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## Article

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Administrative Sciences

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*Suggested Citation:* Miço, Heliona; Cungu, Jonida (2023) : Entrepreneurship education, a challenging learning process towards entrepreneurial competence in education, Administrative Sciences, ISSN 2076-3387, MDPI, Basel, Vol. 13, Iss. 1, pp. 1-21, <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13010022>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/275488>

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Article

# Entrepreneurship Education, a Challenging Learning Process towards Entrepreneurial Competence in Education

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**Abstract:** Entrepreneurship education is a recent field in education. From a field mainly related to small business, it is extended towards enhancement of students’ entrepreneurial attitudes and skills. It can support students in developing an independent and versatile way by growing the spirit of entrepreneurship. Developing entrepreneurship competence among students requires the mastery of concepts by teachers. Training teachers in entrepreneurship education helps them apply specific competences, methods, and tools to encourage confidence in learners’ own capabilities and to stimulate flexibility, leadership, and initiative. To understand the teachers’ entrepreneurial competence, an online survey was developed to assess the level of mastery of such competence in Albanian teachers. The survey was designed to analyze the development of entrepreneurial competence of teachers, and their entrepreneurship education and training. The research goal of the survey is to evaluate the influence mechanisms of gaining entrepreneurship education competence and the way of implementing this competence in pre-university education schools. Results from the questionnaire highlighted the teachers’ need for the acquisition of entrepreneurial competence at every professional level, starting from initial teacher education. The findings from the survey are analyzed by taking into consideration the European policies regarding entrepreneurship education, such as the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp), and their implementation in the Albanian educational sector.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship education; university; teachers; competences; EntreComp framework; learning; Albania



**Citation:** Miço, Heliona, and Jonida Cungu. 2023. Entrepreneurship Education, a Challenging Learning Process towards Entrepreneurial Competence in Education.

*Administrative Sciences* 13: 22.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13010022>

Received: 30 November 2022

Revised: 5 January 2023

Accepted: 6 January 2023

Published: 11 January 2023



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## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship education is a new field (Bueckmann Diegoli et al. 2018), which is spreading and developing beyond the business sphere. It was initially treated in the academy at the subject level in the late 1970s and early 1980s. (Wilson 2008; Hägg and Kurczewska 2021). This period coincided with the period of increased interest in entrepreneurship and small business. Unemployment encouraged different countries to find incentive mechanisms to influence the self-employment of citizens making entrepreneurship education to be considered as a contributing factor for economic growth. Entrepreneurship education was appraised as an academic tool, as well as an important model for the development of the society (Fayolle 2013). Based on these circumstances, the concept of entrepreneurship education is appearing in the educational curricula of many countries (Deveci and Seikkula-Leino 2018).

What does entrepreneurship mean? It is defined as the individual ability to find a business idea and transform it into practice (European Commission 2011). According to Shane and Venkataraman (2000) entrepreneurship is defined as the study of opportunity sources that consist of processes in which opportunities are discovered, evaluated, and used. In order to master these processes, proper education is needed, which has thus given rise to entrepreneurship education (Deveci and Seikkula-Leino 2018).

There are different meanings and various definitions applied in different countries regarding entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education is concerned with learning for entrepreneurship, learning through entrepreneurship and learning about entrepreneurship (Gibb 2005). It refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action and includes creativity, innovation, risk taking, and the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives (Commission of the European Communities 2006; Gautam and Singh 2015; Raposo and do Paço 2011; Secundo et al. 2021). Moreover, entrepreneurship education has been defined as a research focused process enabling us to investigate the most favorable education process to produce graduates in order to transform them into individuals who have life skills (Abiogu 2011). The Eurydice (2016) used the following definition for the entrepreneurship education: "Entrepreneurship education is about learners developing the skills and mind-set to be able to turn creative ideas into entrepreneurial action. This is a key competence for all learners, supporting personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability. It is relevant across the lifelong learning process, in all disciplines of learning and to all forms of education and training (formal, non-formal and informal) which contribute to an entrepreneurial spirit or behavior, with or without a commercial objective".

Moreover, it is estimated that connecting entrepreneurship education only with business world is not enough, as it limits the opportunities of learners and teaching community. Entrepreneurship education has taken on dimensions related to social, psychological and pedagogical aspects, making it a process through which learners acquire a broad set of competencies by bringing individual, social, and economic benefits (European Commission 2011; Hägg and Gabrielsson 2019; Ndou et al. 2019).

It is accepted that there are two main approaches regarding entrepreneurship education (Eurydice 2016). A questionnaire organized by the European Commission with the participation of European countries showed that entrepreneurship education is recognized and embedded entrepreneurship education in a policy document in 21 countries of the European Union (European Commission 2014). The data showed that one of the approaches treats entrepreneurship education in a broad sense related to European key competencies, where learning outcomes related to employability, active citizenship and entrepreneurial skills for life and work are emphasized. The second approach has a narrower goal, focusing entrepreneurship education on learning outcomes linked with entrepreneurial and business activity.

Different studies have supported these approaches (Wach 2014). Firstly, it is accepted by Bécharde and Grégoire (2005) that, in terms of educational theories, research on entrepreneurial education is rather incomplete and mainly focuses on the economic and business content of the teaching. Bae et al. (2014, as cited in Welsh et al. 2016) looked at entrepreneurship education as "education for entrepreneurial attitudes and skills" versus entrepreneurial intentions defined as "desires to own or start a business". According to Deveci and Seikkula-Leino (2018), the first approach is about creating a company or job. The other approach focuses on the individual and aims to improve the entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors of students (European Commission 2004; Rizza and Varum 2011). Ndou (2021) highlights that even though entrepreneurship education has been mainly a priority for management and business students, in today's environment, characterized by the rapid development of new technologies and the complexity of society, it has emerged as a relevant competence to be created at all levels of education and for different disciplines. While for Akhuemonkhan et al. (2013) entrepreneurship training involves identifying "the sources of opportunities, the process of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities; and the set of individuals who discover, evaluate and exploit them".

By being a process of providing students with ability to generate ideas and shaping the skills necessary to implement these ideas, entrepreneurship education has specific objectives (European Commission 2014):

1. promoting the development of personal qualities such as creativity, spirit of initiative, risk-taking and responsibility that are relevant to entrepreneurship;

2. raising students' awareness of self-employment as a career option (the message being that you can become not only an employee, but also an entrepreneur);
3. providing the business skills that are needed in order to start a new venture.

