

ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE TERTIARY LEVEL INSTITUTIONS OF GREECE

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ABSTRACT

Encouraging entrepreneurship is a key factor in creating jobs and improving competitiveness and economic growth throughout Europe. In Barcelona's summit in 2002, the European Council presented the Green Book for Entrepreneurship. According to this Book, the people to be incited to become entrepreneurs they should become fully aware of the meaning of entrepreneurship. The people should possess the appropriate skills that will enable them to convert targets into successful undertakings. Education and training should contribute to the encouragement of entrepreneurship, through the appropriate mentality and sensitivity, regarding the professional opportunities being offered by the entrepreneurial quality. The establishment of an enterprise requires dynamism, creative power and strength, while its gradual growth requires more administrative abilities as well as effectiveness and credibility. Since personality and administrative skills compose the basic factor of success, personal abilities related with entrepreneurship should be taught from very early and carry on up to the tertiary level.

Most European countries have a policy commitment to promote education related to entrepreneurship. However this is a relatively new area and learning from each other's experience is crucially important. In 2002, a Best Procedure project explored ways to promote the teaching of entrepreneurship from primary school to university. Experience shows the importance of well-structured cooperation between different government departments, notably industry and education, and the need to include teaching of entrepreneurship in the national curriculum, as it is in the Czech Republic, Spain, Ireland, and some other countries. However, schools and teachers also need incentives and support in introducing these programmes into the classroom

According to the last world study of the GEM, 28% of the entrepreneurial activities in Greece concerns "necessity entrepreneurship" in contrast to other European countries where the "**necessity entrepreneurship**" is an exception compared to the "**opportunity entrepreneurship**". On the other hand the Greek society seems to underestimate the "creative entrepreneurship" which is based on new technologies, research and innovation. The change of this attitude, mainly through the educational system interventions, is an important action that can help towards improvement of entrepreneurial activity in Greece.

Responsibility for meeting the objectives of Section 1 of the Charter for Small Enterprises in Greece lies mainly with the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs which, within the framework of the "Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training", has started to implement measure 3.1 "Promoting Entrepreneurial and Innovative Applications" to support entrepreneurship in education.

The project: “Center of Entrepreneurial Studies in the Higher Technological Institutions (TEIs) of Thessaloniki and Kavala”, which is financed 75% by the EU and 25% by national recourses, has been implementing jointly by the TEI of Thessaloniki and the TEI of Kavala. It aims at training, giving guidance and supporting people who will undertake new knowledge-based ventures through the following activities: a) delivering a range of elective courses focused on knowledge intensive entrepreneurship b) providing support and advice for the creation of new knowledge based ventures c) innovating and developing new ways of inspiring and informing future entrepreneurs d) awarding entrepreneurial prizes to students submitting, during their studies, the best business plans and e) participating to the annual national competition for business awards in higher education. In the framework of this project, we have completed a sampling survey concerning our multiple fields of studies students’ attitude towards entrepreneurship.

There are strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the activity 3.1.2. “Entrepreneurial Education at the Tertiary Level Institutions of Greece”. Strengths such as the economies of scale arising from the collaboration between institutions and weaknesses such as, the lack of coordination among the involved ministries and other governmental bodies.

“For our economy to excel in the 21st century, we need entrepreneurial thinkers. That’s what we are preparing our young people to be”.

Don Kuratko

CREATING ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE IN THE E.U. COUNTRIES

Encouraging entrepreneurship is a key to creating jobs and improving competitiveness and economic growth throughout Europe. Although the rate of entrepreneurship may be influenced by a number of different factors, there is certainly a cultural aspect that needs to be taken into account. In this respect, education may offer an important contribution. The development of an entrepreneurial attitude should be encouraged in young people, starting at school. If entrepreneurial values are cultivated at school, Europe will gradually create a new generation of people for whom exercise of entrepreneurial activity will be something absolutely normal.

The European Union is not fully exploiting its entrepreneurial potential. It is failing to encourage enough people to become entrepreneurs. According to a recent entrepreneurship survey, the Euro barometer found that only 45% of those questioned in the EU-25 wanted to be self-employed compared to 61% in the United States. But the overall figures conceal wide differences among Europeans themselves. The thought of being self-employed and one’s own boss was particularly attractive for the Portuguese (62%), Irish (58%), Estonians and Cypriots (56% each), Italians (55%), Greeks and Lithuanians (52% each) and Poles (51%). The least tempted were the Finns (28%), Czechs and Slovaks (30% each), Slovenes (32%) and Dutch (33%).

