



AGENZIA ITALIANA  
PER LA COOPERAZIONE  
ALLO SVILUPPO



**elis**  
Associazione Centro ELIS



**PROJECT:**

**“INCREASING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT  
THROUGH SCHOOL-BUSINESS LINKS  
IN BAC NINH PROVINCE, VIETNAM”**

Hanoi – October 2019



The main idea behind the present text was initially linked to the publication of the research "Developing entrepreneurial competencies: evidence from the Bac Ninh Province", which still remains among the most important tasks that have been completed within our project: "Increase in youth employment through school-business connection in the Province of Bac Ninh - Vietnam".

However, as the project approached its conclusion, it seemed appropriate to gather together in a single text a summary description of the activities carried out, also as a fair recognition for those, individuals and institutions, who have provided their collaboration for the good progress of the numerous and articulated project's activities conducted.

The realization of a cooperation project is not a simple undertaking, the complexity of which can be ascribed to various factors starting from the implementation of choices which – even if agreed, as in our case, with the competent local Authorities - have been formulated and refer to profoundly different social and institutional contexts. To this it is necessary to add the bureaucratic times and norms that force both the executor and the beneficiary to a rigidity that does not always conform to the results that are intended to be pursued.

These difficulties were encountered also in the present project and I believe I can say that they have been largely overcome; this was obviously my wish, moreover supported by the vast experience I have accumulated having had the honor of following the activities of the ELIS Center Association in Vietnam since its inception. A special thanks goes to the memory of the engineer Alfonso Oliviero for being the initiator of the activities of ELIS in Vietnam, a country that he intensely loved. I would also like to express my deep respect for Prof. Dang Huu, minister of the Environment at that time, who has always supported us and continued to follow our activities in Vietnam with great interest.

Our NGO has been present in the country since 1995, when our first missions began, followed by the implementation of the following cooperation projects, within which the training and educational activities are clearly prevalent:

1. Start-up and development of SME in Vietnam;
2. Vietnamese knitwear training center;
3. Professional training for combating youth unemployment in Hanoi;
4. Start-up and development of a technical-professional institute as a prototype center for school-work training for Vietnamese youth in the city of Hanoi;
5. Increase in youth employment through school-business connection in the Province of Bac Ninh.

They have been years of very intense activity, which have involved, even on a personal level, considerable commitment and sacrifices, but repaid by the certainty of having acted in favor of people in need, also creating "bridges" that were certainly means of communication and of brotherhood between very different realities.

*Riccardo Pettinelli*  
*Head of Special Projects ELIS NGO*





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# INTRODUCTORY NOTES





*L'Ambasciatore d'Italia  
Hanoi*

I am very pleased to write this brief introduction to the final report of the ELIS Center, regarding the ongoing project for increasing youth employment, started in 2015 in the Vietnamese province of Bac Ninh.

As always, in the activities of the ELIS Center - a non-governmental organization engaged in Italy and in the world on innovation and vocational training - the added value of the project doesn't consist only of the quality of the courses provided or of the cautious identification of the beneficiaries in a province that is experiencing a tumultuous economic and industrial growth.

This project made the difference, compared to the work done by the national and provincial Authorities in charge, for the care and attention given to the needs of the individuals, whose professional development is seen as part of a wider personal and human growth within a rapidly changing society.

Vietnam in two decades, from being a predominantly rural society based on family and inter-generational solidarity, has become the region's most dynamic economy, achieving great success, but also facing profound consequences in the population's social fabric.

Particularly significant in this respect was the effort of the ELIS Center to ensure the inclusion of young people with disabilities, equipping them with technical, cultural and professional tools to adapt to changes.

The project was successfully incorporated, and with great results, in the strategy of our development aid in Vietnam, articulated in different sectors (energy, water resources, small and medium-sized enterprises, bio-security, protection of cultural heritage) in which the training aspect always becomes the most important one, especially in this kind of granted initiatives, which, with an amount of around 700,000 euros, has made it possible to offer the necessary and qualified complement to the largest on credit aid interventions financed in the country.

Now that the project is about to end, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the direction of the ELIS Center and to all the professionals, both Italian and Vietnamese - who carried out numerous activities - for having kept up the image of the Italian Cooperation in Vietnam, along with the hope that the precious network of contacts and relationships built in the province of Bac Ninh will be preserved in the future and will produce long-term results, both for the increase in youth employment in this country and for the benefit of the Italian-Vietnamese bond.

Hanoi, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019

***Antonio Alessandro***

***Ambassador of Italy to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam***



**Department of Labor - Invalids and Social Affairs of Bac Ninh province**  
**Abbreviated name: DOLISA**

On February 16, 1987, the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs was formed based on the consolidation of two ministries: Ministry of Labor, Ministry of War Invalids and Social Affairs. Inheriting and developing precious traditions of previous predecessors, together with localities throughout the country, the Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs in Bac Ninh has been established and operated since then under the direction and inspection, professional and professional guidance of the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs

Department of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs is a specialized agency under supervision of the Provincial People's Committee (PPC); functioning as the state management agency on employment, vocational training, labor, salary, social insurance (compulsory social insurance, voluntary social insurance, unemployment insurance), industrial safety, people with merit, social sponsor, children protection and caring, gender equality, social evils prevention (generally called as labor, people with merit, and society), and public services under Department's management in accordance with Vietnamese law. In addition, Department implements other duties according to the PPC's authority and Vietnamese law.

- Department of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs has legal status, its own seal and account. It is under guidance and management on organization and personnel of the PPC as well as specialized guidance and inspection of Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs.

On June 23, 2016, Bac Ninh Provincial People's Committee and ELIS Association Center (Italy) and Department of Labor - Social Affairs of Bac Ninh signed an agreement to implement the project; On November 22, 2016, Chairman of Bac Ninh Provincial People's Committee issued Decision No. 665 / QD-UBND to approve the content of the project document "Enhancing job opportunities for youth through school connection - enterprises in Bac Ninh province ". In the framework of the project, the Department has collaborated with ELIS to carry out many activities to connect with enterprises and improve the quality of vocational training for some colleges in the province in order to create job opportunities for students after graduation.

Specifically, the project has provided professional training to teachers at 3 project beneficiaries (Bacninh College of Industry; Bac Ninh College of Electromechanics and Construction; Vocational Training and Rehabilitation for disabled people Center in Bac Ninh), organizing soft skills classes, seminars and courses on connecting schools - businesses with the goal of improving business access capacity for teachers and business relations officers school career. Organize new short-term vocational courses for disabled people in the province; skills training courses for staff working in the care of people with disabilities in relevant localities conducted by Italian experts on disability. Funding for computer lab practice room for Bac Ninh Job Service Center and sponsoring classroom repair for vocational training and rehabilitation centers for the disabled in Bac Ninh province

The research and seminar on Developing Entrepreneurial Competencies in Vietnam that was held in Bac Ninh province by ELIS'expert has affirmed the importance of developing the entrepreneurial capacity for students in vocational education. the research has shown the difference in the assessment of Bac Ninh's schools and businesses on entrepreneurship capacity building for students, thereby helping policy makers and vocational trainers gain precious suggestions for completing and updating training programs in order to meet the requirements of the labor market.

**Dinh Van Duan**  
**Director of DOLISA Bacninh province**



The Italian Cooperation to Development has been present in Vietnam since 1990, year of the signing of the first Technical-Financial Cooperation Agreement between the two countries. In all these years, the Italian Cooperation has dealt with numerous activities, from post-emergency interventions - in support of the local population - to the infrastructural and environmental protection programs - essential to mitigate the effects of climate change here in Vietnam - up to the new sectors of sustainable development, carefully paying attention to the major social and economic changes occurred in the country.

Among all the current priorities, workers' rights and their professional training, represent a key step to support the modernization and competitiveness of Vietnam in the new dynamics of the national and international economy.

Within this framework, the Centro ELIS Association's contribution is pertinently and accurately included in the activities of the Italian Cooperation in Vietnam.

The innovative work accomplished by the Association in supporting the improvement of the vocational training system and therefore the increase of youth employment in the Province of Bac Ninh is fundamental and widely recognized by all the Italian and local working partners of the association itself.