These objectives connect entrepreneurship education with pedagogy focusing on students' activity in learning (Gibb 2005). The learning situations are flexible, interactive, and based on multidimensional knowledge development (Ikävalko et al. 2008). Being a non-traditional teaching method, many studies take a pedagogical approach in defining entrepreneurship education (Ratten and Jones 2021; Fayolle et al. 2016; Igwe et al. 2022), giving teachers a primary role in the implementation of entrepreneurship education in schools (Ruskovaara et al. 2016; Oksanen et al. 2021).

The European approach to entrepreneurship education has also influenced the educational policies and legal framework in Albania. Starting from 2012, there was a legislative framework regarding the fundamental competences on education (*On Pre-University Education System in the Republic of Albania Law of 2012, Pub. L. No. 69/2012 2012, Pub. L. No. 69/2012 2012*). The educational system aims to create conditions and opportunities for students in order to build and develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values according to the society's requirements; to develop in an independent and comprehensive manner; as well as to contribute to the construction and well-being of their own by helping them to face life's challenges constructively. The development of the spirit of entrepreneurship is presented as one of the qualities that the student receives at the level of pre-university education. This is attributed to the competence of entrepreneurship, which is included for the first time, in the Albanian legal and policy framework of education in 2012.

Despite steps taken towards entrepreneurial competences in the Albanian education system, there is a lack of adequate teacher training and practices to ensure effective entrepreneurship education. The inclusion of life, entrepreneurship and the environment competence in the Albanian education system, not just in the curriculum, needs a multi-faceted analysis. Such an analysis will evaluate the knowledge obtained by teachers in pre-service education and training through the entrepreneurship pedagogy, continuous professional development, cooperation of the school with business and start-up companies and other forms of implementation related to curricular aspects and its implementation. Such an analysis should be accompanied by the legal framework and the necessary standards compatible with European education policies to enable its implementation by both teachers and students.

This study contributes to a portion of this larger analysis by assessing the entrepreneurial competencies of teachers, the curriculum in pre-service education and continuous educational training, and the approach of schools towards the distribution of entrepreneurship education in Albania. An online survey was completed by 233 teachers of different pedagogical profiles employed in different schools located in urban areas as well as in rural areas. The aim of this study was to assess the need of educators to be equipped with entrepreneurial characteristics and to identify approaches toward meeting those needs.

The article is divided into six sections. Section 1 is the introductory part and provides a concise overview on the article. Section 2 attempts a review of the literature in order to provide insight into the role of entrepreneurship education to the acquisition of learners' knowledge as an approach of European policies, focusing on the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework. This section also highlights the gaps in the research regarding the assessment of the level of mastery of entrepreneurship education in teaching staff. Section 3 deals with methodology used for the research with justification for its adoption. Section 4 presents the findings of data analyzes gathered by the survey. Section 5 interprets the findings in the framework of a literature review. Section 6 concludes with policy recommendations for effective mastery of teachers' entrepreneurship competence in order to promote students' personal and social development.

## 2. Theoretical Background of Literature

### 2.1. The Approach of the European Commission on the Need for Entrepreneurship Education

The efforts of the European Commission for including entrepreneurship competence into education have been concretized by including entrepreneurship as one of the eight European Key Competences in 2006 in the educational systems of the countries of the European Union (European Parliament and Council of European Union 2006). The Eurydice study identified different attitudes of the European states for the inclusion of entrepreneurship competence in the mainstream education system (Eurydice 2016), by accepting a fragmented approach for this policy (Seikkula-Leino et al. 2021; Apostu et al. 2022). The launch of Europe 2020 strategy through education and training turned attention to entrepreneurship competences emphasizing the need for the development of entrepreneurship mindset for all learners (European Commission 2010). On the other hand, Sustainable Development Goals adopted by United Nations have highlighted in the framework of quality education the entrepreneurial learning as a means to equip young people with relevant skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship (United Nations 2015). The main approach through which the learners can acquire entrepreneurship skills and knowledge is accepted to be through the education system (Jónsdóttir 2007; Commission of the European Communities 2006; Eurydice 2016).

Recent research has accepted that entrepreneurship education contributed to risk taking attitudes, to the formation of new business and to the proclivity to be self-employed (Alvarez Marques and Albuquerque 2012; Ndou et al. 2018). The two-folded approach sees the purpose of entrepreneurship education as related to education of students to take more responsibility for themselves and their learning, to try to achieve their goals, to be creative, to discover existing opportunities, and to cope in a complicated society. While, another aim is for them to take an active role in the labour market and consider entrepreneurship as a natural career choice (Seikkula-Leino et al. 2019; Gibb 2005).

To better understand and integrate entrepreneurship across the education system, the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp) is one of the responses of the European Commission (Bacigalupo et al. 2016) for the promotion of entrepreneurial learning towards social, cultural, or financial value creation (Seikkula-Leino et al. 2021). Considering entrepreneurship as a competence with transversal nature, EntreComp was launched as a common reference framework for entrepreneurship to help citizens to develop their ability to actively participate in society, to manage their own lives and careers and to start value-creating initiatives. The EntreComp conceptual model is made up of three main competence areas: 'Ideas and opportunities', 'Resources' and 'Into Action' and 15 competences that, together, make up the building blocks of entrepreneurship as a competence for all citizens (see Table 1) (Bacigalupo et al. 2016; Eurydice 2016). In the EntreComp framework, the entrepreneurship is both an individual and collective competence, defined as the capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas and transform them into value for others. The value that is created can be financial, cultural or social (European Commission 2018). The framework describes the development of 15 competences along a progression model in learning outcomes, over eight levels.

**Table 1.** EntreComp Framework.

EntreComp Framework		
No.	Area	Competence
1.	Ideas and opportunities	Spotting opportunities Creativity Vision Valuing ideas Ethical and sustainable thinking

Table 1. Cont.

