



## ***Developing enterprise in teaching processes managed by PhD students. Case studies<sup>2</sup>***

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### **ABSTRACT**

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**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:** This article aims to explain the results of research obtained as part of a project carried out by PhD students at Warsaw School of Economics in 2014-2015 within the context of work culture in business education, including the development of attitudes of entrepreneurship.

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**THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS:** The main research problem is formulated in the following, complex question: What is the teaching culture of the teaching processes carried out by PhD students and which elements of the processes are emphasised and which are not taken into account by them? The research strategy was the case study, with an analysis of data gathered mostly through observation.

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**THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION:** The analysis of empirical data is preceded by an overview of the theories of work culture in business education within the context of the latest trends in education as a result of changes in the (business) environment, including the changing expectations of university graduates with business degrees in terms of their attitudes to enterprise.

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**RESEARCH RESULTS:** The processes under analysis only marginally take into account an education that develops attitudes of entrepreneurship, i.e. freedom of activity, flexibility and creativity, responsibility sharing, openness to new roles, the use of best practices and, last but not least, atmosphere of innovation.

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**CONCLUSIONS, INNOVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:** Research shows that contrary to expectations, the predominant approach to teaching adopted by candidates for academic teachers is the mechanistic-passive culture model. Only to a small degree does their teaching show features of the humanistic culture

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model, which is based on interactive forms of teaching and activating methods, which means that the teaching process is not focused on developing the students' attitude of entrepreneurship. In this situation, practical teaching of doctoral candidates concerning innovative didactic methods, including business methods and implementation of social competence within teaching, is of particular importance.

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→ **KEYWORDS:** UNIVERSITY, STUDENTS, ENTREPRENEURIAL  
EDUCATIONWORK CULTURE IN BUSINESS EDUCATION,  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION, EDUCATION FOR  
ECONOMISTS, UNIVERSITY

## Introduction

Teaching is one of the main aspects of the work of any university which does not look on teaching as an onerous and formal obligation, but rather continues to manage this aspect of its activity through its active presence in the education market and the process of creating competitive advantage by providing its stakeholders with high-quality services while continuing to increase their quality. This makes the process of building teaching quality a matter of overriding importance (Chmielecka, 2015). The key element of the quality teaching culture is teaching work culture. The development of this work culture depends, to a large extent, on the academic teacher and their competencies (Bugaj, 2014).

The aim of this article is to discuss the results of qualitative research conducted in 2014-2015 as part of a grant project carried out by PhD students at Warsaw School of Economics. The main research problem is formulated in the following, complex question: What is the teaching culture of the teaching processes carried out by PhD students and which elements of the processes are emphasised and which are not taken into account by them? (...) To what extent the processes under analysis take into account an education that develops attitudes of entrepreneurship, i.e. freedom of activity, flexibility and creativity, knowledge sharing (responsibility), openness to new roles, a positive attitude to diversity, the use of best practices and, last but not least, atmosphere of innovation (Cameron & Quinn, 2015).

The analysis of empirical data is preceded by an overview of the theories of work culture in business education within the context of the latest trends in education as a result of changes in the (business) environment, including the changing expectations of university graduates with business degrees in terms of their attitudes to enterprise.

## 1. Components and types of work culture in business education at universities for economics or business

A group of university students as an organisation is similar to a business entity, which operates according to certain rules and principles and which works towards a certain goal. A university is an organisation where ‘special-purpose’ groups of students are established. The members of such a group are part of a small social community whose lifetime extends over a specified period of time, usually a semester, for educational reasons.

At universities for economics or business, such educational groups are focused on the processes and phenomena taking place in market economies and on the activity of business entities. Therefore, from the teaching process perspective, the work culture in business education is a system of ways and patterns of thinking and activities which are of importance in the delivery of the teaching goals in business education for the group concerned (Bruner, 2010). The specific criteria for identifying work cultures may include the following components:

- the goals and key values in the teaching processes and the delivery of the goals,
- the roles, tasks, relations and responsibilities of the actors involved in the processes,
- methodological strategies and the importance of drawing on the student’s personal experience in the learning process.