It is worth noting that in the development process carried out by the Association, the involvement of excellence both from the academic world and from the Italian voluntary sector played a key role, bringing a unique added value to the projects.

I would like to emphasize the importance that the Centro ELIS has given to the themes of youth emergency, to the promotion of women's role and to the issue of disability.

Thanks to the implementation of specific courses on these topics, the Association provided quality assistance to hundreds of beneficiaries and promoted the development of specialized local training centers that will continue the valuable work started with this project.

It is therefore with great favor and gratitude that this AICS Office in Hanoi considers absolutely positive, not only the initiative undertaken, but the entire contribution made by the Centro ELIS Association to the social and economic development of Vietnam.

*Martino Melli*  
*Director of AICS Office in Hanoi*



For over fifty years now, the Centro ELIS Association - founded in Italy and currently present in many foreign countries - has been engaged in the field of youth vocational training. This important task is carried out by spreading a peculiar vision of society, where the professional growth of young people is inextricably linked to the development of citizens aware of the need to contribute to the creation of fairer and more supportive societies. It is a commitment that was born according to the will of the inspirer of the Association - Saint Josemaría Escrivá – and which was perpetrated, even as volunteers, by professionals expert in vocational and dual training.

Therefore, it was a great pleasure for me to learn that the Centro ELIS Association was about to launch a new initiative which, in addition to being in the wake of our most authentic vocation, was also a further confirmation of our interest and love for Vietnam, where the Association has been present for many years conducting several development cooperation initiatives.

The research that is the subject of this publication and the project of which this research has been part have now been completed and it is certainly not my task to make any assessment in this regard; what I can say - as President of the Association - is that our workers and volunteers' tasks have been carried out with great enthusiasm and with a strong civil commitment. My hope is that what has been sown with so much love could give a harvest of fruits far greater than the benefits brought by the project alone; at the same time, I can assure our Vietnamese friends that the Association I have the honour to chair will always be available to contribute to the improvement of the local training system.

*Michele Lepri Gallerano*  
*ELIS Association Center President*



# DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES IN VIETNAM: EVIDENCE FROM THE BAC NINH PROVINCE

Maria Giovanna Devetag<sup>a</sup>, Giovanni Zizzerini<sup>a,b</sup>, Nguyen Quang Tuan<sup>c</sup> and Doan Quang Hung<sup>a,d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Business and Management, LUISS University, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Department of Economics, University of Perugia, Italy

<sup>c</sup> Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, Bac Ninh, Vietnam

<sup>d</sup> Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam

## 1. Introduction

The problem of youth unemployment is a serious one in several developed and emerging countries. In the effort to contrast it, local institutions have started to look for lines of interventions that may help providing students with the skills and competencies that best meet the current needs of the local labor markets in the effort to increase youngsters’ employability and knowledge exchange between industry and education.

This global issue is particularly serious in the Bac Ninh Province in Vietnam where youth unemployment is an increasing concern among policy makers and institutions. One of the reasons of such high unemployment seems to lie in the job candidates’ poor level of qualification and specialization, which induces enterprises to hire employees from nearby regions or to employ graduated for unskilled activities.

The present paper intends to present the results of a survey conducted among colleges and enterprises located in the Bac Ninh Province, with the aim of identifying the most important skills and competencies that local enterprises require from prospective employees, and – in parallel – the types of competencies that colleges transmit to students, with the aim of identifying gaps and discrepancies which may help explain the students’ current low level of employability and, consequently, help identifying lines of intervention that may help reduce the gap.

The paper is organized as follows: section 2 describes the Bac Ninh Province and the labor market figures and key issues; section 3 briefly illustrates the theoretical framework concerning the concepts of employability, competencies and entrepreneurship in the light of the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework developed by the European Commission; section 4 discusses the methodology of our research; section 5 presents our main findings and interpretations, and offers some suggestions to policy makers; finally, section 5 offers some concluding remarks and key recommendations.



<sup>1</sup> McCallum et al. (2018)

## 2. The Bac Ninh Province

The Bac Ninh Province comprises an area of 822.7 km<sup>2</sup>. The population is over 1.2 million people, including around 0.7 million people in working age. Every year, almost 12,000 people reach the working age and constantly increase the local job offer. In addition to the local workforce, there is also a large number of workers from other locations who are looking for a job in Bc Ninh. There is therefore an overall pressure from local institutions towards increasing the offer of vocational training and, as a result, the province occupation level. To achieve the goal of maintaining the unemployment rate below 2.4%, the province should create additional 27,000 jobs every year (of which 11,000 for local workers).

To meet the demand for qualified human resources coming from enterprises and industrial parks, vocational training has always been at the center of the provincial development plan. Currently there are 56 vocational training institutions in the Province, including 12 vocational Colleges, 19 secondary vocational schools, 6 vocational training and continuing education centers, 11 elementary vocational training centers and 8 professional training units.

In recent years, following the implementation of the new law on vocational training and the guidelines from central and provincial public bodies, vocational training has been actively improved and has achieved significant results. Some colleges and vocational schools have achieved more effectiveness in linking training programs to labor market needs by signing cooperation agreements with local businesses. On average, the annual enrollment in professional training institutions is over 50,000, increasing the percentage of workers trained to 66% in 2017 and 69% in 2018. 80% of graduates finds a steady job after training; in some renewed colleges this number is 100%.



To train highly skilled workers, the quality of training is also put on the front line. On the one hand, structures and equipment in vocational training institutions are constantly improved with annual financial support to strengthen the quality of vocational training, on the other, new curricula and training programs have been developed addressing new professions, and the current curricula have been updated and adapted to the demands of the job market.

However, beside some improvements, there are still some shortcomings. First, the network of vocational training centers is cumbersome, overlapping with training disciplines. Vocational training is still inadequate and unbalanced: 80% is short-term training of elementary professional level (duration of 3 months), while just 20% is at university and secondary level. Second, the training quality of workers is still low, not meeting the requirements of enterprises and labor markets, especially in the high-tech sectors. Third, the skills and professional qualifications of some teachers and administrators are not yet adequate. Fourth, there is an overall lack of collaboration between enterprises and vocational training institutions. Finally, the recruitment of students in vocational training institutions, in particular private ones, faces many difficulties due to the psychological tendency of students who prefer to study in universities rather than in professional schools, preferring public schools to private ones.

### 3. Entrepreneurial competencies

In this section we briefly review the current state-of-the-art in the managerial and entrepreneurial literature concerning entrepreneurial competencies, what they are, why they are relevant, and how they can be developed through entrepreneurial education.

Scholars, governments and institutions all are trying to address the unemployment issue by identifying those skills and competencies needed on the labor market. The gap between the skills people learn and the skills people need is becoming larger, as traditional learning falls short of equipping students with the knowledge they need to be able to find a job and/or to start a business. Employability is defined by Knight and Yorke (2004) as “A set of achievements - skills, understandings and personal attributes - that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy”. It refers to the graduates’ abilities to adapt and use personal and academic skills in entering into the job market. Academic skills are formal and technical knowledge acquired at school and or at the university. They are called “hard skills”, while personal “soft skills” refer to personal traits, attributes, attitudes and behaviors. Silva (2009) effectively defines them saying that soft skills focus on “what students can do with knowledge, rather than what units of knowledge they have” and they typically cover communication skills, team working, media literacy, creativity thinking, problem solving, intercultural skills, etc.

As skills are the basis of employability, several studies set lists of skills needed. Employability requires the continuous acquisition and the optimal use of one’s competencies ( Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006). The European Commission (2007) identifies a set of eight key competencies required for individual development and hence global economic development: a) communication in the mother tongue, b) communication in foreign languages, c) mathematical competencies and competencies



competencies in science and technology, d) digital competence, e) learning to learn f) social and civic competencies, g) cultural awareness and h) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. Among these competencies, entrepreneurship holds a prominent position because of the impact on employability as well as on innovation and thus economic growth (Wong et al., 2005).