EntreComp Framework		
No.	Area	Competence
2.	Resources	Self-awareness & self-efficacy Motivation & perseverance Mobilising resources Financial & economic literacy Mobilising others
3.	Into action	Taking the initiative Planning & management Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk Working with others Learning through experience

### 2.2. The Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education

It is accepted that entrepreneurship education is not just about teaching someone to run a business, it is about encouraging creative thinking and promoting a strong sense of self-worth and empowerment (Garavan and O’Cinneide 1994; Gautam and Singh 2015; European Commission 2021a). According to European Commission (2021a) entrepreneurship education gives responsibility to learners by encouraging them to do things themselves, guides them towards identifying and seizing opportunities, supports inventive learning, encourages confidence in the learner’s own capabilities, pushes students to take risks and encourages them to cooperate with others. On the other hand, entrepreneurship education cannot achieve its objectives without the involvement of businesspeople, who play an important role in the acquisition of entrepreneurial competence (Apostu et al. 2022). Their involvement changes the role of the teacher. However, teachers are the ones who will play the main role in realizing the goals of entrepreneurship education and will equip students with entrepreneurial competencies (Ruskovaara and Pihkala 2013; Birdthistle et al. 2007). Yet, recent research has confirmed that the implementation of entrepreneurship education has been a challenge for teachers (Fayolle 2013; Oksanen et al. 2022; European Commission 2021a).

### 2.3. The Pedagogy Applied to Entrepreneurship Education

Teachers face difficulties in finding contents and methods to implement entrepreneurship education (Ruskovaara and Pihkala 2013; Seikkula-Leino 2008). Entrepreneurship education research is mainly based on the theoretical and conceptual understanding of entrepreneurship and learning, while entrepreneurship education is a question of learning for entrepreneurship, about entrepreneurship and through entrepreneurship (Gibb 2005; European Commission 2021a). According to Seikkula-Leino et al. (2010), entrepreneurship education is not an established part of teachers’ pre-service education and training, and continuous professional development. For this reason, it is necessary to change the curricula and develop new teaching and learning methods towards equipping teachers with the entrepreneurship competence.

There are different theories about the competences and previous experience of teachers, whether having entrepreneurial experience in order to pass it on to students (Bueckmann Diegoli et al. 2018), or whether having the possibility to acquire the entrepreneurial competence during initial teacher education and continuous professional development (Ibáñez-Cubillas and Gijón Puerta 2021; Peltonen 2015). Research demonstrates that collaborative learning can help teachers to adopt a more entrepreneurial teaching approach, rather than traditional education methods which do not provide for proper entrepreneurial skills and competences (Alvarez Marques and Albuquerque 2012).

The pedagogy applied to entrepreneurship education should be built on the active role of learners in the learning process which leads towards the non-traditional route of education (Gibb 2005). According to Johannisson et al. (1997) as cited in Alvarez Marques

and Albuquerque (2012), the entrepreneurial pedagogy is adopted to the educational legal framework and to different levels of education within the mainstream educational system. This implies a progressive strategy by considering the age of the students and their previously gained knowledge, starting with “field game” type activities and continuing with “field projects”. This requires the teacher to play an active role in the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and in mentorship of students in the way to acquire entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. It is necessary for teachers to receive training in either or both the experiential pedagogy, and the business content, to enable students to think independently and have the opportunity to learn through “errors” (European Commission 2021a).

In the Albanian education system, the concept of entrepreneurship competence has recently been included in the curricular framework of education. The eight key competences for lifelong learning of the European Union (Council of the European Union 2018) are transferred in the seven basic competences of the Albanian Pre-University Education Curricular Framework. Entrepreneurship competence was mentioned for the first time in 2012 in the legal framework, being later adopted by the curriculum framework, with the terminology “Competence for life, entrepreneurship and the environment”, to enable individuals to manage different situations that they encounter in life (Albanian Ministry of Education and Sport 2014). Through this competence, the school tends to prepare the individual to demonstrate skills in entrepreneurship, in organizing initiatives and group works (The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2015)). Through the data gathered by the survey, it is emphasized that theoretically teachers possess the entrepreneurship competence, while practically they have the possibility to share with students only the teaching process of entrepreneurship.

#### 2.4. The Gaps in the Research

It has been widely argued that the most relevant challenges of entrepreneurship education consist in the different dimensions of competencies to be created, the pedagogical approaches, learning strategies, and knowledge creation processes (Fayolle 2013; Ndou 2021; Secundo et al. 2016). The research on the entrepreneurship education affects educational programs, syllabi, and adapted methodologies to focus on students’ capacity i.e., the ability to benefit from the opportunities offered which they will be faced with (Banha et al. 2022). According to Volkmann et al. (2009), multiple approaches and interactive teaching methods are necessary to promote creativity, innovation, critical thinking, opportunity recognition and social awareness. Since there are required collaborative learning and a connection with experiential pedagogy and business content to enable students to think independently, it is necessary for the teacher to have acquired entrepreneurship education competence. Akpan (2021) considered entrepreneurship education a lifelong process, starting at elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. Nevertheless, Akpan (2021) features the dearth of teaching staff equipped with knowledge on entrepreneurship education and therefore the lack of entrepreneurial competencies of teachers. Huang et al. (2020) identified the factors that influence the formation of teachers’ competence in entrepreneurship education, linking them to professional training, new modes of teaching, entrepreneurial practice, entrepreneurial culture, and policy guarantee. Regardless of the volume in research on the importance and the role that entrepreneurship education plays in the development of the student, making him capable of “turning ideas into actions, ideas that generate values for someone other than for yourself”, there is a gap in research on the formation of the teacher with competencies and skills as a bridge between entrepreneurship education and the student (Colombelli et al. 2022). The assessment of teacher competence on entrepreneurship education, the factors that influence its mastery and the mechanisms of implementing teachers’ skills on entrepreneurship education have not been treated sufficiently.