When asked why they preferred to be an employee, almost one out of three Europeans (30%) cited the existence of a regular, fixed income as the most important consideration, while a quarter attached importance to the stability of employment. Neither consideration ranked particularly strongly for Americans: 16% and 10% respectively.¹

According to a recent world survey of the “Global Entrepreneurship Monitor”, 28% of the total entrepreneurial activities in Greece concern “necessity entrepreneurship” when the respective percentage in other European countries does not surpass 18%. On the other hand the Greek society seems to underestimate the “opportunity entrepreneurship” which is based on new technologies, research and innovation. The change of this attitude, mainly through the interventions of the educational system, is an important action that can help towards improvement of entrepreneurial activities in Greece.

In Barcelona’s summit in 2002, the European Council presented the “Green Book for Entrepreneurship”. This text «aims to encourage more people to start business and to help entrepreneurs thrive by helping them to fully realize their ambitions and by providing a promising business climate. To further the entrepreneurship agenda, the Commission will act in five strategic policy areas:

- Fuelling entrepreneurial mindsets
- Encouraging more people to become entrepreneurs
- Gearing entrepreneurs for growth and competitiveness
- Improving the flow of finance

¹ Who wants to be an entrepreneur, Enterprise Europe No 19, April-June 2005, p.10

- Creating a more SME-friendly regulatory and administrative framework»²

The commission already supports the organization of entrepreneurship events in a number of EU cities. To foster entrepreneurial attitudes and skills among young people, the Commission will continue to promote entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship education in universities should be available in technical universities. Matching scientific potential with entrepreneurial skills will contribute to better commercialization of research results through spin-offs and more start-ups in knowledge-based sectors. As far as university education is concerned, Belgium has created an entrepreneurial center in the Free University of Brussels in order to support and promote the setting up of new enterprises among members of the university society. Denmark supports corporate relations between Universities and organizations which promote entrepreneurship. Ireland has worked hard in the Tertiary education sector to improve systems and procedures through which entrepreneurship research is developed. A very good example of an entrepreneurial training program aiming to support and accelerate graduate entrepreneurs in developing a business from a very early stage, is the Irish “Genesis Enterprise Program” (GEP). Candidates may participate in the GEP if they have a knowledge-based innovative idea with export potential and are looking to develop that potential into a business. It is specifically targeted at graduates who have several years of working experience and are looking to start their own business. The partners of the Program are the Cork Institute of Technology, the Institute of Technology Tralee, the Cork Business Innovation Center, University College Cork and Enterprise Ireland. The program is funded by the Department of Education and Science and Enterprise Ireland under the National Development Plan, 2000 to 2006. This 12 month program offers to its participants a minimum annual income, 30 days of business training, office space and facilities, an experienced mentor for each participant, the opportunity to work in an environment with other entrepreneurs as well as the opportunity to access the facilities and capabilities of the Program partners. Finally, Italy has introduced a series of two-year postgraduate programs using a new teaching method, at Schools, which is the business simulation.

ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION IN GREECE

Responsibility for meeting the objectives of Section 1 of the Charter for Small Enterprises (education and training for entrepreneurship) lies mainly with the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs which, within the framework of the “Operational Program for Education and Initial Vocational Training” (EPEAEK), has successfully continued to implement measure 3.1 “Promoting Entrepreneurial and Innovative Applications” to support entrepreneurship in education. Of the measures, which have already been integrated and carried out by 28 higher-education institutes, most concern the incorporation of courses on entrepreneurship in Institutes where there were previously none, elective courses and a cross-curricular approach as well as support for carriers-offices and the organization of events and meetings for contact, awareness and interconnection with the real world outside the university or the technological educational institute (TEI).

