Embedding entrepreneurship at AUAS
Wakkee, Ingrid; van Grevenhof, Bart

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Embedding Entrepreneurship in Education

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EMBEDDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

for student entrepreneurship, and a collaborative start-up culture in Europe

PROJECT PARTNERS:
The Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS) wants to further expand its reputation as the place where students can develop relevant skills, expertise and networks to either become professional entrepreneurs who build and grow innovative and sustainable businesses or entrepreneurial professionals who can navigate and be employable in the rapidly changing labor market.

Over the past 15 years, entrepreneurship education has been key to achieving this ambition; offering multiple minors, tracks and masters in entrepreneurship, more than thousand students are introduced to entrepreneurship annually, and a number of successful firms have emerged from this. Recently the AUAS introduced a more comprehensive program to stimulate and support the entrepreneurial mentality among students and staff including a research program, special arrangements for student-entrepreneurs, and various extra-curricular programs to inspire, foster ideation and support impact creation. The flagship of this program is the AUAS’ 10K pre-incubator program.

10K bridging the education - innovation gap
The 10K pre-incubator program is created to build the bridge between the safe classroom and the highly competitive entrepreneurial ecosystem and it seeks to help innovative student-ventures to become startup ready and create impact.

Our target groups include teams of students and/or alumni who have already partaken in one of the entrepreneurship minors or tracks but who realize that their initial idea requires further development before it can be taken to the market. We also welcome teams who participated in minors or internships that focused on the development of novel concepts or innovations, ranging from health technology to applied child psychology without actually learning how to develop and benefit from entrepreneurial skills.

10K ideas ideally originate from educational or research projects where participants already have been involved in for a while, as this give the teams a head-start in terms of knowledge and expertise. 10K ideas are furthermore based on recent (technological) innovations and tap in to unmet market demands and/or seek to solve a societal challenge. We believe that these form the most fruitful basis for a scalable business. While 10K does not focus on social ventures per se, we are especially interested in those ideas that can make a real impact while
being based on sustainable revenue models. While being knowledge based, and possibly requiring some R&D, the opportunities developed by 10K participants are expected to have a limited time-to-market and relatively modest (seed) capital requirements. 10K participants typically have a bachelor education (or master at best), limited to no industry experience and hardly any access to advanced lab equipment or R&D facilities. Consequently, if technology based at all, the opportunities pursued by 10K participants are likely to be applications derived from platform or enabling technologies, whether it is virtual reality or 3D printing, with a high technology readiness level where working prototypes can be demonstrated.

How is the program structured?

Every semester we select a maximum of 12 teams (students and alumni) who have an innovative and scalable business idea that they want to bring to the market. The teams can apply directly but we also use our internal network of educators, researchers and business developers to spot and scout potentially interesting teams for us.

These teams enroll in a 6-month program that starts with an introduction week. We kick-start with the 24 steps of Disciplined Entrepreneurship [1], build trust among the new group, establish a work ethos and focus on developing skills including networking, visual thinking and how to benefit from the design method toolkit.

This week is followed by a period of self-activation, bi-weekly sessions of individual coaching and group intervension, joint dinners and masterclasses. The aim is to share knowledge of field experts and help participants gain insights, knowledge and skills they are likely to need at some point during the next three years. Subjects include: fundamental finance, PR & free publicity, going abroad, legal fundamentals and work-life balance.

The program ends with a Dragon’s Den event where the teams have to prove to be start-up ready to a panel of industry experts and experienced entrepreneurs.

In the following semester, 10K alumni are invited to the bi-weekly interaction sessions and master classes on a voluntary basis to expand their network and expertise.

The program itself is based on four building blocks.
- The Disciplined Entrepreneurship method forms the heart of our program. The validated method integrates various well-known start-up methods like lean start-up and business model canvas into an abundance of high-quality (teaching) materials that we both use in our coaching sessions and stimulate self-activa-
“STARTUP READY” MEANS
THE PARTICIPANTS] HAVE A
SUBSTANTIATED ANSWERS TO
“WHY ARE YOU IN BUSINESS?”,
“WHO IS YOUR CUSTOMER?”,
“How do you produce your
PRODUCT?”