The article intends to evaluate the entrepreneurship competencies of teachers by focusing on the factors that lead to obtaining this competence, such as university studies, in-service training in the framework of the professional development of teachers and

support by policies and legislation. Albania was chosen not only for reasons of practicality in data collection, but to demonstrate that the inclusion of entrepreneurship competencies in policies and legislation, rather than in teachers' knowledge and skills, is not sufficient. Based on the above discussion, the research question is posed: What is the level of mastery of entrepreneurial competences of teachers, the factors that influence this competence, and its implementation in the teaching process? For this research question, the following hypotheses are presented:

**Hypothesis 1.** *Teachers have received insufficient knowledge in entrepreneurship education from university studies or training.*

**Hypothesis 2.** *Teachers do not sufficiently exercise entrepreneurship competence due to lack of knowledge and skills.*

### 3. Methodology

The researchers employed the survey method to gain insight into the level of entrepreneurial competence of Albanian teachers and their need to develop competence in initial teacher education, continuous professional development and teachers' professional networks. As noted in the literature, the survey research is used to gather information about population groups to "learn about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences" (Leedy and Ormrod 2005; Brewer 2009). Providing information, the survey research has a specific purpose: to improve the effectiveness of educational research (Ebel 1980; Walston et al. 2017). The study collected data through a questionnaire designed to measure the level of recognition of entrepreneurial competence by the teaching staff of the Albanian education system. The questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms and the teachers' answers are recorded. The questionnaire was organized with 21 multiple choice questions, four of which were open-ended questions. The questionnaire was sent in the form of a link to the heads of 30 pre-university education schools, who were invited to cooperate in completing the survey together with their teachers. The schools are randomly selected and belong to the following types: elementary school, secondary school and vocational school. Educational institutions belong to the district of Elbasan and are located in rural and urban areas. In total, the number of teachers of all schools where the survey was sent reached approximately 600 teachers, but the questionnaire was completed only by 233 of them. There was no sampling selection of teachers. They belong to all subject profiles developed in pre-university education, grouped into: social sciences, natural sciences, computer science and vocational education. The online survey guaranteed the anonymity of the teachers enabling them to provide true opinions, and to share ideas in a safe and comfortable environment. The teachers were free to complete the questionnaire without interference, and this is proven by the number of teaching staff who completed the questionnaire, which is different from the total number of teachers, to whom the questionnaire was sent for completion. The answers to these questions provided information about the teaching staff's level of knowledge regarding entrepreneurial competence. The questionnaire completed by 233 teachers and school leaders who belonged to the nine-year education cycle, secondary education and vocational education would provide data on the mastery of entrepreneurship competence in pre-university education.

Data analysis starts with the presentation of descriptive statistics of the data gathered from google form survey. Detailed information is obtained using crosstabs and correlations analyses of different variables. After gathering the data from survey, it is used cross-tabulation for investigating the relationship between teachers' approach of getting the knowledge on entrepreneurship education and the ways of implementing this knowledge through various teaching methods. The information provided by cross-tabulations serves to investigate the relationship between variables such as: "Did you gain knowledge of entrepreneurship education during your initial teacher education and training?" and "If you received training on entrepreneurial competence, it was provided by:", as well as between "Do you develop



*projects at school that affect the development of entrepreneurial competence*" and *"Do you try to develop the entrepreneurial culture in students through your ideas during teaching?"*. To support the hypothesis, correlation analysis is used to measure the strength of the direct correlation of different variables such as knowledge obtained at university or training programs and entrepreneurial pedagogy.

Data collection took place during November 2022. The collected data from the questionnaire served to reflect on the policy and legal framework of Albanian education regarding entrepreneurial competence. They were also used to provide recommendations for changes needed in order for the Albanian education system to embrace entrepreneurship education.

### 3.1. Participants and Their Demographics

The questionnaire was completed by 233 Albanian teachers working in pre-university education. Participants were randomly selected from basic, secondary and vocational education schools. The schools were located both in urban and rural areas. According to the demographic data collected through the questionnaire, participants included young and experienced teachers of different genders. The participants held various positions within the schools.

The questionnaire was filled out individually by teachers online, without any possibility of intervention. The questionnaire ensured the preservation of confidentiality and informed participants' that the data of the questionnaire would be valid only for study purposes. In the sections below, questions from the questionnaire are indicated by the abbreviations Q1 for Question 1, Q2 for Question 2, etc.

Demographically, the participants varied. With regard to years of experience (Q1), 12.1% of respondents had five years of work experience or fewer, 12.1% had 5–10 years, 43.7% had 10–20 years, 11.7% had 20–25 years, and 20.3% had over 25 years of work experience. In terms of gender (Q2), 183 (79.2%) participants were female and 48 (20.8%) were male. Regarding the location of the participants' educational institutions (Q3), 130 (56.3%) participants reported working in urban areas, and 101 (43.7%) in administrative units and rural areas. Regarding the educational cycle where they teach (Q4), 38 (16.5%) participants taught in primary education, 147 (63.6%) participants taught in lower secondary education; 44 (19%) participants taught in secondary education and only 2 (0.9%) participants in vocational education. Finally, the participants were involved in different subject areas (Q5), with 148 (64.1%) participants in social sciences, 59 (25.5%) in the natural sciences, 22 (9.5%) vocational education, and two (0.9%) computer sciences.

### 3.2. Instrumentation

A questionnaire consisting of 21 questions, developed by the research team for this study, was administered to identify teachers' level of knowledge of entrepreneurial competence. In addition, the questionnaire assessed participants' understanding of the role entrepreneurial competence plays in the teaching and learning process. There were multiple-choice questions, where participants had the possibility of selecting more than one option and provide comments on the answer in case they were required to interpret their position. The questionnaire was sent to teachers via email invitation. Completing the questionnaire created the possibility for each participant to be identified by email address. Consequently, the data obtained from the questionnaire were individual, identifiable, and non-repetitive.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Survey's Components and Results

The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect reliable and concrete data from 233 educational workers who participated in the survey. The quantitative data were used for the empirical interpretation of the study. In the questionnaire, the collected data helped to define the theoretical and explanatory framework of the study, on the level of entrepreneurship competence in pre-university education in Albania.

The second set of questions is related to the collection of qualitative data, focusing on data regarding teachers' knowledge about entrepreneurship education and the level of knowledge applicability in the institutions where they teach. Data interpretation aims to highlight whether the curriculum used nowadays in education meets the requirements of entrepreneurship education. Hence, the researchers addressed this issue in the questionnaire by asking (Q6), "Did you gain knowledge of entrepreneurship education during your initial teacher education and training?" From the received responses, 93 (39.9%) participants reported that they did not receive entrepreneurship education during university training, 72 (30.9%) participants have received partial knowledge while 68 (29.2%) participants reported receiving this knowledge. This is explained by the fact that some of the participants classify the knowledge of pedagogy, psychology, and professional practice related to entrepreneurship education; some others specify the economics subjects as complementary to this knowledge and a significant part of the participants state that the university did not offer special modules on entrepreneurship education during their study period. Such an indicator is sufficient to create the possibility that the teachers apart from not receiving knowledge on entrepreneurship education, were not clear if the knowledge received belonged to this field.