Each of these components has its own possibilities and limitations, relating not only to what is taught, but also to the competencies of academic teachers which also include methodical skills (Bugaj, 2014). In the practice of teaching one can distinguish between three types of work culture in business education (Jabłonowska, 2015). These three types differ in quality and the capacity to develop the students’ attitudes of entrepreneurship.

### 1.1. The mechanistic-passive culture as an approach preventing the development of attitudes of entrepreneurship

When the teaching process is managed according to the mechanistic-passive culture model, knowledge is considered as objective and presented through unquestionable truths, assertions and scholarly theories, developed into the form of valid and indisputable teaching programmes.

## Horyzonty Wykowania

The academic teacher plays the role of an expert who presents what is to be taught and learnt, drawing on their resources, reputation and experience. According to the principle of encyclopaedism in education, the role of the teacher is present ready-to-use, logically organised content, without having to refer to or draw in the students' experience, judgments or opinions. Emphasis is placed on teaching, and work culture is focused on the teacher, who is also the manager of the system. The academic teacher as the process manager decides what is to be taught (the topic), presents the relevant theories and models, resolves problems, gives hints and, finally, makes sure that the students demonstrate that they have learned what they were taught. In the end, it is the teacher who takes on the responsibility for the outcomes of the process, and a measure of these outcomes is the student's ability to reproduce the knowledge.

The mechanistic-passive culture is, regardless of the form of teaching, predominated by the principles of a scholarly approach to work organisation, and the focus of the efforts is made to achieve short-term goals (Bonstingl, 2001). The teacher is not concerned about the student's mind, in line with the rule that psychological or mental processes do not play any role in controlling the teaching process. In the push learning approach, the controlled student will acquire and gather knowledge on a "just in case" basis, which may give them a sense of security, certainty and a peaceful mind in a setting characterised by escapism and protection, but not when faced with the ever changing market challenges.

### 1.2. The humanistic culture on the way to subjectivity and the development of active reactions

In the humanistic culture, the core of educational processes is the students, who not only demonstrate not only their cognitive aspirations, but also – and above all – their readiness for action, who are independent and have a pragmatic mind-set. Their aspirations for personal development, self-actualisation and the achievement of personal goals are linked with their readiness to articulate their expectations and cause the teaching processes to be restructured to reflect to needs and specific character of the student group concerned. Economic knowledge is no longer an unchallengeable structure and becomes a set of content carefully selected according to what is useful for the users of the knowledge.

Education is process-oriented, in accordance with the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), a major role in this process is played by the students' individual experiences combined with information

flowing from the world around them. The process is based on a searching strategy, and the academic teacher creates conditions for learning by discovering and solving problems based in line with the bottom-up strategy (Wach, 2014). This leads to the wide use of: case study and simulations based on complex examples of business practice. Both the students and the teacher manage the teaching process jointly on an authority-sharing basis. The work towards the desired outcomes is the process of making joint efforts in a balanced way, based on partnership and responsibility-sharing.

The work culture in the humanistic approach involves a comprehensive learning process that integrates the students' intellect, competence and emotions (Kolb, 2015). In this sense, the educational processes in the humanistic culture emphasise the importance of building social competencies as the constituents of entrepreneurship, such as critical evaluation of activities within a business context; independent decisions and initiatives; readiness for taking risks, accepting tasks and changing roles; collaboration; effective group communication; leadership; and the taking over of responsibility.

### **1.3. The critical-creative culture in developing a sense of responsibility and creativity**

In the critical-creative culture in business education, knowledge is generally available. It is delivered on demand, at such time and in such quantity as the person who needs the knowledge may require (the pull learning system). The foundation of the business education process in the critical-creative culture is an eclectic resource of sources of inspiration and the students' independence in solving problems where the solution requires creativity (Jasieński, 2012). This is helped by the students' readiness to communicate quickly (e.g. MOOCs – Massive Open Online Course), and freely regardless of the time, place and form, using wireless devices and tools such as podcasts or video repositories (Konnikova, 2014; Yuan & Powell, 2013; Morrison, 2003).

The culture under discussion is predominated by information technologies and the Internet, which promotes an interdisciplinary approach and requires academic teachers, consultants and practitioners in many fields to be included in the same teaching cycle (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006). Under such circumstances, much of the work is done by the students independently, as part of informal networks (e.g. on online forums) and during freely arranged direct sessions.



