

CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION IN ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES

Professor PhD **Mihaela DIACONU**
Economics Faculty, University of Pitesti, Romania
diaconu_m2005@yahoo.com

PhD Associate Professor **Amalia DUȚU**
Economics Faculty, University of Pitesti, Romania
pandelica.amalia@yahoo.com

Abstract:

The entrepreneurship, as an integral part of education, is now widely accepted worldwide. Entrepreneurial education is considered today as a holistic and inclusive process and not just a component of education in business. The activity of developing the entrepreneurial spirit organized on new principles must be seen by the universities as the foundation of successful fulfillment of university's mission in contributing to social and economic development. This paper's main purpose is to identify a number of solutions on how they can ensure through cross-border cooperation the development of entrepreneurial skills within the universities through learning experiences contexts. In this regard, the paper proposes a model of entrepreneurial project which takes the form of simulated enterprise developed by the University of Pitesti, and a number of solutions for this project to be developed and implemented through cross-border cooperation, in accordance with the strategies and principles promoted by European Commission and European Parliament, which stresses the importance of developing through international cooperation of innovative methods that go beyond the traditional frame in which, currently, are formed the competencies and the educational process is performed. Thus, the proposed model can be expanded and implemented "in the mirror" and internationally by building partnerships between countries, universities and economic agents from those countries with real benefits for all parties involved through valuing the national specificities.

Key words: entrepreneurship education, experiential learning, the integrated network of simulated companies

JEL classification: A23, I23, M21

1. ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION, SOURCE OF DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH INNOVATIVE POTENTIAL

Entrepreneurial education is considered by specialists as an activity designed to develop each person's potential usefulness. With new pedagogical approaches, it can stimulate the potential of each person's native capacity. The motivation, the self-esteem and the critical thinking, among other personal and social competencies, are important axes for an entrepreneurial attitude that can be stimulated. (L. Alvarez Marques s.a., 2012, p.56). Through specific teaching methods it can be developed entrepreneurial skills and abilities by stimulating initiative at an early age. Creating an entrepreneurial culture in society is now essential to stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit, critical thinking in solving complex problems as a reaction to a culture of passivity. Clooney's research results (2012) on entrepreneurial training programs, emphasizes that these should be included in the ecosystem of entrepreneurship and the critical elements of training programs are the entrepreneurial efficiency and personal transformation.

Scientific studies have shown that although there is no recipe to form a successful entrepreneur, there are certain characteristics and skills associated with entrepreneurial success, namely: passion, confidence, perseverance, the ability to complete tasks and to work hard, the ability to assume risk, vision, desire for continuous improvement of performance, creativity, the availability for lifelong learning, the ability to identify solutions to problems arising, the ability to plan, communication skills, marketing skills, interpersonal skills, general management knowledge, personal effectiveness, team building skills.

The “entrepreneurial education” doesn’t generate necessarily entrepreneurs, but can promote or potentiate, with renewed pedagogical goals and tools, the possibilities or capacities to be one (Ferreira, 2011). It’s crucial to educate for a more proactive attitude towards life and to a more positive perception about ourselves. (L. Alvarez Marques s.a., 2012, p.57). Thus, we can talk mainly about an “entrepreneurial pedagogy” (Dolabela, 2003).

On the question “*Can entrepreneurship skills be taught?*”, experts responded affirmatively, stating that not all those who participate in these courses will be successful entrepreneurs. The finality lies in educating the process of stimulating personal initiative, proactive attitude to life and to self-esteem, developing an entrepreneurial mindset usefully applied in everyday life and at work. The skills needed today to successfully cope with the nature characteristics of labor are closely related to critical thinking, analytical thinking, personal development, involving those qualities relevant to entrepreneurship as: confidence, personal initiative, creativity and responsibility. The European report “*Employability Skills for the Future*” and “*New skills for new jobs*” (European Commission, 2010) specifies these skills as necessary to develop through education and training to be successful in society. The presupposition is that “all human beings are inherently entrepreneurial, that is, entrepreneurial potential is in all of us” (World EconomicForum, 2009: 25).