The importance of entrepreneurship education to help students develop entrepreneurial competencies has been recognized both in higher education contexts and vocational education contexts, where starting a business is the natural outcome of vocational training (Hao and Ye, 2018). Moreover, students will find a job faster because of the interaction with the business community, the new knowledge gained, and skills developed (Mlinarević et al., 2015).

On top of that, entrepreneurial education helps people to address work challenges in an increasingly globalized, uncertain and complex world we live in (Gibb, 2002) and it can build engagement and motivation in both education (Surlmont, 2007) and in work life (Amabile and Kramer, 2011). In a social entrepreneurship perspective, entrepreneurial education helps also to address problems in society and create social value (Rae, 2010; Volkmann et al., 2009; Lackeus, 2015)

Here, the concept of entrepreneurship must be broadened to include the development of certain personal qualities and mindsets, which are fundamental regardless of whether one owns a business, has an employer or is self-employed, and which can be summarized in “an individual’s ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports individuals, not only in their everyday lives at home and in society, but also in the workplace in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity” (European Commission, 2007).

In a different but related perspective, the managerial literature pointed out peculiar skills that may help identify innovators inside organizations. In their research involving hundreds of innovators and thousands of entrepreneurs, managers and executives from around the world, Dyer, Gregersen and Christensen (2011) identified associating, questioning, observing, networking and experimenting as shaping the innovators’ DNA.

Entrepreneurial competencies refer to the stock of knowledge, traits, attitudes, and skills needed to start and grow a venture (Lackeus, 2015; Gümüşay and Bohné, 2018). They encompass several aspects. Beside basic business skills (marketing, financial and strategic skills), the capacity to spot and recognize opportunities is considered crucial (Tang et al. 2012; Ardichvili et al. 2003). personal and interpersonal characteristics matter as well. Personal virtues such as innovativeness and creativity (Krueger, 2005), proactiveness, perseverance (Sánchez, 2011) risk tolerance, openness to experience (Caliendo et al. 2014) as well as interpersonal ones like leadership, team-working, managing people, communication (Man et al., 2002) are all considered building blocks of the entrepreneurial set.

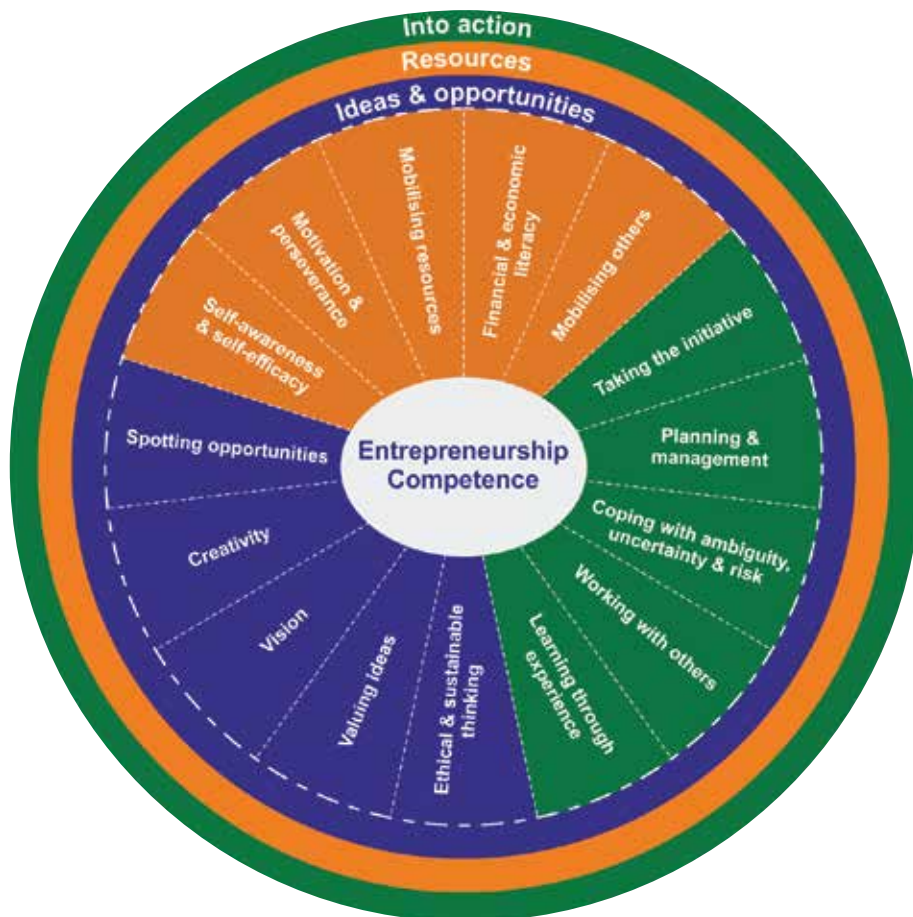
Entrepreneurial competencies are also detailed in the model by Bagheri and Pihie (2011). The model distinguishes five entrepreneurial competencies, which are connected with two basic challenges that

that entrepreneurs face. Firstly, entrepreneurs face the challenge of envisioning the future and the question on how to make their vision come true (scenario enactment); secondly, they have to influence and inspire people to accomplish their vision of the future (cast enactment). For scenario enactment, entrepreneurs need to be proactive, innovative and willing to take risks, whereas cast enactment requires competencies of commitment building and specifying limitations.

Drawing upon the literature above mentioned, we next describe the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (Bacigalupo et al. 2016) that has been applied in the Bac Ninh Province to figure out guidelines on entrepreneurship education, and which represents an effective synthesis of the empirical studies above described.

The EntreComp wheel below (Figure 1) offers an overview of the different yet interconnected entrepreneurial competencies. These competencies are grouped in 3 areas: Ideas & Opportunities, Resources, and Into Action. Each area contains 5 competencies, and together these make up the 15 competencies that individuals use to discover and act upon opportunities and ideas (Table 1).

*Figure 1 - The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework*



Source: Bacigalupo et al. 2016

**Table 1 – Description of Entrepreneurial Competencies**

**Ideas and opportunities**

<b>Competence</b>	<b>Hint</b>	<b>Description</b>
1.1 Spotting opportunities	Use your imagination and abilities to identify opportunities for creating value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify and seize opportunities to create value by exploring the social, cultural and economic landscape</li> <li>- Identify needs and challenges that need to be met</li> <li>- Establish new connections and bring together scattered elements of the landscape to create opportunities to create value</li> </ul>
1.2 Creativity	Develop creative and purposeful ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop several ideas and opportunities to create value, including better solutions to existing and new challenges</li> <li>- Explore and experiment with innovative approaches</li> <li>- Combine knowledge and resources to achieve valuable effects</li> </ul>
1.3 Vision	Work towards your vision of the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imagine the future</li> <li>- Develop a vision to turn ideas into action</li> <li>- Visualise future scenarios to help guide effort and action</li> </ul>
1.4 Valuing ideas	Make the most of ideas and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Judge what value is in social, cultural and economic terms</li> <li>- Recognise the potential an idea has for creating value and identify suitable ways of making the most out of it</li> </ul>
1.5 Ethical & sustainable thinking	Assess the consequences and impact of ideas, opportunities and actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assess the consequences of ideas that bring value and the effect of entrepreneurial action on the target community, the market, society and the environment</li> <li>- Reflect on how sustainable long-term social, cultural and economic goals are, and the course of action chosen</li> <li>- Act responsibly</li> </ul>

**Resources**

<b>Competence</b>	<b>Hint</b>	<b>Description</b>
2.1 Self-awareness & self-efficacy	Believe in yourself and keep developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflect on your needs, aspirations and wants in the short medium and long term</li> <li>- Identify and assess your individual and group strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>- Believe in your ability to influence the course of events despite uncertainty, setbacks and temporary failures</li> </ul>
2.2 Motivation & perseverance	Stay focused and don't give up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be determined to turn ideas into action and satisfy your need to achieve</li> <li>- Be prepared to be patient and keep trying to achieve your long-term individual or group aims</li> <li>- Be resilient under pressure, adversity, and temporary failure</li> </ul>