Another question (Q7) sought to obtain information on the needs of teachers for additional knowledge in the area of entrepreneurship education. Specifically, the question asked: "Have you participated in entrepreneurship training after finishing higher education?" Response to this question varied and 103 (44.2%) of participants claimed to have participated in training programs on entrepreneurial competence, 42 (18%) of participants planned to participate in training programs in the framework of continuous professional development and 88 (37.8%) of individuals did not participate in such training after initial teacher education. Such indicators expressed the variation in teachers' knowledge of entrepreneurial competence.

In 2014, the Albanian curricular framework of education changed, including the competence for life, entrepreneurship and environment and shifted the attention towards learning based on key competences. The answer to (Q9) provided data on the extent of development of entrepreneurship competence during training sessions on the development of the curriculum based on core competences: "Have you acquired knowledge of entrepreneurship competence during training for the curriculum based on core competences?" Only 104 (44.6%) of the participants received trainings for entrepreneurship competence which enabled them to integrate it with the subject they taught. Another 79 (33.9%) participants responded that they received partial training. While only 50 (21.5%) responded negatively. From the data, it is noticed that less than half of the participants have knowledge about entrepreneurship competence. This means that only a part of teachers may use entrepreneurship knowledge for implementation during the teaching process.

In order to evaluate the interest of teachers for participating in training programs for improving entrepreneurial competence, (Q13) asked: "Would you be interested in being involved in training that focuses on improving entrepreneurial competence?" Most of the participants 153 (65.7%) are very interested in participating in trainings towards improving entrepreneurial competence, 65 (27.9%) participants are unsure about participating in these trainings and 15 (6.4%) do not show interest in improving such knowledge. These data are of particular importance as a positive indicator of the legitimacy of teachers towards entrepreneurial competence (Foliard et al. 2019).

The answer to question (Q14) provided different results: "Have your school established links and collaborative structures with businesses and community organizations to support the entrepreneurship curriculum?" From the data, 106 (45.5%) of the participants stated that they try to create connections and cooperation structures with businesses and community organizations to support the entrepreneurship curriculum in their schools. Another 97 (41.6%) of participants make partial efforts for such collaborations for the benefit of the entrepreneurship curriculum, while 30 (12.9%) of them do not make such an effort. The teachers were asked to provide their experiences related to possible tools used for the implementation of entrepreneurship education and they specified: fairs, col-

laborations within the subject “Education for Career”, “field projects” for the creation of a business company, various activities within the initiative “School as Community center”, crafts, activities supported by Junior Achievement, improvisation of entrepreneurial situations. When combined with data from (Q6), 164 (71%) participants reported that they did not receive entrepreneurship education during university training or have partially received it, which shows the need to improve and gain additional knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship education.

In order to guarantee a sustainable quality in education, teachers are organized in professional networks where they exchange experiences, knowledge, and materials for entrepreneurial learning. The answers to (Q15) provided data on the inclusion of teachers in professional networks related to entrepreneurial education: *Are you part of a professional network related to entrepreneurial learning and teaching?* Only 94 (40.3%) participants stated they were part of educational professional networks, 91 (39.1%) participants reported that they were not organized in any professional network, and 48 (20.8%) stated that such a professional network does not exist.

The answer to (Q16), “Do you have discussions/roundtables on specific topics for entrepreneurial education at school, in order to develop your professionalism?” provided similar results. The responses show that 58 (24.9%) of the participants answered yes and another 95 (40.8%) answered sometimes. On the other hand, 28 (12%) participants stated these roundtables are held rarely, where 52 (22.3%) of the participants stated the round tables regarding entrepreneurship education were never organized.

Another question (Q17) asked participants about the implementation of school projects which orient students towards implementation of entrepreneurship competence. This question asked, “Do you plan or implement school projects that guide students towards the implementation of entrepreneurial competence?”. According to the provided answers, 96 (41.2%) participants confirmed their engagement in such projects, 88 (37.8%) indicated their partial participation in these projects; 19 (8.2%) of participant stated their engagement as “Very rarely”, while 30 (12.9%) participants responded negatively.

When asked about *the involvement of the school in different organizations for training/projects related to entrepreneurship education* (Q18), 73 (31.3%) participants reported involvement of school in different projects related to entrepreneurship education and another 90 (38.6%) participants answered sometimes. On the other hand, 18 (7.7%) participants answered “very rarely” and 52 (22.3%) participants confirmed that the school in never involved in different organizations for entrepreneurship education.

Teachers were also asked *about the concepts that school curriculum addresses regarding entrepreneurship education* (Q19). For this question, 88 (37.8%) participants confirmed the inclusion of entrepreneurship education concepts in the school curriculum, 84 (36.1%) pointed partial inclusion and 61 (26.2%) participants responded negatively. They identified as well different subjects related to entrepreneurial competence such as “Finance in your hands”, the elective module “Entrepreneur for a day”, economy, and cultural heritage. From the data, it is noticed different levels of development of entrepreneurship competence, depending on the different subjects.

When asked about the participants’ opinion on the level of entrepreneurial competences in the role of supporter and facilitator of students’ knowledge (Q20), only 69 (29.6%) participants consider their competences as sufficient. Another 128 (54.9%) participants indicated partial possession of this competence and 36 (15.5%) stated that they did not possess the entrepreneurship competencies. The participants were asked to express themselves about their experience and the answers expressed different considerations regarding the activities related to goals of entrepreneurship education, such as: “I have no competence; it is an interdisciplinary connection; development through projects, fairs, group work; work with student government; computer entrepreneurship, management of recyclables, personal budget management, cooperation with organizations, visits to business locations. The data highlighted the struggle of educators to identify the content and methods needed for implementation of entrepreneurship education.

