

CASE STUDIES AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS: COLLABORATION BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND INDUSTRY

Rasa Pocevičienė

*Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija / Higher Education Institution,
Professor of Management and Communication Department (Lithuania)*

Abstract

Analysis of theoretical and empirical discourse allows to state that entrepreneurial skills and competences can no longer be treated only as professional competences, necessary only in certain areas. Today they are perceived as general, transversal competences, relevant in any field of activity or profession, as well as in personal life. For this reason, the development of entrepreneurial skills and competences should be included in most study programmes (especially in universities of applied sciences) or as a separate study subject (compulsory or freely chosen/free optional), or as a topic, or as a part of the study philosophy, which would be implemented through study methods, techniques, tools, resources, etc. In 2025 research was conducted at Šiauliai State Higher Education Institution (SVK). The participants of the research were students and teachers involved in entrepreneurship education. The research aimed to identify the main factors of entrepreneurship education that have the greatest positive impact on the development of students' entrepreneurial competencies, and to provide recommendations to higher education institutions (HEI) in the field of student entrepreneurial competencies development. The research showed that both when studying a separate study subject dedicated to entrepreneurship education and when integrating entrepreneurship education topics into other study subjects, the most positive impact is achieved by the applied study methods, among which the case analysis method occupies a special place. As the research showed, the case analysis method not only perfectly develops entrepreneurial skills and competencies, but also provides excellent opportunities for students to get acquainted with real-life situations, learn to solve them and thus be better prepared for real professional activities during their studies. The case analysis method also creates favourable conditions for cooperation between HEI and industry. As shown by the analysis of the results of the research such cooperation is beneficial for all the aforementioned partners in the study process: both students and the HEI and business enterprises. The solution of cases proposed by companies – as real practical situations, real business challenges – is not only a means of motivating and involving students. The solutions proposed by students, according to company representatives, often are applied in companies. The recommendations presented in the article will enable the improvement of the process of developing students' entrepreneurial skills and competencies, and the practical examples of the application of the case analysis method at the institution will likely encourage HEI teachers to pay more attention to the development of students' entrepreneurial competencies.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial skills and competencies, case studies, higher education, university and industry collaboration, management of teaching/learning process.*

1. Introduction

Analysis of theoretical and empirical discourse allows to state that entrepreneurial skills and competences can no longer be treated only as professional competences, necessary only in certain areas. Today they are perceived as general, transversal competences, relevant in any field of activity or profession, as well as in personal life. Today, entrepreneurship plays a unique role not only in economic development. It is a vital source of change in all aspects of society. Not only the constantly changing environment, intensifying urbanization processes, increasingly intense and widespread globalization of markets, the industrial and educational revolution, new “breakthrough” technologies, longer life expectancy and constant changes determine this need. The need is also based on a new concept of entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurial competencies are increasingly associated less with business creation or development, and with other, even very distant areas from business (World Economic Forum ..., 2020; Jobs and Skills Transformation ..., 2026).

On the other hand, such an approach also presupposes the application of new teaching/learning methods in the practice of developing entrepreneurial skills. One such method could be the case study method, which is a widely used teaching and learning tool that gives students the opportunity to be particularly active participants in the teaching/learning process. In business, management, and other social science studies, the case study method brings a piece of the real world into the learning process to help students develop their thinking skills, especially critical thinking, to gain a deeper understanding of business problems and find better, more practical, more adaptable solutions.

Moreover, the case study method also integrates other methods relevant to the development of entrepreneurial competencies, such as discussions, problem solving, teamwork, etc. Such active participation can not only promote intellectual exchange and enable students to make critical decisions, but also ensure greater synergy between theory and practice, creating natural prerequisites for higher education and industry cooperation, long-term and mutual partnerships, because cases taken from the life and activities of a professional enable them to understand the applied purpose of scientific knowledge. At the same time, the solutions of those cases can be applied in business and industry. And all this makes teaching/learning meaningful. And since the focus of learning in case studies is on students, the teacher's role also changes. From being an information provider, he becomes a mediator between scientific knowledge, real life and the student. He becomes a learning facilitator, whose main focus is not on the content, but on the management of the learning process. Teachers also need to understand the purpose of the method, know its specifics and apply it in a way that is beneficial to all parties involved in the educational process.