2.3 Mobilising resources	Gather and manage the resources you need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Get and manage the material, non-material and digital resources needed to turn ideas into action</li> <li>- Make the most of limited resources</li> <li>- Get and manage the competencies needed at any stage, including technical, legal, tax and digital competencies</li> </ul>
2.4 Financial & economic literacy	Develop financial and economic know-how	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Estimate the cost of turning an idea into a value-creating activity</li> <li>- Plan, put in place and evaluate financial decisions over time</li> <li>- Manage financing to make sure your value-creating activity can last over the long term</li> </ul>
2.5 Mobilising others	Inspire, enthuse and get others on board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inspire and enthuse relevant stakeholders</li> <li>- Get the support needed to achieve valuable outcomes</li> <li>- Demonstrate effective communication, persuasion, negotiation and leadership</li> </ul>

### *Into action*

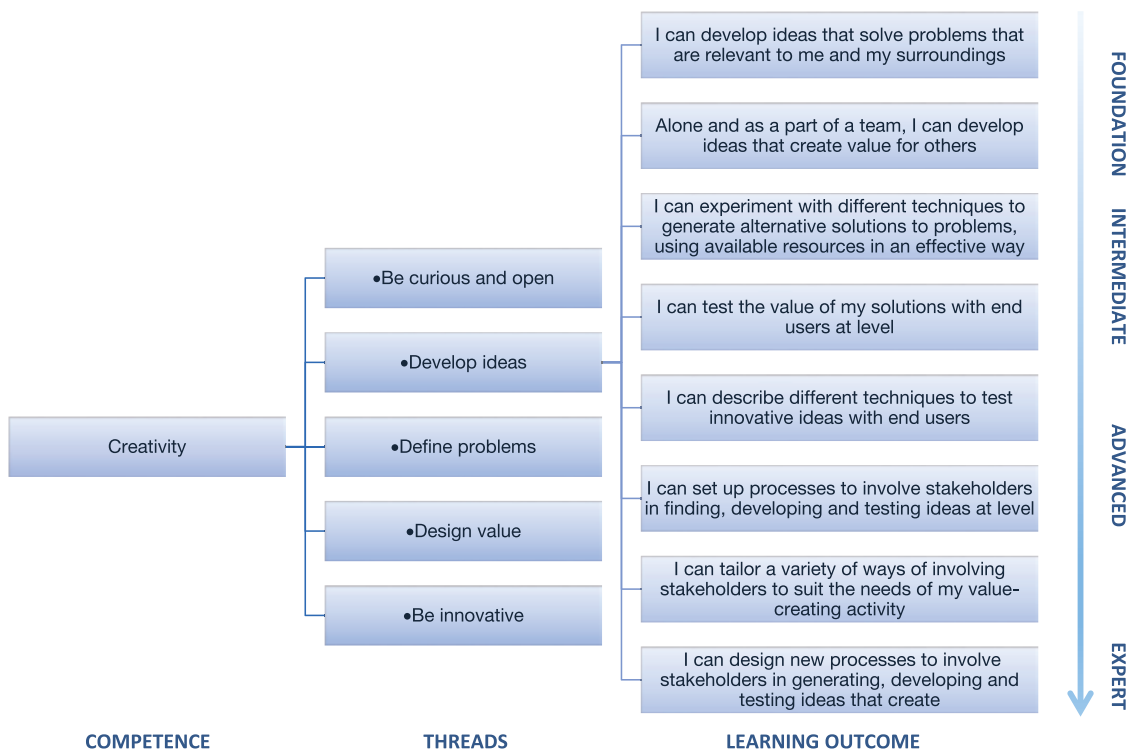
<b>Competence</b>	<b>Hint</b>	<b>Description</b>
3.1 Taking the initiative	Go for it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initiate processes that create value</li> <li>- Take up challenges</li> <li>- Act and work independently to achieve goals, stick to intentions and carry out planned tasks</li> </ul>
3.2 Planning & management	Prioritise, organise and follow up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set long-, medium- and short-term goals</li> <li>- Define priorities and action plan</li> <li>- Adapt to unforeseen changes</li> </ul>
3.3 Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk	Make decisions dealing with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make decisions when the result of that decision is uncertain, when the information available is partial or ambiguous, or when there is a risk of unintended outcomes</li> <li>- Within the value-creating process, include structured ways of testing ideas and prototypes from the early stages, to reduce risks of failing</li> <li>- Handle fast-moving situations promptly and flexibly</li> </ul>
3.4 Working with others	Team up, collaborate and network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work together and co-operate with others to develop ideas and turn them into action</li> <li>- Network</li> <li>- Solve conflicts and face up to competition positively when necessary</li> </ul>
3.5 Learning through experience	Learn by doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use any initiative for value creation as a learning opportunity</li> <li>- Learn with others, including peers and mentors</li> <li>- Reflect and learn from both success and failure (your own and other people's)</li> </ul>

Source: Bacigalupo et al. 2016



For each of the 15 competencies there is a set of threads that specify the competence. Each thread has associated learning outcomes across 8 progression levels, from foundation to intermediate, advanced and expert levels.

For example, looking at the creativity competence (n.1.2) the framework allows to identify the following threads and learning outcomes.



Source: Authors' elaboration from Bacigalupo et al. 2016

The progression levels show that competencies could be developed increasingly to achieve each of the outcomes identified. It represents also a reference model for the development of proficiency starting from value creation achieved through external support, up to leading the value creation. It consists of four main levels: foundation, intermediate, advanced and expert. At the foundation level, entrepreneurial value is created with external support. At the intermediate level, entrepreneurial value is created with increasing autonomy. At the advanced level, responsibility to transform ideas into action is developed. At the expert level, the value created has considerable impact in its reference domain. This sense of progression is important when considering the development of entrepreneurial competencies over time, in that the different stages could also contribute to create a coherent entrepreneurship education pathway.

## 4. Methodology

Our research was motivated by previous interviews and informal investigations conducted by one of the authors in the Bac Ninh province; the investigations had highlighted several problems concerning the local educational system which echo the ones reported in section 2 and can be briefly summarized as follows:

- Enterprises view graduates from colleges in search of their first job as not possessing competencies that best respond to their demands and needs;
- More specifically, enterprises view graduates as lacking both specific skills related to their field of study and more general competencies;
- Among general competencies, the ones in which graduates perform worst are mastering foreign languages, analytical and problem-solving skills, but also soft skills such as leadership, oral and written communication, ethics and creativity.

Starting from this anecdotal evidence, we decided to conduct a survey among both colleges and enterprises within the Bac Ninh province to gather more systematic evidence on the presumed mismatch between demand and offer competence-wise.

We conducted two different surveys, the first one, directed at enterprises, was administered to 65 enterprise representatives in the Bac Ninh province; the second survey was directed at colleges and was administered to 47 representatives of colleges in the same area (both surveys are available in Appendix). The entire research was conducted during spring and early summer 2018. The Bac Ninh Province was selected because it is highly known as one of the fastest growing industrial districts in Vietnam. There are 15 industrial parks in the area, attracting several foreign direct investment (FDI) projects such as those by Canon, Samsung, P&Tel, Sumitomo, Foxconn, ABB, Orion, PepsiCo and Nokia. The enterprises were randomly selected within the enterprise census list of The General Statistics Office of Vietnam in 2016.

We developed the questionnaire based on the framework by Bacigalupo et al. (2016) to assess the perception of both colleges and enterprises. Questions included the respondents' judgments of importance of each competence belonging to the framework (on a 7-point scale), and the respondents' opinion on the set of competencies that students should acquire to successfully compete on the job market as well as on the most effective teaching modality (e.g., within specific courses, through internships or extra-curricular activities, etc.).

Our research was exploratory, the main goal being the understanding of which competencies may facilitate graduates' access to the local job market, and the extent to which such competencies are part of curricula offered by colleges. The next section offers an analysis of our main findings.

## 5. Research results

Our analysis draws upon the entrepreneurial framework by Bacigalupo et al. (2016) above described, which includes three main areas that overall contribute to define and determine entrepreneurial competencies: "Ideas and opportunities", "Resources" and "Into Action", with each area characterized by five entrepreneurial competencies. The student needs to be able to recognize and seize unexploited opportunities, he/she needs to develop several ideas aimed at value creation and use suitable and available resources to turn them into actions.