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Meetings as part of an informal student group (classroom learning) serve as consultations and their main purpose is to critically present the information gathered by the members and their ideas formulated as a result of their independent learning with the use of carefully selected external sources. Under such circumstances, the academic teacher plays the role of a tutor who encourages action and provokes, but does not prevent dialogue and critical reflection on a particular solution.

The critical-creative culture facilitates project-oriented thinking. Activity in the DT (design-thinking) process provides exceptional potential for the development of the students' attitudes of entrepreneurship: creativity and adaptability (Koh, Chai, Wong & Hong, 2015). It also facilitates the search for solutions in an atmosphere of innovation to real existing business problems within a context of the needs of customers (society) (Leifer & Meinel, 2016). This approach to learning is based on social competencies, their consolidation and improvement, and encompasses actions to encourage the students' sensitivity and ability to recognise ethical and social issues, as well as to promote the students' ability to calculate market-generated changes, to draw on professional identity, to cope with difficulties, uncertainty and critical situations. In addition, this approach involves building a sense of responsibility as a sign of maturity and autonomy in action. In the critical-creative culture, it is the student that takes the greatest responsibility for the educational process.

## 2. Assumptions for PhD degree projects as the research area

In the current doctoral-level education system, the practical component of the educational process is insufficient. However, businesses, public institutions and nongovernmental organisations are noticeably involved in scholarship / grant programmes for PhD students, which include scholarships offered by local government authorities.

In 2010-2015 Warsaw School of Economics joined forces with the Regional Government of the Mazovian Voivodeship as part of two projects. The project called Scholarships for Science, Development and the Mazovia Region was carried out from March 2012 to November 2015. The project attracted 29 PhD students of Warsaw School of Economics. Before that project, from February 2012 to April 2013, the project called Get a Scholarship – for Development was open to the best Warsaw School of Economics students (Poznańska & Kraj, 2013). The scholarship projects were open to PhD students with outstanding performance, studying on

a full-time or extramural basis, candidates for work in the academic community who demonstrated a high level of potential, the so-called talents.

The egalitarian approach looks on talent as a set of abilities, motives and opportunities (Clayton, 2007). The elitist approach regards talent as an individual's above-average qualities and abilities, reinforced with talents, above-average motivation for development, and enabling the individual to act with exceptional efficiency (Gąska, 2013; Sienkiewicz, 2007). This understanding of talent was adopted in the two projects described above.

The Scholarship Rules of 19 June 2012 set out the following operational selection criteria for the projects: the candidate's marks for examinations in the subjects included in the curriculum for the PhD programme; progress in academic and research work and writing a PhD thesis dealing with an original research problem or, in the case of the Scholarships for Science, Development and the Mazovia Region project, progress in work related to the regional strategy for development and innovation, including the priorities defined in the strategy; involvement in academic teaching; taking an active part in organising the work of the university; an assessment of the candidate's intellectual and personal aptitude for research and academic teaching; and having plans for future research and academic teaching.

Both projects were expected to make academic research work more effective and to improve the quality of the teaching provided to PhD students of Warsaw School of Economics. With these objectives in mind, during the projects the beneficiaries were provided with support through a thematic seminar, a methodological and educational seminar, as well as training in research commercialisation. A review of the project participants was conducted in each semester through half-yearly assessments of their academic research activity and evaluation of the teaching they provided.

### **3. Methods, techniques, tools and procedure for the processes studies as part of the research**

The research method, or research strategy, was the case study (Piekkari, Welch & Paavilainen, 2009; Jabłonowska, 2011). It gave the researchers an in-depth insight into the teaching work culture and allowed them to conduct a holistic analysis of the problem and to generate knowledge contextually. This research strategy has no specific principles or limitations as to research material analysis. This allowed the researchers to

apply a descriptive and statistical analysis, with complementary qualitative and quantitative methods. In addition to separable characteristics grouping and descriptions, one-dimension and multi-dimensional contingency tables were used in the analysis.