In the final question (Q21), participants were asked to list the forms of knowledge learning for entrepreneurial education. The results reveal that, 86 (39.6%) participants acknowledged that they have received this knowledge through qualifications or training programs. Sixty (27.6%) participants reported initial teacher education as a form through which they learnt regarding entrepreneurship education, 51 (23.5%) participants reported both continuous professional development and initial teacher educations as possible routes for this knowledge, and 20 (9.3%) participants stated other forms of knowledge learning (self-taught, personal skills, school activities).

4.2. Statistical Analysis of Main Indicators

The following questions shown in Table 2, highlight the lack of formal learning on entrepreneurship education received from universities and training programs, which is reflected in the perception of entrepreneurship competence by the teaching staff and the way of exercise the entrepreneurship competence due to insufficient knowledge and skills (information presented in Table 3). From the received qualitative data, it is debatable whether teachers are prepared and able to cultivate the culture of entrepreneurship in students.

Table 2. Crosstabulation of (Q6) and (Q8).

Did You Gain Knowledge of Entrepreneurship Education during Your Initial Teacher Education and Training? * If You Received Training on Entrepreneurial Competence, It Was Provided by: Crosstabulation					
		If you received training on entrepreneurial competence, it was provided by:			Total
		Training programs	Educational institutions	By the individual	
Did you gain knowledge of entrepreneurship education during your initial teacher education and training?	No	35.5%	20.4%	44.1%	100.0%
	Partly	38.9%	23.6%	37.5%	100.0%
	Yes	47.1%	38.2%	14.7%	100.0%
Total		39.9%	26.6%	33.5%	100.0%

Table 3. Crosstabulation of (Q8) and (Q10).

If You Received Training on Entrepreneurial Competence, It Was Provided by: * If Entrepreneurship Education Was Part of the Training Program, Were Approaches Such as: Project-Based Learning, Active Learning or Independent Learning, Part of the Training Pedagogy? Crosstabulation					
		If entrepreneurship education was part of the training program, were approaches such as: project-based learning, active learning or independent learning, part of the training pedagogy?			Total
		No	Partly	Yes	
If you received training on entrepreneurial competence, it was provided by:	Training programs	7.5%	31.2%	61.3%	100.0%
	Educational institutions	11.3%	30.6%	58.1%	100.0%
	By the individual	29.5%	39.7%	30.8%	100.0%
Total		15.9%	33.9%	50.2%	100.0%

Since the *p*-value is less than our chosen significance level  $\alpha = 0.01$  as shown in Table 4, we can reject the null hypothesis, and conclude that there is an association between the two above-mentioned variables.

Although almost half of the respondents expressed that they could manage to cultivate the culture of entrepreneurship as shown in Table 5, they still feel the need to attend training in this field in order to improve their competences.

**Table 4.** Chi-Square Tests of (Q8) and (Q10).

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-Sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.092 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	24.065	4	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	20.734	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	233		

<sup>a</sup> 0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.85.

**Table 5.** Crosstabulation of (Q11) and (Q12).

Do You Develop Projects at School That Affect the Development of Entrepreneurial Competence? * Do You Try to Develop the Entrepreneurial Culture in Students through Your Ideas during Teaching? Crosstabulation					
		Do you try to develop the entrepreneurial culture in students through your ideas during teaching?			Total
		It's not important	Sometimes	Often	
Do you develop projects at school that affect the development of entrepreneurial competence?	No	21.1%	56.1%	22.8%	100.0%
	Yes	0.6%	44.3%	55.1%	100.0%
Total		5.6%	47.2%	47.2%	100.0%

Since the  $p$ -value is less than our chosen significance level  $\alpha = 0.01$  as shown in Table 6, we can reject the null hypothesis, and conclude that there is an association between “Do you develop projects at school that affect the development of entrepreneurial competence” and “Do you try to develop the entrepreneurial culture in students through your ideas during teaching?”.

**Table 6.** Chi-Square Tests of (Q11) and (Q12).

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-Sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	43.175 <sup>a</sup>	2	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	39.640	2	0.000
N of Valid Cases	233		

<sup>a</sup> 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.18.

This is illustrated by taking the following questions as an example. “If entrepreneurship education was part of the training program, were approaches such as: project-based learning, active learning or independent learning, part of the training pedagogy?” and “Did you gain knowledge of entrepreneurship education during your initial teacher education and training”, showing a positive correlation of 0.322. According to Table 7, this result emphasizes the connection between the acquisition of knowledge on entrepreneurship education and their exercise by teachers in activities related to this competence.

**Table 7.** Correlation matrix of variables Q8, Q10, Q11, Q12.

		<b>Correlations</b>			
		<b>If You Received Training on Entrepreneurial Competence, It Was Provided by:</b>	<b>Do You Try to Develop the Entrepreneurial Culture in Students through Your Ideas during Teaching?</b>	<b>Did You Gain Knowledge of Entrepreneurship Education during Your Initial Teacher Education and Training?</b>	<b>If Entrepreneurship Education Was Part of the Training Program, Were Approaches Such as: Project-Based Learning, Active Learning or Independent Learning, Part of the Training Pedagogy?</b>
If you received training on entrepreneurial competence, it was provided by:	Pearson Correlation	1	−0.116	−0.193 **	−0.299 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.077	0.003	0.000
	N	233	233	233	233
Do you try to develop the entrepreneurial culture in students through your ideas during teaching?	Pearson Correlation	−0.116	1	0.196 **	0.388 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.077		0.003	0.000
	N	233	233	233	233
Did you gain knowledge of entrepreneurship education during your initial teacher education and training?	Pearson Correlation	−0.193 **	0.196 **	1	0.322 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003	0.003		0.000
	N	233	233	233	233
If entrepreneurship education was part of the training program, were approaches such as: project-based learning, active learning or independent learning, part of the training pedagogy?	Pearson Correlation	−0.299 **	0.388 **	0.322 **	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	233	233	233	233

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). All combinations showing two asterisks (\*\*) have a significant correlation among each other. Negative signs show that they have a negative correlation.

Overall, the results of the questionnaire show that teachers may not be prepared for entrepreneurship competence. Enterprise education is usually conceived more broadly, seeking to foster self-esteem and confidence by drawing on the individual's talents and creativity, while building the relevant skills and values that will assist students in expanding their perspectives on schooling and opportunities beyond. Methodologies are based on the use of personal, behavioral, motivational, attitudinal, and career planning activities (UNESCO/ILO 2006). The data obtained from the questionnaire provide the level of knowledge on the entrepreneurship competence possessed by teachers, as well as the methods of implementation during the teaching process. From the data, it is noticeable that a significant number of participants admit that the knowledge obtained in university studies for entrepreneurship education was at minimal levels or absent.