## 5.1. Which entrepreneurial competencies are important for colleges and for enterprises?

The first question asked respondents to state the importance (on a 7- point scale) of each of the competencies in the Bacigalupo framework.

Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4 below present radar plots reporting mean values of five competencies in each area of the Bacigalupo framework, distinguishing between colleges (orange line) and enterprises (blue line). Besides descriptive statistics information, in Table 2 we report the results of a Kruskal-Wallis test for paired differences between colleges and enterprises responses. If the result is significant ( $p$ -value less than 0.05), the perception of colleges differs from that of enterprises.

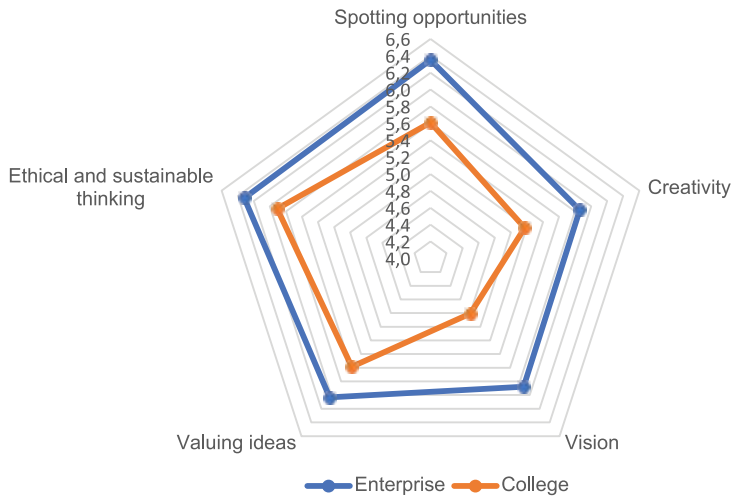
### 5.1.1. Ideas and opportunities area

Intuitively, Figure 2 reports the mean values (over a 7-scale) of responses for colleges and enterprises in orange and blue line respectively. Arranging from the smallest to the largest mean values, we can see that the ranking of competencies for colleges are ethical and sustainable thinking (5.91), spotting opportunities (5.61), valuing ideas (5.58), creativity (5.17) and vision (4.81); and the rankings of competencies for enterprises are spotting opportunities (6.35), ethical and sustainable thinking (6.32), valuing ideas (6.03), vision (5.88) and creativity (5.86). In general, enterprises' responses show less variance compared to colleges'. However, Figure 2 also reveals a substantial gap between university and enterprise responses. This evidence is also confirmed by the results of the nonparametric tests reported in Table 2, indicating that all the differences in responses are statistically significant. To sum up, in the "ideas and opportunities" area, rankings of importance for colleges and enterprises are fairly similar, but the gap in mean values is relevant and significant. More specifically, for all five competencies analyzed, enterprises report a significantly higher judgment of importance compared to colleges. For three competencies in particular, differences are highly significant: spotting opportunities, creativity, and vision. Companies value these competencies much more important than colleges do.

**Table 2: Kruskal-Wallis test for difference between perception of college and enterprise**

Area	Entrepreneurial competencies	Chi2(1)	P-value
Ideas and opportunities	Spotting opportunities	9.144	0.003
	Creativity	4.626	0.032
	Vision	15.148	0.000
	Valuing ideas	3.925	0.048
	Ethical and sustainable thinking	3.932	0.047
Resources	Self-awareness and Self-efficacy	2.320	0.128
	Motivation and perseverance	0.014	0.906
	Mobilizing resources	2.259	0.133
	Economic and financial literacy	0.967	0.326
	Leadership	5.120	0.024
Into action	Taking the initiative	3.737	0.053
	Planning and management	12.047	0.001
	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	12.370	0.000
	Working with others	0.934	0.334
	Learning through experiences	2.498	0.114

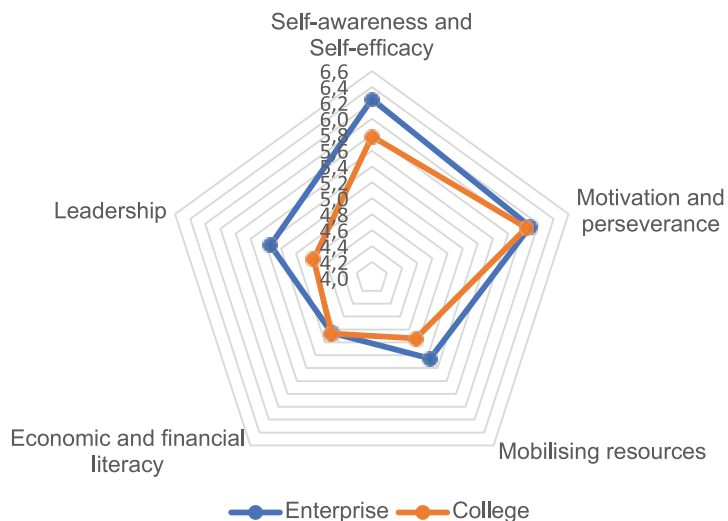
**Figure 2: Ideas and opportunities area**



**5.1.2. Resources area**

Figure 3 shows the mean values in the “resources area”; the ranking of importance for colleges is 1) motivation and perseverance (6.04), 2) self-awareness and self-efficacy (5.78), 3) mobilizing resources (4.94), 4) economic and financial literacy (4.86), and 5) leadership (4.77). The ranking for enterprises is 1) self-awareness and self-efficacy (6.25), 2) motivation and perseverance (6.09), 3) leadership (5.34), 4) mobilizing resources (5.25), and 5) economic and financial literacy (4.85). As Table 2 shows, in this area colleges and enterprises evaluations differ less compared to the previous area. The only significant difference concerns “leadership”, which is considered by enterprises much more important than by colleges, despite being ranked only third. The results clearly suggest that colleges should modify their curricula to include the development of the “leadership” competence.

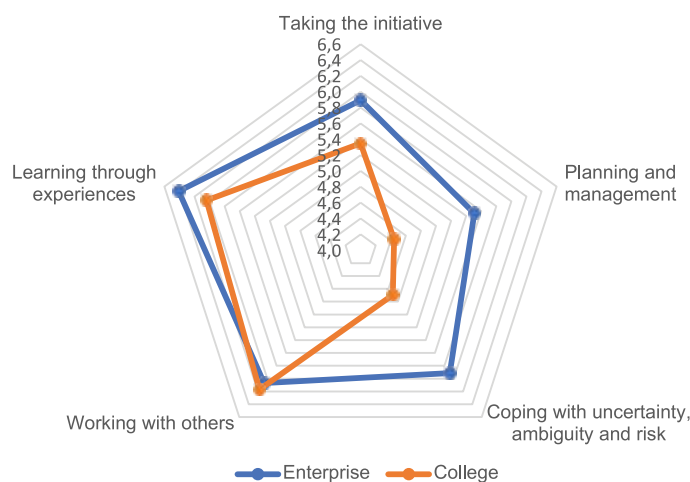
**Figure 3: Resources area**



### 5.1.3. Into action area

In this area, the ranking of mean values for enterprises is 1) working with others (6.17), 2) learning through experience (6.04), 3) taking the initiative (5.35), 4) coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk (4.69) and 5) planning and management (4.44). For colleges, the ranking is 1) learning through experiences (6.41), 2) working with others (6.07), 3) coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk (5.91), 4) taking the initiative (5.89), 5) and planning and management (5.51). In general, their responses show less variance. Interestingly, the expectation of colleges and enterprise emphasize the last two competencies of this area, which are team up, collaborate and network; learning by doing in terms of rankings are not different in terms of statistics (see two last rows in Table 2).

Figure 4: Into action area



## 5.2. Which entrepreneurial competencies should be trained? The difference between college and enterprise

This section of the questionnaire asked respondents to select, from the list of 15 competencies of the Bacigalupo framework, those that according to them should be included in college curricula. Respondents could select any competence from 0 to all 15. In figure 4, 5, and 5 we report, for each competence, the percentage of college and enterprise respondents who selected that competence. We analyze the results separately for each area, as above.