The input data for the case study analysis was gathered through observation, as part of "inspection visits by experts". The expert group consisted of a specialist in the field or area concerned (an experienced academic teacher responsible for the teaching cycle concerned), the supervisor for the PhD student, a consultant on course design and teaching, plus two representatives of the Scholarship Committee. Of the available expert visit models, a development-oriented model with elements of the evaluative model was selected as the most adequate approach for the projects (Gosling, 2002; Wach-Kąkolewicz, 2015).

The procedure for the development visits by experts was divided into the following three phases: (a) a casual pre-observation interview with the person being evaluated, (b) the process of gathering information on the conduct of the teacher and their students and on how the teaching and learning processes are conducted through observation, and (c) an post-observation interview.

The aim of the pre-observation interview (a) was to create an atmosphere of trust and friendly interaction. It was also an opportunity to become familiar with the observation class script. Phase (b) of the observation was conducted by some of the experts in an unrestrained manner and by some with the use of a dedicated observation questionnaire. In each case, the methodology expert carried out the observation process using the questionnaire (programmed observation) to record the relevant indicators and related comments according to the following criteria: the teaching objectives (specified in the teacher's class plan), the class structure (knowledge delivery or problem solving); proportions of theory and practice in the process; communicativeness (verbal or non-verbal); building relations and the class atmosphere; the methods and resources used in the process (for knowledge-delivery or activation (to encourage entrepreneurship) and the ability to use them; assessment of the delivery of the teaching objectives and of how the process is managed; progress in the teaching process (recommendations for the future). The post-observation interview (c) is the key part of this type of class inspection. Depending on how much time was available, the premises available and the engagement on the part of the person being evaluated, the interview took between several and less than an hour and involved a jointly conducted analysis of the conduct of the class, the role of the different parts of the process, the role of practice, the strategy employed by the teacher, the

outcomes, the students' reactions to the teacher's behaviour, the available alternatives and optimisation of activities, as well as the teacher's strengths and competence gaps.

#### 4. Case analysis of educational processes

The paper contains a case analysis of teaching processes conducted in 2014 and 2015 as part of the final phase of the Scholarships for Science, Development and the Mazovia Region project within the context of three work cultures. The content of the teaching process under analysis encompasses various economic sciences, e.g. management (business management, brand management, employee management, team management, time management, conflict management), marketing, market (labour market, real estate market, consumer market), policies (government budget policy, social policy, international policy), statistics and logistics. A total of 17 candidates for academic work 26 were included in the research project and 26 cases were analysed. The cases were described according to the criteria specified in the aforementioned observation questionnaire.

In all the cases, the inspected classes were conducted on the basis of class plans. The class plans were prepared according to a set of criteria agreed during the methodological and educational seminar, in accordance with the Bologna Process requirements. The analysis shows that regardless of the teaching format, the PhD students find it very easy to formulate cognitive goals, i.e. what is to be taught and learned, remembered and understood, as well as the skills to be learned by the students. There were only four cases, with the teaching format being a lecture, where no practical skills were included the teacher's plans, which can be defended, but where no cognitive goals were defined, which is uprising. A comparison of the number of goals and how they formulated in 2015 and 2014 indicates that in 2015, the PhD students formulated significantly more goals and included at least twice as many cognitive goals and nearly three times as many skill-learning goals, compared to 2014 (Table 1).

Table 1. Types and formulation of goals

Type of goal	Number of times the goal was identified		Change	Number of times the goal was not identified	
	2014	2015		2014	2015
Cognitive goals	14	31	2.2	1	-
Skill-learning goals	11	32	2.9	3	1
Social competence (attitude)	5	13	2.6	4	8

Source: own study.

Social competence-developing goals were the most difficult for the teachers to identify and formulate. Although the number of times such goals were identified was 2.5 times greater in 2015 than in 2014, nearly a half of the PhD students failed to include such goals in their class plans. Eighty percent of those class plans which included outcomes for attitude development identified "readiness for group work."

One aspect included in the analysis was the class structure defined as a number of stages and their interrelations which are typical of the methodological unit and which determine the occurrence and sequence of the different stages (Arends, 2005). The inspected classes were, in the class plans and the actual teaching processes, predominantly the knowledge-delivery type (two-thirds of the cases), with slightly over one-third being the problem-solving type. The proportion between the knowledge-delivery type structure and the problem-solving type structure remained the same in 2014 and 2015, i.e. 1.6.