During preparation of teachers in initial teacher education, students receive knowledge on "Psycho-pedagogical training" and "Curricula training". The knowledge related to entrepreneurship education is integrated in the educational programs of "Psycho-Pedagogical Training". However, there is no real courses in higher education studies to equip future teachers with the competence of entrepreneurship education. The lack of obtaining this knowledge, highlighted as well in the questionnaire, creates a lack of connection between the competence of entrepreneurship and the individual who is preparing for this competence.

Entrepreneurship education programs can significantly change the entrepreneurial intentions of participants (Almahry et al. 2018), which can only happen if future teachers are prepared for this competence. Teachers mostly perceive entrepreneurship education as knowledge that is supplemented by pedagogy and psychology modules and not as an attitude and ability that is converted into individual initiatives for entrepreneurial activities with individual and social benefit.

Entrepreneurship education allows the student to develop different aspects of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, since the knowledge gained equips them with perceptions about their entrepreneurial skills (Porfírio et al. 2022). The data show that the development of modules, such as "Career Education", "Finance in your hands", and the projects developed by Junior Achievement (Q14), are indicators that the introduction of entrepreneurship education has a positive impact on the entrepreneurial attitudes of students (Junior Achievement of Albania 2014), despite the lack of teachers' knowledge on entrepreneurship education during their university studies.

Entrepreneurial culture is achieved and enlightened through education and training, processes which were found to be lacking in the group of respondents. If we have entrepreneurial competencies applicable, then we will believe that entrepreneurs are not born but they are made through their life experience (Gautam and Singh 2015).

## 5. Discussion

Entrepreneurship education is one of the fastest growing subject areas in the world due to increased interest in its ability to connect current business practices with academic theory (Ratten and Usmanij 2021). The main goal of entrepreneurship education is to develop certain levels of entrepreneurial competence. This is also reflected in the curricular framework of education in Albania, where entrepreneurship competence is defined as an attitude that orients students towards the future, to develop the spirit of entrepreneurship and to be motivated to meet the objectives (Albanian Ministry of Education and Sport 2014).

Yet, challenges with adapting education to entrepreneurship and better-preparing teacher education students is a long-standing issue (Arruti and Panos-Castro 2020). To help address this issue, the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp) aims to identify the competencies that make someone entrepreneurial, focusing on three competence areas with five competences each of them (Bacigalupo et al. 2016). These areas are summarized in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Study Findings in the light of EntreComp Framework.

EntreComp Framework			
No.	Area	Competence	Study Findings
1.	Ideas and opportunities	Spotting opportunities Creativity Vision Valuing ideas Ethical and sustainable thinking	49.4% of participants acknowledge the lack of training on project-based learning, active learning or independent learning, as part of the entrepreneurship pedagogy. (Q10) 60% of the participants acknowledge that they need further knowledge on entrepreneurship education (Q21).
2.	Resources	Self-awareness & self-efficacy Motivation & perseverance Mobilising resources Financial & economic literacy Mobilising others	(Q19): Only 37.7% of the participants confirmed the inclusion of entrepreneurship education concepts in the school curriculum, particularly in specific subjects such as “Finance in your hands”, the elective module “Entrepreneur for a day”, economy, and cultural heritage. 60% of the participants acknowledge that they need further knowledge on entrepreneurship education (Q21).
3.	Into action	Taking the initiative Planning & management Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk Working with others Learning through experience	105 (45.5%) of the participants stated that they try to create connections and cooperation structures with businesses and community organizations to support the entrepreneurship curriculum in their schools, while 54.5% of them make partial or no efforts at all (Q14). 60% of the participants acknowledge that they need further knowledge on entrepreneurship education (Q21).

Entrepreneurial competence is both individual and collective capacity (McCallum et al. 2018). Entrepreneurship is a competence for life, which must be developed through training programs or special modules in educational institutions. The results collected from the data analysis support Hypothesis 1: Teachers have received insufficient knowledge in entrepreneurship education from university studies or training. The data collected from variables Q6 and Q8 show that only 38.2% of teachers received training on entrepreneurial competence from educational institutions and 47.1% of teachers have provided such knowledge from training programs. While the cross tabulation of variable (Q8) “If you received training on entrepreneurial competence, it was provided by: training programs; educational institutions; by individuals” with the variable (Q10) “If entrepreneurship education was part of the training program, were approaches such as: project-based learning, active learning or independent learning, part of the training pedagogy?” supports the Hypothesis 2: Teachers will not sufficiently exercise entrepreneurship competence due to lack of knowledge and skills. Moreover, the correlation emphasizes that the lack of knowledge in entrepreneurship competence on the part of the teachers affects the lack of expansion of the competence in specific activities distributed in the curriculum and in the pedagogical aspect.

The unsatisfactory level of training and knowledge obtained on entrepreneurship education has resulted in the poor level of individual and collective capacities. The teacher needs to understand the entrepreneurship process and then to implement his/her ideas, in collaboration with others. This seems difficult to achieve, for as long as the teacher in the role of the student has a lack of knowledge on entrepreneurial education, the possibility to engage with the approach to entrepreneurial education becomes more difficult (Q6; Q7; Q8; Q21). Entrepreneurship education requires sound education for the educators (European Commission 2021a). The data obtained from this study identified shortcomings in the professional engagement of teachers in order to meet the competences of each area of EntreComp Framework.

During initial teacher education and training, the student performs mainly the professional practice and course assignments in the form of mini-projects. These courses try to fulfill the minimum needs on entrepreneurship education. This learning method is mainly related to knowledge about the concept of entrepreneurship rather than the process of explaining the concept and implementing it in a work process. Even after initial



teacher education, it seems that only some educators receive training on entrepreneurial education, where knowledge is mainly related to economics and business subjects. While entrepreneurship education should be included in all study programs, not only in business study programs, since one of the key competencies of the curricular framework in education is related to the competence of entrepreneurship (Q10; Q19).