Specialists claim that entrepreneurship education should be carried out not only in higher education, but also at primary and secondary. According to The European Foundation for Entrepreneurship Research (EFER), as the entrepreneurship education starts at the lower school age, the chances that students take into consideration in one form or another the entrepreneurial approach are greater. The supportive environment for the process of entrepreneurship education training must be supported by teachers and entrepreneurs as mentors to promote an entrepreneurial attitude towards life and society.

L. Alvarez Marques, C. Albuquerque claims that “it’s important to reflect about the potentialities of an entrepreneurial pedagogy to develop more conscientious, ethical and proactive citizens, and not just functional individuals. Assuming this perspective we must reflect about what to teach, how to do it, by whom and when”. (2012, p.58). Entrepreneurship pedagogy adapted to different levels of education involves a progressive strategy capable of stimulating problem-solving capabilities, cooperation and adaptation roles, critical thinking, initiative, creativity.

2. EFFECTIVE METHODS TO DEVELOP BUSINESS SKILLS

Finding a large number of researchers (Garavan & O’Cinnelde, 1994; Greene & Rice, 2002; Bucha, 2009; WEF, 2009; Ferreira, 2011) indicates that the most effective methods to develop entrepreneurial skills are pupil/student centered learning and experiential learning, including through their own life experiences as “learning by doing”. These methods are supported also by the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2009). To these methods is also added the contact with concrete examples of entrepreneurs who inspire pupils / students.

To get good results in the formation of entrepreneurial skills in pupils / students, it’s necessary that also the teachers to adopt a new working style, becoming facilitators of learning. This implies their focus on the needs and characteristics of the pupil/student to develop competencies, skills and talents of each student in a stimulating specific environment. In this perspective, it’s needed a good collaboration between entrepreneurs and teachers to shift from teacher to facilitator. The Council of Europe (2003: 21) defines a facilitator as “someone who helps the group to discover the knowledge they already have, which encourages you to learn more and help you explore your potential. Facilitate means creating an environment where the group learns, experiences, explore and grow. Not a process where experts, transmit their knowledge and skills to others”.

A qualitative research undertaken in 2010 by L Alvarez Margues and Cristina Albuquerque on the contribution of entrepreneurial education to develop life competencies and skills has underlined the fact that learning by doing performed by the Network of teaching entrepreneurship NFTE organized in Ireland and Belgium led to higher positive impact on skills development of

young people and the development of skills associated with life in general, namely self confidence, critical thinking, planning, relationship skills, know-how, responsibility and ability to work in team.

Entrepreneurship education in an educational setting recognises that youths are a diverse group with diverse qualities, talents, motivations and learning objectives. It clearly focuses on developing, understanding and ability for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours, attributes and skills in widely different contexts which can be practiced, developed and learned over a period of time. Personal attributes such as creativity and spirit of innovation can be useful to everyone in their responsibilities and daily existence. (S. Vidya, 2014, p. 28).

Entrepreneurship must be maintained by a special labor integration, practice and education, by using different methods and approaches that enable students to build self confidence by focusing on positive ways to handle obstacles and learning from failures. "The entrepreneurship curriculum underlines the processes of constructing knowledge by learners."(S Vidya, 2014, p.30)

3. THE EXPERIENTIAL BACKGROUND AS INNOVATIVE LEARNING METHOD, KEY CHALLENGE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES

The experiential context, as an innovative learning method seen as non-formal alternative to traditional learning contexts meet the needs of development and improvement of entrepreneurial education revealed by the European Parliament, the European Commission, Eurydice Network etc, given that "students participating in entrepreneurship education are more likely to start their own business and their companies tend to be more innovative and more successful than those led by persons without entrepreneurship education backgrounds" (European Commission, 2015). Experiential learning linked to specific situations and/or issues is more likely to be successful in developing entrepreneurship skills than classroom-based learning.