An analysis of the class structure within the context of Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, 2015) allows for the conclusion that more than 62% of the teaching processes began with the teacher's presentation of a theory supported with examples. Subsequently, where necessary, the teacher switched from the knowledge-delivery model over to the problem-solving model where the students were expected to solve a particular case / problem and organised a seminar to sum up the logic of the process. In more than one-third of the cases analysed, the students began their work with heuresis, i.e. a specific experience that reflected their openness, inventiveness and multi-dimensional approach through an exchange of ideas based on that experience, from a generalisation that conceptualised their previous experience and reflection (the theory) and, where necessary, practical application of the theory in a particular case.

At the knowledge-delivery stage, the teaching process was dominated by descriptions and a traditional knowledge-delivery lecture, with the

definition of the related problems through aetiology and questions to the students. Another method in this knowledge-delivery approach involved one of the PhD students solving a case in front of the other students. During the classes where the teachers applied the problem-solving strategy, the talent-PhD students applied made use of the following methods, which are given here in the weakening order of their use: case study solving in a group, problem solving in a group, situational analysis, discussion, the question method, brain storming (drawing on the students' knowledge and experience in the first phase of the class), self-analysis, and exercises / activities to practise the model presented by the teacher.

The processes carried out by the talents were evaluated also in terms of their content divided into theory and practice. In all the cases included in the analysis, theory accounted for a smaller or larger share of the content, which seems to be of benefit to the students given the academic nature of the teaching process, provided, however, that all other phases of the work, such as the students' drawing on their own experience, reflection (exchanging ideas, a discussion) and practical application of the theoretical knowledge are not ignored (Kolb, 2015). A vast majority of the teaching processes (85%) included description of new concepts, terms, definitions, types/classes or criteria. Socioeconomic phenomena and systems were referred to three times less frequently, the possibilities and scope of their practical application (including procedures, methods, rules, principles and theses) were referred to twice less frequently.

Practice was present in 88% of the cases and this was based, in most cases, on examples of real people or businesses with real data (70%), as well as single-topic examples from the world of business (65%). These were examples prepared by the teachers for the lecture. The business examples seem to have been particularly valuable, as they encouraged the students to work actively by referring to practical business examples they knew of. During the lectures, a half of the teachers provided generalised examples, without proper names or references to real people from the world of business. In the problem-solving strategy, the practical part involved the application of theoretical knowledge in an analysis of a multi-topic example or a single-topic situation with a discussion by the students. This method of applying theory was only occasional (Table 2).

# Horyzonty Wykowania

Table 2. Theory and practice in teaching processes

Type of knowledge	Description	Number of times the type was identified	%
Theoretical knowledge	models, socioeconomic phenomena	7	27
	classification of the characteristics of phenomena, concepts, definitions, types, criteria	22	28
	theses, principles, rules, procedures, methods and their application	10	39
Practical knowledge	extensive multi-topic case descriptions, case study	3	13
	examples of real cases	16	70
	generalised examples (without proper names or references to real people; examples with proper names)	12	50
	short examples, single-topic examples cases	15	65

Source: own study.

In their choice of methods, the PhD students demonstrated their ability to apply the methods with ease. They are most likely to have opted for those methods which best suited their personalities and preparation. In addition, the teachers took care to prepare their teaching materials properly, i.e. in accordance with psycho-pedagogical. The verbal audio-visual was a rare occurrence. In addition to the well-prepared teaching materials, the teachers found it very easy to use new technology and presented visual content and the content delivered in spoken form. Also, the teachers used non-standard methodical solutions, such as "empty slides" during discussions. In more than a quarter of the cases included in the analysis, the students received copied materials, which they used in accordance with the applicable methodological principles.

In a vast majority of the cases, the candidates for work as academic teachers found it easy to communicate with the students and demonstrated good diction and expressiveness. Semantic disfluency and anti-ca-dence were relatively rare in the group included in the analysis, which is indicated by the fact that the PhD students are well-prepared in terms of subject-specific knowledge and methodology for the inspected processes and by their ability to cope with difficult situations. In their communication with the students, the language used by the teachers included mainly direct general and personalised expressions, with a large number of polite expressions, indicating the talents' very good manners (Table 3).