### 5.2.1. Ideas and opportunities area

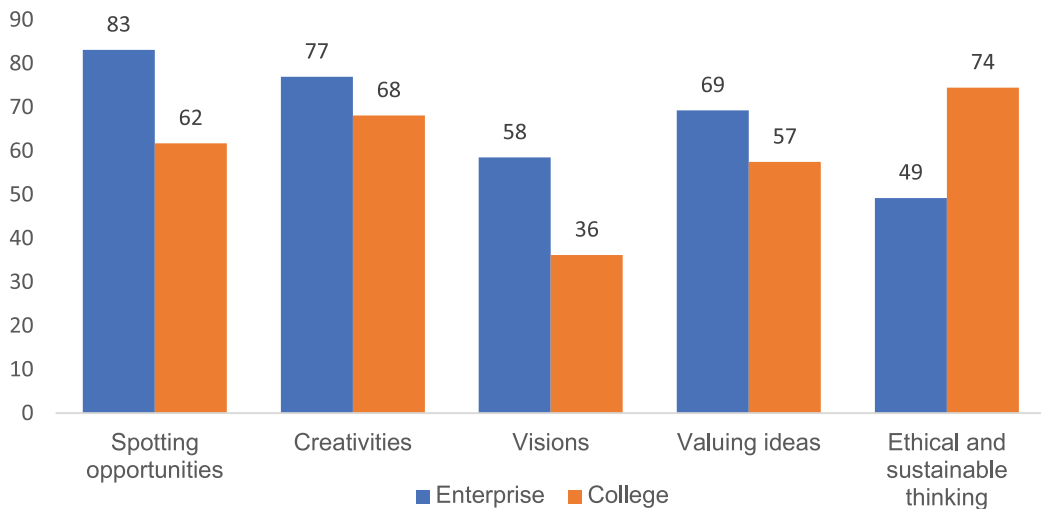
Figure 5 shows the percentage of enterprises (blue) and colleges (orange) that selected each of the five competencies belonging to the “Ideas and opportunities” area. Percentages for enterprises are almost always higher than those for colleges, meaning that there is a clear gap between what colleges consider important to offer in terms of competence development and what enterprises would require. In other words, the share of enterprises that consider a given competence a necessary part of a student curriculum is higher than the corresponding share for colleges. The only exception is “ethical and sustainable thinking”, for which the difference between colleges and enterprises is reversed. Evidently, colleges consider ethics and sustainability very relevant competencies, while the same is not true for enterprises.

Table 3 reports the results of the Chi-Square test for differences in values between colleges and enterprises. Differences are statistically significant (p-value less than 0.5) for “spotting opportunities”, “visions”, “ethical and sustainable thinking” (in the reversed direction as opposed to all other differences, as already pointed out). Hence, colleges should promote the development of curricula to include soft skills that help students seize opportunities and imagine scenarios, whereas enterprises should be encouraged to value ethics and sustainability more than they currently do.

**Table 3: Chi-squared test for college and enterprise about “Which entrepreneurial competencies should be trained”**

Area	Entrepreneurial competencies	Chi2(1)	P-value
Ideas and opportunities	Spotting opportunities	6.495	0.011
	Creativities	1.086	0.297
	Visions	5.423	0.020
	Valuing ideas	1.650	0.199
	Ethical and sustainable thinking	7.228	0.007
Resources	Self-awareness and Self-efficacy	8.564	0.003
	Motivation and perseverance	0.022	0.883
	Mobilizing resources	0.486	0.486
	Economic and financial literacy	0.687	0.407
	Leadership	0.364	0.546
Into action	Taking the initiative	2.835	0.092
	Planning and management	6.416	0.011
	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	2.087	0.149
	Working with others	12.148	0.000
	Learning through experiences	1.772	0.183

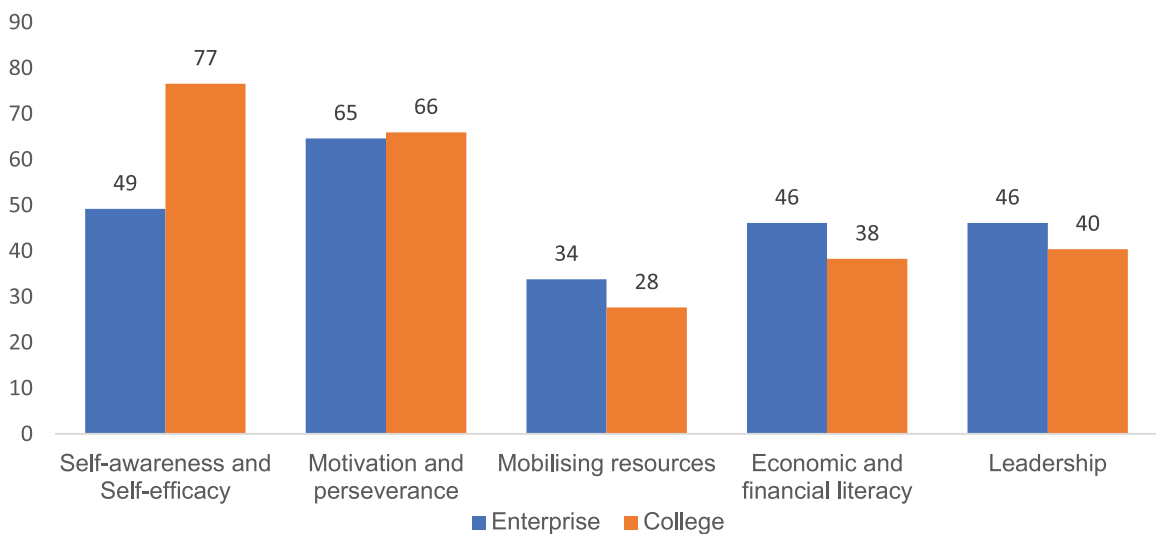
**Figure 5: Ideas and opportunities area - Should be trained**



### 5.2.2. Resources area

Results for competencies in this area are somewhat less clear-cut. The share of enterprises is higher for some competencies, while the opposite is true for other competencies. The only highly significant statistical difference lies in “self-awareness and self-efficacy”, for which opinions of colleges and enterprises dramatically diverge. More specifically, colleges seem to consider this particular competence essential for future entrepreneurs, whereas enterprises on average do not seem to share this view (although 50% of them do select the competence in the list).