2. Theoretical discourse of case studies

Case studies were used for business education purposes in the early 20th century at Harvard University (Naumes and Naumes, 2012, Cooney, 2026). Case studies are usually based on real events or circumstances. They tell stories of conflicts, problems or situations that need to be resolved, which involve decision-makers in real-life situations and develop appropriate competencies. This feature of case studies, as we have already mentioned, is very motivating and engaging for participants, because it is interesting, relevant, and gives meaning to the learning process. Traditionally, case studies provide detailed information that can be supported by graphs, tables, financial information or other forms of data. Typically, case study participants are asked to analyse a situation and propose recommended solutions under certain conditions (Cooney, 2026). According to W. Naumes and M. J. Naumes (2012), case studies are designed to stimulate discussion and analysis of a specific situation; therefore, it is an active educational process in which students act as active learners, collaborating with other students as well as with the companies whose case they are solving. For example, an integral part of the entrepreneurship education activities organized at our university are visits to the companies and institutions themselves, contact meetings with representatives of the companies of the cases under consideration, even their inclusion in the assessment procedures of students' study achievements.

By using case studies, entrepreneurship educators offer students hands-on learning opportunities that are highly applicable to their environment and encourage students to critically analyse and propose solutions to situations that regularly occur in the world of entrepreneurial activity. Such cases can also be used to examine everyday problems or challenges, as well as abstract and complex problems, encouraging students to solve problems and make decisions that arise in a complex and constantly changing business environment (Ilonen, 2021). The benefits to students are diverse and include learning by doing, applying prior learning and learning from peers, the ability to structure one's own work, and the value of working with others in a team. The case study approach allows students to develop skills such as critical analysis, problem solving, and strategic thinking. It also develops presentation skills. Students are also taught to structure their learning environment and develop clear roles and responsibilities when working in a group (Cooney, 2026). The case method is an evolving, interactive approach that enhances critical thinking, analytical skills, and real-world application. (Puri, 2020; 2025; Toogood, 2023; Jelenc, 2010). It is useful in developing transferable skills such as: teamwork, individual learning skills, information gathering and analysis, time management, presentation skills, and practical skills (Cooney, 2026; Martinez, 2022). Indeed, case studies also allow for the demonstration of the ability to draw on theory and apply theoretical knowledge in practice, which clearly helps to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Case studies are also of benefit to teachers as they enable greater interaction to take place between the teacher and the students. Classes are no longer an environment where a subject expert imparts knowledge to the gathered audience; instead, discussions and cross-communication occur, leading to debate and more developed reasoning around various learning points. Indeed Golich et al. (2000) argued that case teaching promotes good practice in instruction in the following ways: encourages contact between students and faculty – especially contact focused on the academic agenda; develops reciprocity and cooperation

among students – teaching them to work productively with others; encourages active learning – thinking, doing, and thinking about what they are doing; gives prompt feedback on performance – helps students figure out what to do in response; emphasises time on task – provides lots of useful, productive, guided practice; communicates high expectations – and encourages students to have high self-expectations; respects diverse talents and ways of learning – engenders respect for intellectual diversity.

According to Barnes et al. (cit. from Cooney, 2026), the main task of the case study method is not to teach but to promote learning. Therefore, the teacher, as we have already mentioned, becomes a facilitator of learning, a discussion leader, and not just a disseminator of knowledge as in a traditional lecture style. Depending on the level of students' abilities and the nature of the course being taught, the teacher can also change the format of the class discussion to meet the needs of the specific case or simply to avoid repetition. For example, the teacher can divide students into groups in the class and ask them to solve the problems identified in the case study or to create their own scenarios, or he can invite the student to play the role of facilitator to create an alternative approach to the learning opportunity (Toogood, 2023)

The case study methodology greatly enhances the ability of teachers to effectively help students truly understand the main aspects of the learning presented to them, and therefore, as a teacher, a greater sense of achievement is gained. Like any educational method, the case study method also has its own methodology. A case study usually begins at an individual level, when the student reads the case and tries to understand it. The case is also discussed in the student's case study group (selected by the student or pre-assigned by the teacher), as they first analyse the main problems related to the case, and then look for possible solutions. The next stage of the process is when the group (or groups) are invited to present their work to an audience, usually other students, and the teacher and other students ask questions related to the analysis and the proposed solutions. A whole-group discussion takes place. The final stage of the case study is the summary, during which the teacher may also present his/her reflections on the case study and how he/she could address the main problems raised. (Cooney, 2026; Martinez, 2022; Jelenc, 2010)

At the beginning of a case study, it is helpful to introduce students to the method itself and to provide practical advice on how to analyse and prepare a case study. McDade (cit. from Cooney, 2026) gave the following advice to students preparing a case study: to review the case; to identify the main problems; to check are there any additional data that should be considered; to read the case carefully, make notes in the margins; to identify the main problems in the case making a list and to prioritize these problems; make a list of recommendations; evaluate the recommendations against the alternatives; discuss your analysis with the rest of the class.