Table 3. Verbal communication

Description of the communication	Number of events/reactions observed	%
Attentive listening (supportive listening, dynamic listening)	4	15
Language of expression: ease, diction, expressiveness	21	80
Direct general and personalised expressions	22	85
Personal polite expressions	11	42
Ability to establish/build contact (asking the students to speak)	11	42
Sentence intonation – anti-cadence	4	15
Embolophrasia (semantic disfluency, syllabic disfluency)	3	12
Jargon, colloquialisms	3	12

Source: own study.

The atmosphere during the inspected classes was one of attention, concentration and, depending on the needs of the process, openness and ease (85%). In a vast majority of the cases (85%), the teachers were standing up, using many gestures such as the baton gesture or cohesive gestures (20%), but “use of the self” was observed only in isolated cases.<sup>3</sup> The above indicates that the teachers whose work was inspected were externally strong and committed to the teaching.

## Conclusions

Work culture in business education is inspired by, above all, the academic teacher. It is the academic teacher that provides the students with conditions for studying. In the cases included in the analysis, the teacher is a PhD student-talent who draws on, although not always realising it – philosophical doctrines, psychological orientations and pedagogical theories (Jabłonowska, 2014). This results in the teacher taking into account or ignoring attitudes of entrepreneurship in accordance with the latest trends in education and what is required by the market. The research shows that the teaching practice of candidates for work as academic teachers-talents is dominated by the knowledge-delivery strategy,

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<sup>3</sup> This term owes its popularity to the wide use of the Alexander Technique in education. For more information see: <http://www.somayog.pl/index.php?website=%25233Technika%2520Alexandra>

which means that the teaching process is based on delivering and (passively) acquiring knowledge and by the use of the theory-example-theory teaching structure. The analysis shows that two-thirds of the processes included in the analysis are rooted in the mechanistic-passive culture.

The critical-creative culture in business education is not present in the teaching processes carried out by candidates for work as academic teachers. It is at best limited to individual indicators such as the use of materials available online or awarding the students for creative solutions. The processes organised by the PhD students show features of the humanistic culture to a small extent only. The processes are student-focused and based on the students' activity, inventiveness, multi-dimensional approach and readiness for anticipation, which are available if active forms of problem-solving teaching are applied. Young academic teachers tend to marginalise (misunderstand) a process that begins with a situational analysis / case study and ends with a theoretical model that conceptualises previous experience with an implementation proposal, i.e. a process with the 'example (problem to be solved)-theory' structure. This teaching style shows the features of what is referred to as flipped classroom. In this style, the work of the student group works is focused on analysis, evaluation and creativity, while understanding, remembering and application take place as part of the student's self-study work (Michałowska, 2014).

The greatest difficulty encountered by the PhD students when preparing and conducting the inspected processes is the formulation of objectives in the development of attitudes. They focused on cognitive and skill-learning goals, including with regard to tools, while demonstrating a weaker understanding of the importance and possibilities of developing psychosocial skills within the context of what they were teaching. After all, social skills are a pillar of attitudes of entrepreneurship.

Drawing on practice plays a major role in the PhD students' teaching. This includes the use of short business stories, single-topic real-life cases of people or businesses. However, the practice presented by the teachers in such a way has the features of declarative or descriptive knowledge, and has little to do with the development of the students' pro-active attitudes.

The majority of the PhD students found it easy to apply the methods, resources and materials they had selected and demonstrated the ability to codify their content. In the majority of the cases included in the analysis, the PhD students/talents as academic teachers have no difficulty communicating and building contact with the students. At the same time, the learning conditions they provided the students with encouraged

in-class communication mainly along the teacher-student lines. The type of communication that enhances interactions between students and which makes the teaching process unique and encourages the development of attitudes of entrepreneurship was limited due to the methods preferred by the teachers and the knowledge-delivery strategy they applied.

The analysis of the cases indicates that, contrary to expectations, the majority of the candidates for work as academic teachers repeat or copy their own experiences from the student years, conference speeches or meetings of university department or institute staff, without searching independently for innovative methodological solutions. Practical teaching of doctoral candidates concerning innovative didactic methods, including business methods and implementation of social competence within teaching, is of particular importance.

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