of the many important Sustainable Development Goals of the UN: "take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts" (United Nations 2020). There is a need to strengthen the understanding on how to change the business strategy to act with a positive impact and sustainable manner. The students of Lapland UAS are future entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs. Entrepreneurs and businesses in the society are functioning as engines of the local, national and international communities, meaning that if they start to think and act greener, they will have a great impact on the societal level. Turning into a green company means developing attitude towards sustainability, finding new ways to operate. It is a process of many steps, challenges and changes, shift of the whole business value perspective towards sustainable thinking. However, there is still a gap of actual competence and skills when it comes to the understanding on how to incorporate sustainable goals into business doings. According to The World Economic Forum's, the most significant risk that businesses are facing is the failure to adapt to climate change. To close the gap experts in the field of business education are developing and testing innovative educational and training methods and approach that would stimulate sustainable entrepreneurship for climate action in

the Arctic region. With such a training methodology approach it is expected to have an increase in the number of green companies and sustainable thinkers in the future in the Arctic region and beyond and possible increase in the number of climate change activists and eco-conscious individuals after they complete business studies.

As an example, we can refer to the study course Innovation and Entrepreneurship where students are creating innovative solutions to selected SDGs by applying Creative Steps 2.0 innovation workshop methodology. Sustainable entrepreneurship for climate action was set as a core subject framework for the course. Creative Steps 2.0 is a step-by-step innovations process that helps students to work on real life business solutions where the actual business case is identified SDGs. As a part of the process students follow ten sequential steps of innovation starting from initial analysis of the actual problem in order to better understand selected business case connected to particular SDG. The process includes the activities that help the understanding of the framework of a particular case, following by enabling online tools, further identification and understanding of the context of the selected business case, resulting in actual formulation of a solution and business idea that can serve as a base for a sustainable entrepreneurial endeavour. However, the idea is further validated, market research is conducted and through creative clinic approach student groups get a feedback from the pool of external experts. Real prototype is presented as a result of entire innovations process.

Students present actual innovative business ideas and sustainable solutions related to SDGs in wide range of areas. Starting from the development of new device turning the snow into fresh water for drinking and household use, to building model schools for children in remote districts in developing countries where it is difficult to access school for young age children. Earlier experience of similar training activities show that some of the created ideas actually become an enterprise. As an example there is built new school in Vietnam Pu Pien village. Now children, who earlier had to walk tens of kilometres to reach the school, can access it in their own village. Such development and innovation project ideas are born during innovation and entrepreneurship classes here at Lapland UAS, discussing such subjects as impact entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship opportunities. With the right tools at hands students begin to see the real implementation possibilities for their project ideas. Further development of the idea continued in the following semester when the students worked on the actual fundraising project collaborating with the students from all over the Finland. For some it seemed like mission impossible, but when June, the alumni of Lapland UAS send us the video of the actual school constructions and final result – young children attending the school,

it encourages also new generations of students to see real impact they can realise by learning good entrepreneurship tools and approach. (Du Hoc Sinh TV 2017)

Recent implementation of the innovation workshop was carried out entirely digitally due lockdown related to Covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020. At first it seemed to be a great challenge, however, effective use of digital tools and platforms made it possible to finalise the process with the demonstration of significant results. This built a confidence of the possibility to transfer the innovation workshop with Creative Steps 2.0 methodology into digital format entirely. Such digital innovation workshop format was applied again in the fall 2020 during Kolarctic CBC Bridge project activities where ten selected case companies together with the students from Finland, Norway and Russia were dealing with the innovation of business models of selected case companies (Koractic Bridge 2020).

Thus, sustainable entrepreneurship incorporating green approach for implementation of SDGs can become a cornerstone in the general business training as well as entrepreneurship training across the disciplines. Digital transformation in the innovation training process was happening gradually until it became fully digital due to unexpected circumstance, which on the positive side only facilitated taken direction towards digitalisation of innovation and entrepreneurship training. Therefore, digitalisation only adds to the formation of more sustainable solutions for the training and sustainable and impact entrepreneurship.

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