3. Methodology

The main methodological concepts are based on:

- Pragmatism (Dewey, 1966; Bitinas, 2000; Duoblienė, 2006), which emphasizes active participation in learning process by the way of experimenting, solving real life problems, assessing the behavioural effects, active participation in society's life; which also emphasizes the importance of interaction between individuality and society.
- Social constructivism and reconstructivism, which enable critical interpretation of "formed" educational phenomena and understanding them in a sociocultural context. (Berger, Luckmann, 1999 and etc.)
- A phenomenological approach favours a dialogue between learner and teacher, which requires a lot of effort and preparation required from the teacher. (Mickūnas, Stewart, 1994, and etc.)
- Humanistic psychology and pedagogy, where education in a democratic community is characterized by "cooperation, participation, social integration, social responsibility (Maslow, 1943; Rodgers, 1996 and etc.).
- Progressivism philosophy (Duoblienė, 2006; Bitinas, 2000), which emphasizes active person 's participation in his/her own learning process and society 's life too.
- "Free" education access (Rogers, 1996), which is based on the student's and teacher's interaction, where the student and teacher has to be free to find their own truths, where the learning process is seen as a discovery, learning from their experiences and through his experience as an active and conscious participation in the process.
- The learner-centred conception (Bitinas, 2000; Duoblienė, 2006), which is based on humanism, pragmatism, progressivism ideas about the free, conscious and active personality, which can realize your needs, actively and constructively to solve real life problems, and so on.

3.1. Objectives

The research aimed to identify the main factors of entrepreneurship education that have the greatest positive impact on the development of students' entrepreneurial competencies, and to provide recommendations to HEI in the field of student entrepreneurial competencies development.

3.2. Methods

The qualitative analysis was based on the experience of Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija / Higher Education Institution in developing of entrepreneurial competencies by using case study methods and collaboration among HEI and industry.

3.3. Design

In the 3 focus groups (2 with the students, each by 9 students, and 1 with the teachers, 7 teachers) there were organized the discussion where the main attention was paid on the teaching and learning methods which were used during the different activities for entrepreneurship development as well as the recommendations for future was highlighted too.

4. Discussion

The participants of the research were students and teachers involved in entrepreneurship education. The research showed that both when studying a separate study subject dedicated to entrepreneurship education and when integrating entrepreneurship education topics into other study subjects, the most positive impact is achieved by the applied study methods, among which the case analysis method occupies a special place. Teaching / learning methods that were offered for development of entrepreneurial skills. The results are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Teaching / Learning Methods Were Offered for Development of Entrepreneurial Skills.

Teaching / Learning Methods	Percentages
Live classes	88,2
Course materials uploaded on the e-learning platform (MC Teams)	88,2
Discussions with the teachers	58,8
Live video conferences	76,5
Collaborative activities	52,9
Individual activities	64,7
Discussions in the groups	52,9
Team work	41,2
Case studies	41,2
Project-based activities	29,4
Other	5,9

As can be seen in the table, traditional methods and activities are still popular in entrepreneurship education, such as face-to-face lessons and course materials uploaded to an e-learning platform (88.2%), live video conferences (76.5%), and individual activities (64.7%). Methods that are more related to practice and real life, and, according to various entrepreneurship education researchers and experts, more suitable for developing entrepreneurial skills and competences, are also used, but certainly less frequently. On the other hand, they are more liked and positively evaluated by students and teachers themselves. Students were asked to evaluate the teaching/learning methods used. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students Opinion about the Teaching / Learning Methods, which Were Used for Entrepreneurial Skills' Development.