Figure 6: Resources area - Should be trained

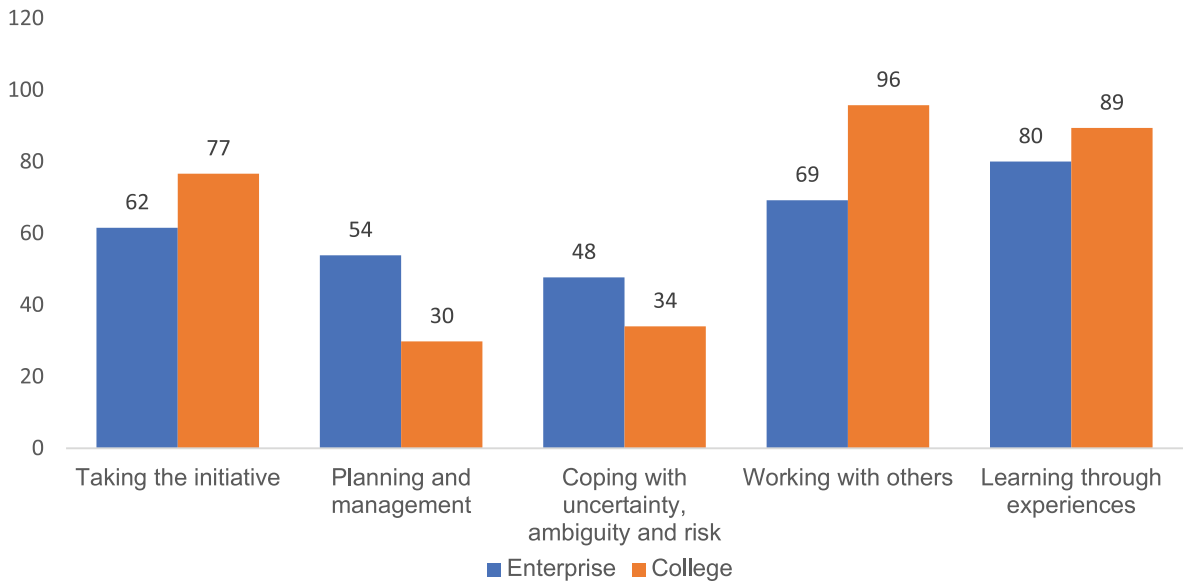


### 5.2.3. Into action area

In this section, the results show that both enterprises and colleges consider “working with others”, “learning through experience” and “taking the initiative” as very important relative to the other competencies from this section. Regarding differences, the shares of colleges and enterprises differ significantly for “working with others” and “planning and management”, and the two differences are in the opposite directions. While almost all colleges consider “working with others” a very necessary competence to be taught, this is true for only 70% of enterprises (a still relevant share nonetheless), whereas the opposite holds for “planning and management”: enterprises seem to value this particular competence more than colleges, on average. This suggests a clear direction for the improvement of student curricula, although it has to be noted that “planning and management” together with “coping with uncertainty”, “ambiguity and risk” are less likely to be selected by both enterprises and colleges relative to other competencies in the area.



Figure 7: Into action area - Should be trained



### 5.3. How should entrepreneurial competencies be transmitted?

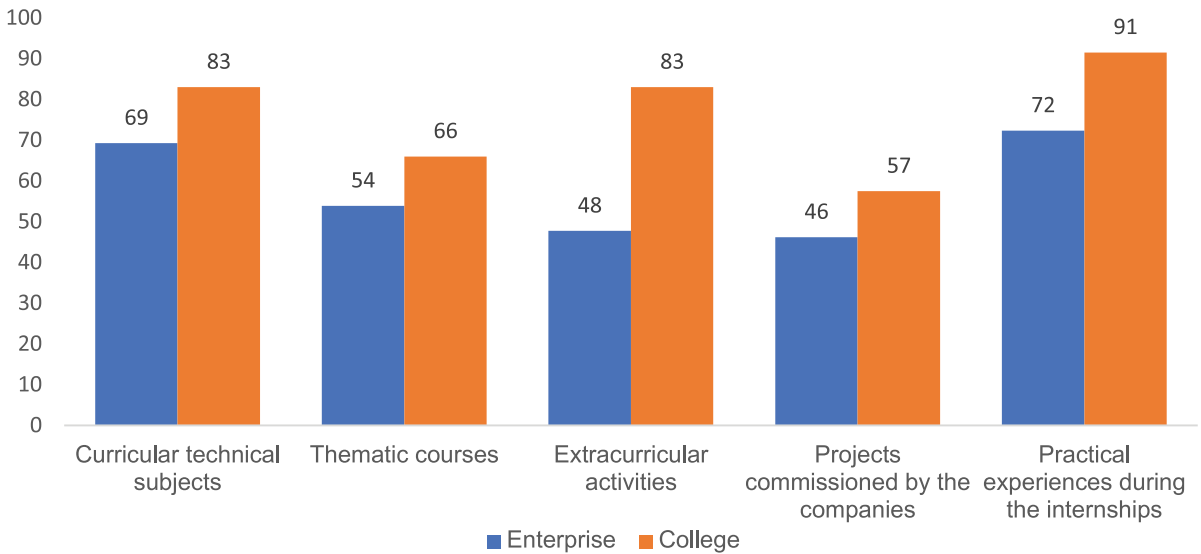
The final part of the questionnaire asked respondents to state how entrepreneurial competencies should be taught, having them to select among the following options: curricular technical subjects, thematic courses, extracurricular activities, projects commissioned by enterprises, and practical experience during internships. The following questions asked respondents how, in their opinion, training on these competencies could be improved.

The results in Figure 8 show that, according to colleges, students should be mainly trained through practical experience during internships, followed by curricular technical subjects, extracurricular activities, thematic courses, and projects commissioned by the enterprises. Shares for enterprises are higher for internships, followed by curricular technical subjects, thematic courses, extracurricular activities and projects commissioned by enterprises. Hence, opinions on this matter between enterprises and colleges seem to highly converge. Regarding statistical test, we only have a significant difference of perspectives between colleges and enterprises in extracurricular activities (chi-squared test = 14.491, p-value = 0.000, at significant 1%). Many colleges consider it a viable way to transmit competencies, whereas much fewer enterprises seem to share this view. What enterprises and colleges clearly converge on is the great consideration given to internships as a way to transmit competencies.

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**Figure 8: Where entrepreneurial competencies should be trained**



**Table 4: Chi-squared test for university and enterprise perspective about “Where entrepreneurial competencies should be trained”**

	Chi2(1)	p-value
Curricular technical subjects	2.750	0.097
Thematic courses	1.653	0.199
Extracurricular activities	14.491	0.000
Projects commissioned by the enterprises	1.392	0.238
Practical experiences during the internships	6.358	0.012

## 6. Comments and recommendations

We can draw some preliminary and tentative conclusions from the results of this survey, attempting also to advance a few suggestions on how to improve vocational schools and colleges curricula.

The first key finding emerging from the data is a generalized gap (with few exceptions) between the levels of importance that enterprises and colleges assign to competencies that belong to the “entrepreneurship” sphere. This generalized gap, on the one hand, is partly justifiable in that it reflects the different mentalities of the “educational” world and the “professional” world. However, the gap partly reflects an attitude on the part of colleges still not sufficiently focused on transmitting those entrepreneurial competencies that enterprises look for. This is true in particular for “soft skills” such as leadership, visions, creativity, and ability to seize opportunities, which enterprises consider very important to find in prospective job candidates, whereas colleges consider less important than, for example, ethics and sustainable thinking. Hence, we think that the focus on ethics should be maintained, alongside more specific courses on other competencies.

Regarding how to transmit these competencies, our data show that more attention should be given to internships in enterprises, accompanied by specific mandatory courses inserted into the regular curricula.

Hence, on the basis of our findings and from the knowledge accumulated in carrying out the research, we can advance a series of tentative recommendations to enterprises, policy makers and higher education representatives.

First, we strongly suggest that vocational schools, colleges and universities in the Bac Ninh Province integrate entrepreneurship education courses into their regular curricula, to prepare students to be competitive by being equipped with the proper entrepreneurial knowledge and competencies. Development of the competencies highlighted above should be given top priority, in that they could represent the first pillars on which entrepreneurial educational programs could be built. More broadly, attention should also be given to building an entrepreneurial “ecosystem” at the national level, through an integrated policy of higher education reforms.

Second, a closer cooperation of the three main actors involved – State, schools and enterprises – is needed and could be achieved through the promotion of work-related vocational training in accordance with the implementation of decision no. 680 / QD-UBND of 30/11/2017 of the provincial People's Committee on the human resources development plan of the province of Bac Ninh as well as the Implementation of the plan n. 184 / KH-UBND of 17/5/2018 of the provincial People's Committee on the promotion of cooperation between vocational training institutes and enterprises in the Bac Ninh province.

Third, it is crucial to promote awareness of vocational training through mass media, conferences, scientific seminars, and forums to attract the attention of state agencies, enterprises and the whole society on vocational education.

Fourth, vocational training could extensively benefit from applying information technology in the management and evaluation of vocational training institutions. It is advisable to publish all the information on the training, capacity and quality of the vocational training institutes and the conditions to guarantee the students' exit standards.

Fifth, we suggest that building a teaching staff with strong theoretical background as well as rich practice in entrepreneurship and “soft skills” teaching would be a necessary requirement. Some skills and competencies can also be transmitted by partly modifying the prevailing teaching modality of existing courses. For example, increasing the amount of group work during the semester may foster the development of both the ability to work in teams and leadership potential. Having students present their team project in class may greatly help in increasing their language skills as well as self-efficacy. Other competence-enhancing methodologies may include (but not limited to): a) workshops and laboratorial classes, b) digital tools and multimedia c) interactive learning and problem solving, d) multidisciplinary and transversal projects, e) simulation and didactic games, and f) interactions with entrepreneurs.