Another initiative is the National Competition for business awards in higher education which is open to teams of students. The University of Piraeus accepts every year applications for business ideas and plans. The best business plan can be subsidized by the

² Action Plan: The European Agenda for Entrepreneurship, COM (2004) 70 final, Commission staff working paper, p.6

Ministry of Development so as to be turned into an actual business. With regard to the introduction of entrepreneurship in schools, it is also worth mentioning the initiative of the Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry which has established a system of awards for pupils and students in an effort to encourage and reward entrepreneurship in Greece and to familiarize young people with the world of business.³

There are strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the activity: “Entrepreneurial Education at the Tertiary Level Institutions of Greece”. Strengths such as the economies of scale arising from the collaboration between institutions and the initiatives from the employers’ associations aiming at establishing a system of awards for students. Weaknesses such as the lack of coordination among the involved ministries and other governmental bodies, bureaucracy and delays in the outflow of finance, lack of cooperation even between departments within the same Institution, lack of experienced teachers to run entrepreneurship courses and lack of motivation among administrative and teaching staff which is not directly involved with the particular activity.

For a more efficient use of financial resources and a better implementation of entrepreneurship education in Greece, we need to:

1. Enhance cooperation between different departments in the public administration that need to be involved in promoting entrepreneurship education (notably, Ministries of Development, Education, National Economy and Finance, Employment, as well as the Secretariat General of New Generation)
2. Introduce concrete schemes and initiatives that will help towards increasing the provision of specific training to the teachers on entrepreneurship, including opportunities to gain practical experience through direct relations with businesses
3. Increase the application of programmes based on practical experience
4. Incite regional and local authorities so they can play an essential role in promoting entrepreneurship education in local communities
5. Raise the awareness within the education departments in the administration at all levels of the importance of entrepreneurship as a new basic competence, not just as a means of creating more business but also as a way of stimulating the development of personal qualities
6. Step-up activities of dissemination of good practice and the exchange of information between public administrations and other EU member states
7. Encourage private parties (business associations, chambers of commerce, companies, business consultants etc) to become more involved in education programmes, both by sponsoring specific initiatives and by participating directly in the teaching (e.g. as tutors or mentors)
8. Reduce bureaucracy and delays in the outflow of money concerning the financing of different entrepreneurship projects.

The project: “Center of Entrepreneurial Studies in the Higher Technological Institutions (TEIs) of Thessaloniki and Kavala”, which is financed 75% by the EU and 25% by national recourses, has been implementing jointly by the TEI of Thessaloniki and the TEI of Kavala since September 2003. It aims at training, giving guidance and supporting people who will undertake new knowledge-based ventures through the following activities

- (a) delivering a number of elective courses focused on knowledge intensive entrepreneurship

³ European Chapter for Small Enterprises, Greece, 2004 Progress Report, Ministry of Development, Secretariat-General for Industry, p. 5-8

- (b) providing support and consulting for the creation of new knowledge based ventures
- (c) innovating and developing new ways of inspiring and informing future entrepreneurs
- (d) awarding entrepreneurial prizes to students elaborating, during their studies, the best business plans
- (e) participating in the annual national competition for business awards in higher education

In the syllabuses of the departments participating in the project there are three optional courses: **“Entrepreneurship I”**, which aims to inspire students to develop entrepreneurial skills studying the management issues surrounding SMEs, **“Entrepreneurship II”** which is focusing on the process of business planning and **“Mentoring”** in which groups of students are guided and encouraged by experienced business professionals (mentors) to materialize their business plans and to start their own business as an option after graduating. Entrepreneurship courses have a multi-disciplinary character and they are addressed not only to students of business studies but also to students of other curricula (informatics, engineering, automation, electronics, clothing technology etc).⁴

The syllabus of the courses fulfills the real needs of the economy, since apart from theoretical knowledge we are using practical methods (case studies, visits to business, projects, laboratory work). “Students, who actually write a business plan, take part in a game where they have to make some decisions or even set up a real business venture will learn much more than those attending traditional classroom lectures”.⁵ General-material books and case-studies have been produced on entrepreneurship and on how to start a new business.

There is a continuous provision of information on entrepreneurial issues through the website of the Center and printed material. The Center is organizing seminars and conferences with topics related to entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility and innovation. An entrepreneurship conference will be held in Kavala, in autumn 2006 having as a theme: “Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness in the Balkan and Black Sea Countries”.

