Chapter 9

Poliempreende Project: A Validated Methodology for Entrepreneurship Education

Teresa Paiva
Research Unit for Inland Development of Guarda Polytechnic Institute, Portugal

Maria Leopoldina Alves
Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal

Jorge Humberto Sampaio
Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal

ABSTRACT

The Portuguese polytechnic high education network has developed a reference project with an institutional cooperation and entrepreneurship education methodology of development and implementation, for more than 15 years now. The concern of promoting and empowering entrepreneurs as a response to the paradigm shift of “a job for life” gave form to the Poliempreende Project which is a teaching design method, enterprise-oriented, to promote and develop new business projects. The main goal is to present and demonstrate the impact of the Poliempreende project in the students and in their business creation process. In order to do that, the authors will follow a case study methodology to analyse how and why this entrepreneurship education methodology is implemented and how it has achieved success. This will be done by integrating the project within the European entrepreneurship education policies, showing how it addresses and follows the European guidelines for entrepreneurship competencies development, and supports innovation and business projects can be turned into new enterprises in a sustainable way.

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INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of projects of entrepreneurship education in the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) throughout Europe is high and its necessary to analyse and fully understand how they are organized and implemented and what are the results they are producing in terms of business creation or entrepreneurial projects development, so it’s possible to observe the ones that are really making a difference and help to contribute to a more entrepreneurial and innovative society like entrepreneurship is likely to produce.

The entrepreneurship involvement throughout Europe is different since some countries began to develop efforts sooner than the others or give different levels of importance. In Portugal, we have a short history in entrepreneurship promotion in HEI, but it has several decades now. The different types of HEI drawn diverse strategies to promote and educate entrepreneurship within their institutions, and clearly, there is one that can be enhanced due to its longevity and to be part of a national network of institutions, working together around the same entrepreneurship purpose.

In this chapter we propose to analyse this project, Poliempreende, explaining the process occurred in Portugal in entrepreneurship education promoted in HEI and, following a case study methodology, describing, observing the Poliempreende project results and analyse its validation in terms an excellent example to follow in HEI entrepreneurship education.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND PORTUGUESE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Entrepreneurship education models usually include four objectives: (i) promote the individual characteristics and skills that are common to entrepreneurs; ii) sensitize students to self-employment and entrepreneurship as a possible career; (iii) construct learning models in the real context; (iv) provide basic entrepreneurial skills for self-employment, creation and start-ups of a business (Oslo Agenda on Education for the Development of Entrepreneurship in Europe, 2006).

Heinonen and Poikkijoki (2006) defined the elements for the education of entrepreneurship and development of entrepreneurial skills followed by the European Union in its definition of educational policies for entrepreneurship (European Commission, 2012) in which it is observed that in Institutions of Higher Education the dimension of teaching-learning is usually related to the teaching of entrepreneurship (e.g. entrepreneurship courses, entrepreneurship degrees, extracurricular activities, curriculum development and teaching methodologies) (Béchard & Grégoire, 2005). The scope and focus of entrepreneurship education vary according to the types of institutions and years of experience in entrepreneurship education and whether the focus is on entrepreneurship or entrepreneurship education, that is, more traditional (disciplines related to economics and social sciences) or involving subjects outside the Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

The teaching of entrepreneurship in Portuguese higher education has been encouraged since the beginning of 2000, although the first entrepreneurship course was offered in the 1990s (Redford & Trigo, 2007). Later, with the renovation of Portuguese higher education, driven by the introduction of the Bologna process, as of 2006, most of the Portuguese universities offer courses with themes specifically or partially dedicated to the theme of entrepreneurship (Saraiva & Paiva, 2014).
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