Since 2012, the non-profit organization Junior Achievement Albania has been operating in Albania for the development of entrepreneurship education, which is dedicated to preparing teachers and youngsters for the world of entrepreneurship. Teachers get to experience a non-traditional way of teaching, getting closer to “the entrepreneurial teachers” who challenge young students to think outside the box and learn by doing (Junior Achievement of Albania 2014). Consequently, entrepreneurship education cannot be treated as knowledge only in economics, but in any other educational program, starting from primary education.

For instance, in the “Albanian language and literature” study program, a special module which enables students to develop computer platforms on the use of standard language can be implemented during initial teacher education (Q6). Such a platform can also serve as a start-up business. In this way, real-life situations are used to help students formulate their own ideas about engaging in or creating a new venture (Brawer 1997). Regardless of the fact that teacher training in entrepreneurial education within the framework of the Junior Achievement program is offered to a limited number of teachers, it is considered necessary to extend the activities of this program to every local educational institution (Albanian Ministry of Education and Sport and Albanian Ministry of Finance and Economy 2022).

It is necessary to develop a common framework to evaluate and improve the teacher training curriculum with involvement of clear methodologies to build entrepreneurship competencies through pedagogical processes and learning context (Fayolle et al. 2006). Entrepreneurship education is the study of the source of opportunities and the process of discovery (Gautam and Singh 2015), therefore knowledge of entrepreneurship education in second cycle study programs that prepare future teachers (Miço 2019), will enable students to return ideas into action and acquire entrepreneurial skills for implementing them during the teaching profession (Q19; Q20; Q21). In this way, it is possible to cultivate the culture of entrepreneurship, which starts with knowledge, feeds with ideas and is implemented with actions in practice.

Moreover, the regulatory framework should be expanded to include entrepreneurship education and pedagogy (Q6; Q7; Q8; Q9). Since various studies have recognized the provision of entrepreneurship education through non-traditional teaching methods (Gibb 2005), it is necessary that teaching methods be included in the education act and regulatory legal framework, to be a reference part of policy implementation (European Commission 2021b). In this way, educators will have the sense of identity and will play an active engagement in the learning methods of entrepreneurship education (Kelchtermans 2005).

Considering that entrepreneurship education requires a collaborative role of school with business community and other social organizations, an increased autonomy of school is required for a better implementation of the activities related to entrepreneurship competence (Q10; Q14). This will increase the knowledge of the teacher in entrepreneurship education, by serving as a boost for entrepreneurship competence simultaneously for teachers and students. On the other hand, since the concept of autonomy has remained unimplemented from the legal aspect, this requires the implementation of the Albanian law on the pre-university education system, regarding the financial and administrative autonomy of schools (Miço and Cungu 2022; On Pre-University Education System in the Republic of Albania Law of 2012, Pub. L. No. 69/2012 2012, Pub. L. No. 69/2012 2012).

## 6. Conclusions

The need to address entrepreneurship education in terms of teacher education has become evident not only from international policies with the support of international

organizations, but also from the implementation of the competence-based curriculum in Albanian education. For a variety of reasons, Albanian educators encountered lack of knowledge about entrepreneurship education. This study indicates the need to strengthen entrepreneurship competence in education in terms of teaching competence, pre-service teaching programs, in-service training, curricula, and cooperation with the school with stakeholders. The goal is a holistic approach towards an educational system that guides learners to identify and seize opportunities, supports incentive learning, and encourages confidence in the learners' own capabilities. The study highlighted the fact that the entrepreneurial competence of teachers is interconnected with a vivid role of school in community. In Albania, research in the framework of the connection between entrepreneurship education and teachers is insufficient. Entrepreneurship education competence is perceived to be offered to students mainly through one of the elective subjects at pre-university education level, despite being a key competence of the curriculum framework. For this reason, this paper is innovative and carries values that serve to address the suggestions made to change this perception. The limitation of this study is that more factors should be considered to further explore teachers' competencies in entrepreneurship education and the relationship between teachers' knowledge and skills and entrepreneurship competencies. An analysis according to the teacher's professional profile should be added to the questionnaire to highlight different levels of entrepreneurship education obtained in different profiles of the teaching profession. Furthermore, further study on how to improve teachers' competency through university studies and training would serve the best implementation of entrepreneurship competence.

Entrepreneurship education embraces a non-traditional teaching method that requires specific competencies, methods, and tools. It increases teachers and school principals' competence by providing them with new knowledge through the learning-by-doing method. Since knowledge about pedagogy, didactics and psychology are part of Master programs in the field of teaching, it is necessary that entrepreneurship education to be part of pre-service training. Teachers should be provided with the theoretical content of entrepreneurship education, the importance of this methodology for students, and methods on how to implement this knowledge via in-class practice.

Given that the Albanian education system continues to be centralized both politically and financially, the need for investment in entrepreneurship education must be met by the government in parallel with curricular changes in pre-service and in-service training. To facilitate this, mechanisms should be built not only to promote and improve teachers' knowledge in entrepreneurship competence, but to introduce ways of incorporating entrepreneurial knowledge in the legal framework and in Albanian educational policies. The results of this study further reveal the need to adopt the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp), to include it into educational policy and legislation, and to break it down into concrete areas of the teaching profession. The results of this study can provide a focal point for policy reflection on the part of the state, with the goal of increasing investment in education to facilitate the entrepreneurship education.

In addition, this study may increase awareness among faculties and universities that offer pre-service teaching programs to enable different courses with a focus on improving entrepreneurship competence of graduating teachers about to enter future classrooms. Finally, the study seeks to provide a voice for governmental institutions developing educational policies in Albania to provide ongoing training for teachers in the field of entrepreneurship education.

**Author Contributions:** The authors have collaborated together in every phase of the article. Conceptualization, H.M. and J.C.; methodology, H.M. and J.C.; software, H.M. and J.C.; validation, H.M. and J.C.; formal analysis: H.M. and J.C.; resources, H.M. and J.C.; data curation, H.M. and J.C.; writing—original draft preparation, H.M. and J.C.; writing—review and editing, H.M. and J.C.; visualization, H.M. and J.C.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to the anonymity of the survey participants.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** Data supporting reported results are gathered via google form, created from the email address jonidacungu21@gmail.com. The data are available in every moment they are required.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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