Economic and social developments of recent years have shown that it is necessary to act more coherently in education and training to meet the challenges arising from economic crises (especially youth unemployment), new technologies and intensifying competition in the market. The need of providing enhanced entrepreneurial skills to schooled young people in higher education and the development of international cooperation relationships academically, to face continuous changes in society and economy have been recognized by the higher education institutions. Developing experiential learning contexts within the universities through active partnerships with business representatives corresponds as the approach of higher education internationalization strategies and education and training of young people through flexible and innovative methods, as they are described in the *European Commission Communications: "European higher education in the world"* (2013), "Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes" (2012), "Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems" (2011). Also, this approach can be framed in the assumptions of the Entrepreneurship 2020 action plan, according to which education and training play an essential role in nurturing new generations of entrepreneurs and the university entrepreneurship education can stimulate high-tech companies also with strong growth by supporting business ecosystems, industrial partnerships and alliances.

4. MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CONTEXTS SIMULATED IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS; CASE STUDY UNIVERSITY OF PITEȘTI

In higher education in Romania, entrepreneurial education is an approach that must be substantially improved as a result of identifying the need for matching skills, abilities and qualifications provided by the institution of higher education with the skills and competence requirements existing on the labor market. A study of EY Romania - *The Barometer of education and entrepreneurial culture among young people - Romania 2014*, through which were measured perceptions of youth on entrepreneurship, education and entrepreneurial culture in Romania, has

highlighted among others, that students realize the need for accumulation of experience and knowledge before becoming entrepreneurs.

Developing the entrepreneurial culture within University of Pitești, aims to fulfill three complementary missions: education, research and the local and regional socio-economic development. In the context of this development, entrepreneurship education aims to develop the entrepreneurial skills of the entire academic community composed of students, graduates, teachers and researchers.

In the systemic approach of entrepreneurial education and the transition from traditional education to experiential education within University of Pitești, are very important the following aspects:

- Addressing entrepreneurship education in all study programs, removing education tend to treat this just as an extracurricular activity or as the object of marginal study of traditional education
- Focusing the attention in the educational process on experiential learning and also on removing the traditional relationships between teachers and students, so that the teacher to become especially a mentor, a guide
- The context of improved learning process in the sense of using methods that allow students to experience in the actual environment of real or simulated enterprises and to acquire self-knowledge
- Building a new type of organizational culture centered on the adoption of entrepreneurial orientation at the department, faculty and university level using technology transfer as an important tool with which the university may now become more entrepreneurial
- Developing a network of professional mentoring for teachers and students by involving representatives of business with relevant professional experience, with the availability of sharing with the students the secrets of professional success, with an opening to collaboration and voluntary commitment, with interest for the professional training of young people according to quality standards.

In order to develop the local and transboundary ecosystem of entrepreneurship education, we further define a model for developing and implementing non-formal contexts of learning, as experiential learning, starting from the experience gained so far in the University of Pitești. The model is based on the concept of organization and operation of the integrated network of simulated companies, the environment complementary to the traditional parameters of education, significantly reducing the differences between the classroom and the specific organization's internal environment. Developing interactive learning method of simulated enterprise network type, is designed as synergy created between academia and organizations active in the socio-economic field and as a process approach centered on the orientation from business environment to the academic one and the students' needs. Implementing this method of experiential learning involves the training of entrepreneurial mentoring competencies at the level of university teachers by involving representatives of the socio-economic environment possessing proven experience in developing successful businesses at local, national and regional level. It also involves training of entrepreneurial skills in students through mentoring activities provided jointly by mentor teachers and specialists with experience in socio-economic environment. The experiential context in which the teaching process takes place is based on the entrepreneurial mentoring which is viewed as a resource for learning.

In designing this model we took into account also the statement of the European Commission's Guidelines on strengthening the spirit and entrepreneurial skills which states as a necessity *"D6 Establishing links between students and real enterprises or businessmen to ensure a close relationship with real experience in the business field. Students should not be isolated and kept away from the world outside school"*.