As a final recommendation, we also suggest that enterprises invest more in designing meaningful internship experiences to allow students to put acquired skills, competencies and mindsets into practice by applying them to concrete situations and problems.

Concluding, we believe that implementing the above guidelines will render curricula and practices more tailored to the needs of local labor markets and graduates more equipped to undertake a successful professional career.

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## The Project

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# "Increasing youth employment through school-business links in Bac Ninh - Vietnam Province "

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It is an institutional support initiative - lasting three years (2017/2019) - financed by ODA (Official Development Assistance) funded by the Italian Cooperation and based on an agreement between the NGO Centro ELIS Association and DOLISA (Department of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs of the Province of Bac Ninh). The project concerns the institutional support for the improvement of training activities of two colleges for vocational training, a center for assistance and training for disabled people and the DOLISA itself.

The problem to be addressed is the youth unemployment in Bac Ninh, mostly caused by inadequate professional training of the available workforce, which often forces the local companies to recruit workers from other provinces or from abroad.

The project's purpose is therefore to contribute to increasing the levels of youth employment in the Province of Bac Ninh, through the improvement of the local training system and employment offices, as well as the establishment of a system capable of activating relations, of mutual benefit, between training centers (or colleges) and the world of work (dual training - school / work).

The beneficiaries of the initiative are :

- The Technological College for Electro mechanics and Construction in Bac Ninh
- The Bac Ninh Technology College for Industry
- The Training and Reception Centre for Disabled People in Bac Ninh
- Dolisa's staff responsible for the education system
- The "Forum", an institution dependent on DOLISA that carries out activities aimed at encouraging the search for work for young graduates



**Briefly, the main activities carried out during the project were:**

Revision and updating of the training curricula of the colleges implemented with the contribution of Italian and Vietnamese experts. The training curricula selected by the two technological colleges concerned the following subjects: "metal cutting" and "refrigeration technique".



Professional updating and training of trainers (teachers) and managers (Dolisa and Forum), belonging to the training system, through the development of courses entrusted both to local and international experts, and to competent local institutions such as the University of Economics in Hanoi; the University of Industry in Ho Chi Minh City; the teachers of the College "Viglacera" in Bac Ninh, ELIS Association Center, Italy

Internships of students of the two Technology Colleges in local industries, according to the indications provided by the updated school curricula. The students participating in these internships have received a cash contribution to support the costs of food and transport.



As far as the Disabled Centre is concerned, the following activities were carried out: a training course for trainers on the subject of "special teaching" for teachers of disabled students, managed by the "Hanoi Special Education Centre"; several courses - for trainers and students - concerning work activities suitable for the blind (e.g. massage techniques); several training courses concerning the "Community Based Rehabilitation" (CBR) methodology.



Seminars aimed at improving the relationship between schools and the world of work (dual training).

A total of 1080 scholarships - divided between the two Colleges and the Disabled Centre - have been granted to most of the students of the Disabled Centre and to those students of the two technology colleges who have been selected as being among the most needy and deserving. Dolisa/Forum officials have been trained in Italy on the dual training.







Supply of equipments: a project office has been set up at Dolisa's premises equipped with a system for video conferencing; a computerized laboratory for languages teaching has been provided to the Forum; a classroom has been rehabilitated at the Centre for the Disabled and the latter has been equipped with office equipment and teaching tools for the disabled people (e.g. beds for carrying out massage therapies).

Other project partners have been:

UBND - People Committee of the Province of Bac Ninh

DOET - Provincial Department of Education and Training

MOLISA - Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs

INSME - The International Network for SMES

Further information on the project can be found on the bilingual website:

[www.jebproject.org](http://www.jebproject.org)





## The ELIS Centre Association

The “Associazione Centro ELIS” (Education, Labour, Teaching, Sport) is an Italian non-profit institution founded in 1962 that, since then, deals with vocational training and education, which are considered the basic tools for the development of work and for the creation of more harmonious and fairer societies. In fact, work is seen as a benefit belonging to the whole community and ELIS, placing the person and the work at the center of its mission, is aimed at young people, professionals and businesses to help solve, among other things, the problems related to the school-work gap and youth unemployment.

Initially, the activities of the Association were carried out only in Italy - at the training schools established in Rome, Milan and Palermo - but, later, having been legally recognized as a Non-Governmental Organization by the General Directorate of the Italian Cooperation (DGCS) in 1988, and, in 2016, by the Italian Agency for the Cooperation to the development (AICS), is also authorized to operate abroad. Therefore, the Association has been operating in Vietnam for 20 years and is now also engaged in other parts of the world in defense of its values. The ELIS Centre Association is aimed at promoting – especially through the professional training activities – a sustainable and inclusive development, addressing, in particular, the most fragile sectors of the societies.

For further information: [www.elis.org](http://www.elis.org)

*Centro ELIS headquarter in Rome*



## Project Coordinator's note

The coordination activity that I have carried out for the Project "Increase in youth employment through school-business connection in the Province of Bac Ninh" has allowed me to get to know the main problems that affect the sector of vocational training and youth employment in the above mentioned Province. In our globalised economy, these issues have many similarities with situations and related problems that we can find in much of the rest of the world.

Given the complexity of the topic, it would be unrealistic to assign to a single Cooperation project the responsibility for solving all the problems associated with it. In my opinion, the Cooperation should first of all address sectorally and territorially well-defined issues, proposing initiatives as examples that can be replicated in other contexts as well. In other words, it is a matter of leaving a seed that can then bear fruit in terms of the quality of life of the beneficiaries, or in terms of "development". This is in fact the added value of Cooperation projects concerning education, vocational training and, more generally, the cultural field. And this was exactly the main theme carried on during the course of the Project, where we constantly tried to put local counterparts in touch with the most advanced approach methods to the dual training issue.

Moreover, when there are no "hegemonic" aims, bringing together culturally diverse realities such as, in this case, the European and Eastern ones, can only generate mutual positive consequences in terms of knowledge, development and peace.

This is my conviction deriving from many years of work for the Italian Cooperation, four of which spent as Director of the Hanoi Cooperation Office. During this period of time, my ties with Vietnam - traditionally already widespread within my generation - have been further strengthened, having had the opportunity to appreciate closely the tenacity and sympathy of the Vietnamese people.

Among the numerous initiatives accomplished during my period of service in Vietnam, I would like to mention two of them that I am particularly fond of and which, I believe, are a good example of the type of relations existing between our two countries: the first one concerns the numerous restoration and rehabilitation works on the archaeological site of My Son, which is a very important testimony to the presence of the ancient Cham civilization in Vietnam. In this case, our country can be credited with having actively contributed to the safeguarding of a primary national asset whose conservation could perhaps not have been included among the priorities of a country that has made the economy the backbone of its development policies.

The second initiative is the creation, at the University Hospital in the city of Hue, of an advanced "Health Center (laboratory) for research and diagnosis of respiratory diseases"; in addition to the important results achieved in the field of prevention and treatment of these disorders, this laboratory is dedicated to the memory of the Italian doctor Carlo Urbani, who in 2003, sacrificing his own life, prevented the spread in the country of a violent epidemic of avian flu: a very important testimony of professional self-denial, humanity and, evidently, love for Vietnam.

*Carlo Cibò*

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- **Prof. Luigino Binanti**, Professor of Salento University
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- **Prof. Nguyen Duc Luu**, Director of Bac Ninh college of Industry
- **Prof. Nguyen Quoc Huy**, Director of Bac Ninh college of Electromechanics and construction
- **Dr. Nguyen Nhu Vy**, Director of Bac Ninh center for Vocational Training and Rehabilitation for disabled people
- **Prof. Cao Minh Chau**, Faculty of Medicine - Medical University, Hanoi , Vietnam
- **Dr. Dinh Van Duyet**, director of Bac Ninh Employment Service Center.
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