

Entrepreneurship Education in Europe:
Fostering Entrepreneurial Mindsets through Education and Learning
European Commission Conference

Summary of Workshop on Higher Education
October 26-27, 2006
Oslo, Norway

Moderator: Paul Hannon, NCGE, UK
Rapporteur: Karen Wilson, EFER, Netherlands

Speakers:

- Jon Erik Svendsen, BI Norwegian School of Management, Norway
- Angela Short, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland
- Robert Handscombe, University of Sheffield, UK
- Jann van Benthem, University of Twente, Netherlands
- Jonathan Nowak, JADE

I. Key Conclusions

The workshop on higher education provided many examples of good practice and innovative approaches in entrepreneurship education across Europe. The presentations and discussions highlighted six main conclusions, which are discussed in further detail below.

- Clarifying the outcomes we seek from higher education
- Building effective entrepreneurship education
- Developing effective educators
- Reshaping the institutional paradigm
- Integrating entrepreneurs/professionals in curricula design and delivery
- Securing public support/interventions

1) Clarifying the outcomes we seek from higher education

Greater clarity is needed regarding the purpose and goals of entrepreneurship education. These should be based on a broadly defined set of outcomes, not only on a narrow measurement of the number of start ups created from universities. Entrepreneurship education is about developing attitudes, behaviors and capacities at the individual level. It is also about the application of those skills and attitudes, which can take many forms during an individual's career, creating a range of long term benefits to society and the economy. Developing a broader framework for assessing entrepreneurship education is therefore necessary. Measuring intangible outcomes is difficult, however, applying only simple measures of the potentially wrong things can result in falling far short of the intended outcomes and impact.

2) Building effective entrepreneurship education

In terms of the content or curricula, it is important to take the local context into account as well as the level and background of the students. Opportunities should be made available to students at all levels and from all disciplines across the campus to take entrepreneurship. In Europe, the majority of entrepreneurship courses are offered in business schools. Entrepreneurship needs to

be expanded across the campus, particularly to the technology and science departments where many innovative ideas and companies originate.

In terms of delivery, a greater emphasis is needed on experiential and action learning. There are numerous pedagogies which can be utilized including case studies, team projects, and activities with entrepreneurs. Using active learning methods is more complex than traditional teaching methods. It requires engaging students' feelings and emotions in the learning process. Educators/facilitators therefore must be able to create an open environment of trust in which students develop the necessary confidence to take risks. The proper incentives, assessment, rewards and recognition must be put in place to encourage educators to try these approaches.

3) Developing effective educators

It is vital to create a critical mass of entrepreneurship educators able to create the right learning experiences for students. Growing the base of experienced educators not only means providing the necessary training and education but also requires expanding the definition of "educators" beyond professors to include entrepreneurs, alumni and even students.

Greater mobility and exchange of experience is needed in Europe, not only between universities but also between academia and the business world. University exchanges should consist of more than delivering a few lectures. Programs need to be developed that allow educators to spend a significant amount of time at other institutions and/or in the private sector to truly engage, learn and develop. Europe needs more entrepreneurial learning models and greater sharing of knowledge and good practice across sectors and national borders.

4) Reshaping the institutional paradigm

Institutional culture, practice and policies often get in the way of developing an entrepreneurial spirit and environment within universities. Entrepreneurship champions play critical roles within the universities but there must also be a strong commitment from the university leadership (Provosts, Rectors and Vice Chancellors). Traditionally universities have been focused on ensuring students can secure future employment. Today, universities must prepare students to work in a dynamic, rapidly changing entrepreneurial and global environment. This requires a complete paradigm shift for the entire university, including changing the fundamentals of how the university operates and its role in society.

5) Integrating entrepreneurs/professionals in curricula design and delivery

Active and learning-by-doing methods integrate elements of practice into the learning process. This highlights the importance of actively engaging entrepreneurs and other professionals in both course design and delivery. These individuals also serve as role models, particularly if they are alumni of the school, as well as coaches and mentors. They also enhance entrepreneurial spirit within the university as well as create stronger links between the university and the local community.

6) Securing public support/interventions

It is clear that public interventions have affected the behavior of universities and faculty, increasing the focus on entrepreneurship education. The field of entrepreneurship education is

still relatively young in Europe and it is therefore important and necessary that this support is continued until entrepreneurship is embedded in a sustainable manner in universities across Europe. Efforts to communicate with policy makers about the need, benefits and possible actions to take to encourage and support entrepreneurship education should be increased.

II. Recommendations for Action

There is a role for public interventions at the EU, national, regional and local levels, for embedding entrepreneurship support within a coherent framework. There is also clearly a role and responsibility for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). These initiatives are often led by individual educators and other champions but a commitment is also needed from the highest levels of the universities.

Recommended actions for governments

1. Support training programs of educators (professors, practitioners, students)
2. Provide support for European-wide mobility and exchanges of educators
3. Improve the resource base
 - Best practices models
 - European/local entrepreneurship case studies
4. Reassessment of components of the Bologna Protocol
 - Recognition and acceptance of teaching by practitioners
 - Undergraduate education to recognize entrepreneurial career paths
5. Create a broad framework of outcomes and measures

Recommended Actions for HEIs

1. Develop shared framework of desired outcomes of entrepreneurship education
 - Developing individual capabilities, attitudes, mindsets
 - Encouraging application of those capabilities
 - Contributing to economy/society
2. All faculties/disciplines should develop opportunities for students at every level to experience entrepreneurship
3. Engage university leaders in actions to gain their commitment to reshaping the institutional paradigm
4. Broaden base of entrepreneurship educators, develop appropriate incentives and celebrate successes
5. Engage and exchange with the business community