The network of simulated companies gives students the conditions to enable them to acquire entrepreneurial skills, to develop innovative products, to be integrated in a work team, to be in contact with the industry and the socio-economic environment, to stimulate their creativity and develop their communication skills, thereby increasing their chances on the labor market or in the

business field. Structurally, the simulated company network is made up of three basic firms and two support firms. Both basic and support companies have flexible and flattened organizational structures with minimal hierarchical levels, the management adopted within the network being a project and participatory one. The basic company has as main activity the development of concepts of new products/ innovative services. The support company aims to provide consultancy services for the basic companies. Each company in the network is managed and coordinated by a manager hired on management contract (student). Each basic company initiates and improves product/service development projects. The manager of the basic company allocates available human resources (responsible for the product development) for the product/service development projects. Human resources available in the basic companies can be allocated between the companies through the managers' agreement. A product responsible can be assigned to work on multiple projects (either within the same company or across multiple companies). The manager of the basic company identifies the necessary of consultancy services and sends service requests to the support companies. Each support company within the network is managed and coordinated by a manager hired on a management contract (student). The support company manager takes the necessary of consulting services, performs the planning of the activities and also the allocation/reallocation of human resources available for projects and basic companies, in order to effectively cover the needs of each basic company and to ensure the a smooth running of activities within the network.

In the development of simulated company network it is capitalized the experience gained by experts from business as an example of of good practice in building the business model that is experienced in the simulated companies. The proposed model can be also used in the context of developing strategies for internationalization of higher education and the education and training of young people through flexible and innovative methods through empowerment of universities, economic agents and development "in the mirror" of this model. The common elements, especially the national specificity can contribute substantially to improving entrepreneurial training for both students and teachers and specialists from the position of mentors. In the case of cross-border cooperation within the partner universities may be adopted new learning methods and new forms of In the case of cross-border cooperation within the partner universities may be adopted new learning methods and new forms of organizing learning contexts conducive to the development of entrepreneurial skills to the needs of current socio-economic context that can lead to the development of entrepreneurial skills according to the needs of current socio-economic context. This form of collaboration can generate direct benefits for students, materialized in the development of entrepreneurial skills and improving language skills, increasing opportunities for professional and personal development. A real benefit of cross-border cooperation is the development of institutional networking between countries, academic and business environment in order to increase labor market insertion and development of entrepreneurship. Social and economic operators involved in the proposed model can directly benefit from the opportunity to identify future employees with highly qualified training, acquiring expertise in entrepreneurial skills training and entrepreneurial mentoring through direct collaboration both with students and with teachers. At the level of internal organizational environment, business involved operators will also benefit of working tools for stimulating entrepreneurial behavior, for developing their human resources, increasing productivity and achieving superior economic results, all of which contribute to the need for sustainable development through partnership and collaboration with the academia.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The entrepreneurial education through new pedagogical approaches can develop the potential usefulness of each person and the stimulating the potential of native capacity specific to the youth. The youth must be maintained by a particular way of integrating the practice with the education, using different methods and approaches, namely the pupil/student centered learning and experiential learning, including learning through their own life experiences as "learning by doing". Using experiential learning contexts in universities through active partnerships with business