Higher Technological Education, with the assistance of such a kind of entrepreneurship programs, can play an important role in competitiveness, economic growth and new jobs’ creation.

SURVEY FOR STUDENTS’ ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In the framework of the project: “Center of Entrepreneurial Studies in the Higher Technological Institutions of Thessaloniki and Kavala” and the category of actions 3.1.2β “Encouragement of Entrepreneurial Activities, Innovative Applications and Elective Courses of Students and Pupils” of the Operational Program for Education and Initial Vocational Training, which is co financed 75% by the European Social Fund, we realized, in September 2005, a sampling survey concerning our multiple fields of studies students’ attitude towards entrepreneurship, their entrepreneurial skills, their desire to attend entrepreneurial courses during their studies and their intention to set up a business after

⁴ Henricks, M. “Extra Credit”, Entrepreneur, May 2004, p.74

⁵ Volery T., Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Education in Europe: What must be Learnt and what Can be Taught, EntreNews, Issue 2/2004

their graduation. In this survey 263 students participated from the nine departments of the TEI of Thessaloniki which in their turn participate voluntarily in the project.⁶

The main results of the survey are the following:

1. A relatively high percentage of the questioned students (57%) prefer either to work as self-employed or to start a new business after graduation instead of becoming employees. This percentage is considered to be rather high under the current economic contingency, when most young people in Greece prefer to become employees, especially in the public sector, where they can ensure a fixed income and stability of employment. Women prefer more than men to become employees, being more reluctant to undertake entrepreneurial activities.
2. There is low correlation between students' decision to work either as self-employment or to start a new business and the existence of entrepreneurs in their intimate family environment. So there is no proof that the existence of entrepreneurs in the family stimulates children to become entrepreneurs.
3. Students, who participated in the survey, seem to have a moderate to high perception of the meaning of entrepreneurship although more than 1/3 has not been taught relative courses.
4. 93% of the questioned students, regardless of sex, would like to acquire the necessary knowledge and to have the appropriate guidance, so as to be able to develop entrepreneurial activities after graduation.
5. Although a very high percentage of students would like to acquire the necessary knowledge and to have the appropriate guidance in order to be able to start their own business, only 70% are willing to attend elective entrepreneurial courses during their course of studies. They would probably prefer compulsory entrepreneurship courses embodied in their conventional curriculum.

CONCLUSIONS

The European Committee aims at cultivating entrepreneurial culture among the young people in Europe, and in doing so it promotes entrepreneurial courses in the secondary and tertiary education of its member countries. There are some very good examples promoting the entrepreneurial spirit in European Universities.

“Necessity entrepreneurs” and not **“opportunity hunters”** comprise the majority of young people who decide to develop entrepreneurial activity in Greece. To advance **“creative entrepreneurship”** in Greece we have introduced at Universities and TEIs entrepreneurial courses under the framework of measure 3.1 **“Promoting Entrepreneurial**

⁶ These departments are: Electronics, Informatics, Automation, Civil Infrastructure engineering, Clothing Design and Technology, Farm Management, Tourist Industry, Accounting and Marketing-Advertising.

and Innovative Applications” which is financed by EU structural funds and the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

Within the framework of the above measure, we are implementing the act: “Center of Entrepreneurial Studies in the Higher Technological Institutions of Thessaloniki and Kavala”, which embraces teaching of entrepreneurial elective courses, mentors’ training, seminars, visiting speakers, visits to business and students’ participation to competitions for business awards. This synergy has been characterized as a **“good example”** in the 2004 progress report for Greece to the European Committee.

From a survey, concerning our students’ attitude towards entrepreneurship, conducted in September 2005, we confirmed that students are very interested in taking compulsory entrepreneurship courses embodied in their conventional program of studies. A high percentage of students, mainly men, are thinking of starting entrepreneurial activities after graduation, as a way out to the serious problem of unemployment, especially among the tertiary level graduates, in Greece. Their decision does not seem to be influenced by the existence or not of entrepreneurs in their intimate family environment.

In the last few years, we took steps to make private funds more available and ease regulatory burdens on start-up companies, but it will take time for a more entrepreneurial culture to catch on. Culture can be changed and the answer to that is **education**, which is the first and most important responsibility the state should assume.

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