**Stations and learning.
- Intuition**
  can be a useful
tool for an en-
trepreneur but
we stimulate our
teams to make de-
cisions in relation
to their business
models based on a
combination of critical thinking and the best avail-
able evidence, whether it is about customer decision
making or funding opportunities. Hence, we train
our participants in methods of Evidence based
management and decision making and give them the tools to make these kind of decisions.

- To succeed in entrepreneurship it is important to have a team that knows their own
strengths and weaknesses and to do this, both as a
team as on an individual level it is important to
identify which competencies are well developed
and which need to be worked on. To that end, we
use the validated EntreComp: Entrepreneurship
Competence Framework [2] to monitor ideation
and opportunity recognition, abilities to mobilize
resources and translate ideas into action.

- We use the UN’s Sustainable development
goals to inspire teams to think about how the op-
portunities they pursue can contribute to creating
a real impact in the world. Also, we translated a
model developed by United Nations Institute for
Training and Research (UNITAR) [3] into a tool
that allows teams to analyse their business model
and organization in terms of sustainability.

Are you ‘Startup Ready’?

Being Startup Ready doesn’t mean that the
team will directly earn money, have employees or
even have their own company. Rather it means that
they are ready to compete – for a spot in an acceler-
tor, for funding, for attention, for customers – within
the startup ecosystem. Just like after finishing an
education with bachelor degree qualifications, peo-
ple need to build skills to be competitive in the labor
market and compete for a job with other applicants.

During the program participants learn that
launching an independent company is not always
necessary but that in some cases, they can actually
create a bigger impact when becoming a part of an
established firm or merging with another startup.
Enrollment in an accelerator or startup in residence
program could also be a sensible next step, just as
selling the idea to someone else and moving on to
new endeavors. Regardless of the organization form
they choose, as entrepreneur they will be able to
convince many people that their idea and their team
are startup ready.

Startup ready, here, means they have a substan-
tiated answer to questions pertaining to their busi-
ness model, such as “Why are you in business?”, “Who
is your customer?”, “How do you produce your prod-
uct?”. Their personal development and how they are
able to bridge the gap between being a student and be-
ing a professional entrepreneur is also important. Can
they attest to what drives them and their team, their
ability to build network relationships, and to deal with
complex information? Additionally, we challenge our
participants on their ability to build sustainable ven-
tures and create impact beyond the financial domain.
Finally, we expect them to have a corroborated story
on how their venture can contribute to a better world.

Promising outcomes

Currently we benefit from the lessons learned dur-
ing the pilot edition. The second edition has started
with six innovative ideas to be developed into start-
up-ready ventures. The first generation participants
have, in the meantime, proven to be startup ready.
One team has secured a soft loan for almost 250k, in
order to take their prototype to market. Another team
secured a grant for a technical feasibility study and a
third team entered the Startup-n-residence [6] pro-
gram of the municipality of Amsterdam. Finally, one
participant quit her job to fully focus on her enterprise
and another got a job within the university to further
develop his business idea.

It is a promising start for 10K on which; we are ea-
ger to build to help students develop their entrepre-
neurial spirit and underline the entrepreneurial rep-
utation of the AUAS.

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* The name 10K is not about money though it is about in-
vesting. It refers to Gladwell, M. 2008. Outliers: The story of
success: Hachette UK. “10,000-Hour Rule” that states that
10,000 hours of “deliberate practice” are needed to become
world-class, at anything.

INGRID WAKKEE is the Professor of Entrepreneur-
ship at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.

BART VAN GREVENHOF is the Program Manager
at the entrepreneurship program of the Amsterdam
University of Applied Sciences. In this capacity he is
responsible for the 10K Pre-incubation program.