Activities for Development Intercultural Literacy	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Have no opinion
Live classes	47,1	47,1	5,8	-
Course materials uploaded on the e-learning platform	52,9	35,3	11,6	-
Discussions with the teachers	64,7	35,3	-	-
Live video conferences	58,7	41,3	-	-
Collaborative activities	52,9	47,1	-	-
Individual activities	52,9	47,1	-	-
Discussions in the groups	52,9	47,1	-	-
Team work	52,9	35,3	-	11,6
Case studies	58,7	35,3	-	5,8
Project-based activities	47,1	47,1	-	5,8

The focus group discussions (students and lecturers) that followed the surveys showed that the case study method not only perfectly develops entrepreneurial skills and competencies, but also provides excellent opportunities for students to get acquainted with real-life situations, learn how to solve them, and thus better prepare for real professional activities during their studies. The case study method also creates

favourable conditions for cooperation between higher education institutions and industry. As the analysis of the research results shows, such cooperation is beneficial for all the aforementioned partners in the study process: both students, higher education institutions, and business enterprises.

5. Conclusions

- The study showed that both when studying a separate study subject dedicated to entrepreneurship education and when integrating entrepreneurship education topics into other study subjects, the greatest positive impact is achieved by applied study methods, among which the case analysis method occupies a special place.
- As the study showed, the case analysis method not only perfectly develops entrepreneurial skills and competencies, but also provides excellent opportunities for students to get acquainted with real-life situations, learn to solve them and thus better prepare for real professional activities during their studies.
- The case analysis method also creates favourable conditions for cooperation between higher education institutions and industry. As the analysis of the study results shows, such cooperation is beneficial for all the aforementioned partners in the study process: both students, higher education institutions and business enterprises.
- Solving cases proposed by companies – as real practical situations, real business challenges – is not only a means of motivating and involving students. According to company representatives, solutions proposed by students are often applied in companies.

References

- Berger, L., & Luckmann, Th., (1999). *Socialinis tikrovės konstravimas*. Vilnius: Pradai.
- Bitinas, B. (2000). *Ugdymo filosofija*. Vilnius: ENCIKLOPEDIJA.
- Dewey, J. (1966). *Democracy and Education. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: The Free Press.
- Duoblienė, L. (2006). *Šiuolaikinė ugdymo filosofija: refleksijos ir dialogo link*. Vilnius: Tyto alba.
- Cooney, T. M. (2026). *The use of case studies in entrepreneurship education*. Available at <https://www.elgaronline.com/>
- Golich, V. L., Boyer, M., Franko, P., & Lamy, S. (2000). The ABCs of Case Teaching. Pew Case Studies in International Affairs Georgetown University, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <https://researchswinger.org/others/case-method-teaching.pdf>
- Ilonen, S. (2021). Creating an entrepreneurial learning environment for entrepreneurship education in HE: The educator's perspective // Industry and Higher Education. *Sage Journals*, 35(4), 518-530.
- Jelenc, L. (2010) The Case Study Method. In M. Brunnhofer (Ed.), *Higher Education in South Eastern Europe* (pp. 38-47). Wien, Austria: World University Service. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288822257_The_Case_Study_Method
- Jobs and Skills Transformation: What to Know at Davos (2026). Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2026/01/davos-here-s-what-to-know-about-jobs-and-skills-transformation/>
- Martinez, C. (2022). Developing 21st Century Teaching Skills: A Case Study of Teaching and Learning Through Project-based Curriculum. *Cogent Education*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.2024936>
- Maslow, H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 1943.
- Mickūnas, A., & Stewart, D. (1994). *Fenomenologinė filosofija*. Vilnius.
- Naumes, W., & Naumes, M. J. (2012). *The Art and Craft of Case Writing* (3rd ed). Armonk: M. E. Sharpe Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/625901151/The-Art-and-Craft-of-Case-Writing-2>
- Puri, S. (2020). Effective Learning Through the Case Method. *Innovations in education and Teaching International*, 59(2), 161-171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2020.1811133>
- Puri, S. (2025). Teaching with the Case Method to Build and Teach management Theory in Offline and Online Courses. *Innovations in education and Teaching International*, 63, 2026(2), 526-537. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14703297.2025.2482074?src=recsys>
- Rogers, C. (1996). *Teaching Adults*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Toogood, C. (2023). Supporting Students to Engage with Case Studies: A Model of Engagement Principles. *Educational Review*, 77(4), 1125-1139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2023.2281227>
- World Economic Forum: The Top 10 Skills You'll Need for the Future of Work. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.cooracademy.com/en/blog/learning-innovation-en/world-economicforum>