representatives may constitute into an approach of strategies for internationalization of higher education with important achievements by supporting business ecosystems. The proposed model, based on the experiential context and simulated enterprise, on the entrepreneurial mentoring regarded as a resource for learning and on the implementation “in the mirror” at cross-borders level, generates added value for every stakeholder involved in the process from each country.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alvarez, L.M. and Albuquerque, C. (2012) - *Entrepreneurship Education and the development of young people life competencies and skills*, ACRN Journal of Entrepreneurship Perspectives, Vol. 1, Issue 2, p. 55-68, Nov. 2012, ISSN 2224-9729
- [2] Chigunta, F. (2002) - *Youth Entrepreneurship: Meeting the Key Policy Challenges*. Education Development Center. Retrieved 31.05.2015 from: <http://yesweb.org/gkr/res/bg.entrep.ta.doc>
- [3] Cooney, Th. (2012) - *Entrepreneurship Skills for Growth-oriented Businesses*, Report for Workshop on Skills Development for SMEs and Entrepreneurship, Copenhagen.
- [4] Crişan, P. (2010) - *Problematic aspects of entrepreneurship relationship-co-opetition strategies*, Management Intercultural, vol XII, nr 2(22), p. 4-9.
- [5] Cruikshank, J. L. (2005) - *Shaping the Waves: A History of Entrepreneurship at the Harvard Business School*, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press
- [6] Dolabela, F. (2003) - *Pedagogia Empreendedora*, São Paulo, Editora de Cultura.
- [7] Feldman, M.P. (2014) - *The character of innovative places: entrepreneurial strategy, economic development, and prosperity*, Small Business Economics, 43:9–20, DOI 10.1007/s11187-014-9574-4.
- [8] Ferreira, J. S. (2011) - *Entrepreneur XXI. Education for Entrepreneurship - New paradigm?*, International Business and Economics Review, 2, 16-29.
- [9] Gănescu, C. (2014) - *Entrepreneurship, a solution to improve youth employment in the European Union*, Management strategies, 7 (Special Issue): 580-588
- [10] Gibb, A.A. (2010) - *Towards the Entrepreneurial University*, NCGE, Birmingham.
- [11] Grilo, I. And Thurik, R. (2006) - *Latent and Actual Entrepreneurship in Europe and the US: Some Recent Developments*, The International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal 1(4): 441-459.
- [12] Higgins, David and Mirza, Mohammed (2012) - *Entrepreneurial education: reflexive approaches to entrepreneurial learning in/through practice*, Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship ISBE Conference 2012, 7th-8th November 2012, Dublin, Ireland. (Unpublished)
- [13] Kelley, D., Bosma, N., and Amorós, J. E. (2010) - *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: 2010 Global Report* - Babson College, Wellesley, MA.
- [14] Kutzhanova, N., Lyons, T.S. and Lichtenstein, G.A. (2009) - *Skill-Based Development of Entrepreneurs and the Role of Personal and Peer Group Coaching in Enterprise Development*, Economic Development Quarterly, Vol. 20, No. 10
- [15] Llisteri, J.J., Kantis, H., Angelelli, P. and Tejerina, L. (2006) - *Is Youth Entrepreneurship a Necessity or an Opportunity? A First Exploration of Household and New Enterprise Surveys in Latin America*, Washington: Inter-American Development Bank.
- [16] Oyelola, O.T., Igwe, N.C., Ajiboshin, I.O. and Peluola, S.B. (2014) - *Entrepreneurship Education: Solution to Youth Unemployment in Nigeria*, Journal of Poverty, Investment and Development, 5:149-157.
- [17] Szabo, Z. and Herman, E. (2012) - *Innovative Entrepreneurship for Economic Development in EU*, Procedia Economics and Finance 3:268 – 275.
- [18] Uzunidis, D., Boutillier, S. and Laperche, B. (2014) - *The entrepreneur's 'resource potential' and the organic square of entrepreneurship: definition and application to the*

- French case*, Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 3:1 <http://www.innovation-entrepreneurship.com/content/3/1/1>.
- [19] Vaidya, S. (2014) - *Developing Entrepreneurial Life Skills*, SpringerBriefs in Education, DOI: 10.1007/978-81-322-1789-3_2, © The Author(s).
- [20] Zamfir, A.M., Lungu, E.O. and Mocanu, C. (2013) - *Studiul comportamentului de antreprenoriat în rândul absolvenților de învățământ superior din 13 țări europene. Economie teoretică și aplicată*, 20 (11/588): 35-43.
- [21] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 2013, Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources - COM(2013) 654 final.
- [22] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 2013, European higher education in the world - COM(2013) 499 final
- [23] European Commission, 2015, Entrepreneurship Education: A road to success A compilation of evidence on the impact of entrepreneurship education strategies and measures, available at <file:///C:/Users/Asus/Downloads/Final%20report-EE-a%20road%20to%20success-final.pdf>
- [24] European Parliament resolution of 8 September 2015 on promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training, (2015/2006(INI))
- [25] European Parliament resolution of 11 September 2013 on tackling youth unemployment: possible ways out (2013/2045(INI))
- [26] European Commission, 2012, Entrepreneurship in the EU and beyond - Flash *Eurobarometer*