



Panel II – Towards the Entrepreneurial Education: Summary of the Presentations and the Final Debate

Presentations

Anthony M. Mendes, Executive Director of the Academy of Entrepreneurial Leadership, University of Illinois (USA)

Anthony Mendes gave a presentation on the principles and practice of teaching and the promotion of entrepreneurship at the University of Illinois. He mentioned that the Academy of Entrepreneurial Leadership implements and coordinates each and every action to promote entrepreneurship in all University departments. He added that entrepreneurship in this University is not taught as a discipline itself; instead, the traditional courses and disciplines include in their curricula multidisciplinary projects with students responsible for those projects, from conception to implementation and evaluation. In addition, the stated mission of the Academy of Entrepreneurial Leadership also includes sponsoring research on entrepreneurship and regularly awarding students, teachers and researchers prizes in Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Vítor Figueiredo, Directorate-general for Curricular Innovation and Development, Ministry of Education

The speaker introduced to the audience the National Project for Entrepreneurship Education and its principles and practice. This project aims to broaden the teaching of entrepreneurship at the secondary schools level, both in curricular and extracurricular activities.

Vítor Figueiredo concluded its presentation describing a successful case at Fundão Secondary School. What stroke the audience the most was how involved and motivated the pupils, local business partners and University were. The case made clear that some of the projects carried out under the scope of this initiative lead to the resolution of technological problems in the local enterprises and to new products launch into the market.

Ana Sofia Ferreira et al., Faculty of Economics, University of Porto (FEP)

Ana Sofia Ferreira presented a research work and its conclusions regarding the correlation between the potential of entrepreneurship (revealed during specific academic activities, junior enterprises) and the effective entrepreneurial capacity (proved by the professional experience acquired after the graduation). The study focused on several generations of students who took part at the *FEP Júnior Consulting*, a junior enterprise within the Faculty of Economics. It was possible to analyse students' entrepreneurial potential and effective entrepreneurial capacity. The main conclusion is that there is no statistically significant correlation between the two variables. This absence of correlation might be explained by a difference pointed out to in the literature: entrepreneurial capacity versus managerial capacity. The potential of entrepreneurship is linked to the first concept while the effective entrepreneurship is related to the second concept.

Rui Magno, Training and Knowledge Department, Portuguese Business Association

The speaker gave a sharp, not to mention provocative, speech about desirable policies to overcome the Economic crisis in Europe. In his view, those policies would naturally lead to an increase in entrepreneurship and would ease the necessary shift in the economic paradigm.

The argumentation relies on the assumption that Europe cannot currently compete with the rest of the world on products or low salaries; Europe's competitive advantages rely on knowledge and on the welfare industries. Therefore, it is necessary to invest on new competencies and higher entrepreneurial capacity, both oriented to those two industries. According to the speaker, the best way to achieve that level of knowledge and entrepreneurship is by reducing the working hours in 20%. People would then have time and



will to gain new competencies. The salaries, however, would be reduced in 10%. Rui Magno estimates that this is the right way to stop the increasing unemployment rates and encourage the acquisition of new competencies and entrepreneurial capacity in the fields of knowledge and welfare industries. As a consequence, Europe's competitiveness will boost.

Debate

Questions and comments from the participants

1a. (Marcelino Lopes, University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro) He disagrees with the National Project for Entrepreneurship Education because it only accepts one way of being entrepreneur and that goes against people's natural diversity, particularly when it comes to students. He means that "there is not only one area of expertise but several; not only one perspective, but several...". The participant adds that the Project mixes up Education with Schooling, letting down the Project's vision: "School for Entrepreneurship". To sum up, it was referred that this is just another project created by politicians who know nothing about reality.

1b. It is impossible to put into practice the idea of reducing the working time. On the contrary to what Rui Magno defended, that decision would have a counterproductive effect, namely for the countless workers who earn roughly the minimum wage. In conclusion, this proposal is challenged because it does not take into consideration the difficulties faced by the majority of the workers. For them it would only mean a loss of income and not a search for new competencies or new entrepreneurial initiatives.

2. (Postgraduate student at the University of Aveiro) This intervention is in line with the one from the previous conference attendee. It questions the meaning of "training entrepreneurs at school" because education is directed to individuals and their particularities and not groups of individuals. The participant added that it is necessary to "look every person individually", not forcing stereotypes.

3. (Luísa Orvalho, Directorate-General for Education in the Northern Region) This participant posed a question to Professor Anthony Mendes concerning the types of extracurricular activities organised at the University of Illinois with the purpose of foster in entrepreneurship.

4. (Alexandra Camacho, Imaging and Sound Consultant) Comment on the fact that "an entrepreneur is not necessarily a businessman and a businessman does not have to be entrepreneur". The conference attendee referred that the speakers forgot to mention transversal issues regarding today's education for entrepreneurship, such as motivation and ability to work in teams.

5. (Viana de Abreu, businessman) He raised the following question to Mr. Rui Magno: "What reaction would you expect from the social fabric if it was confronted with the change you propose [reduction in the working time and salary]?"

6. (Non-identified participant) Mr. Rui Magno was asked the following question: "How would it be possible to implement the model you presented [reduction in the working time and salary] given the fact that the majority of the employers think that lowering the salaries is actually a benefit?"

7. (Christine Naschberger, Researcher at Audencia School of Management) Mr. Rui Magno was asked the following question: "Is the reduction in the working time socially acceptable? Is it not an impractical «craze»?"



(Non-identified participant) The panel was asked the questions hereby reported:

8a. "Is there a privileged age to learn how to be an entrepreneur?"

8b. Which strategies are known to be more efficient when it comes to teach for entrepreneurship?

9. (Diana Silva, Psychologist and personal coach) As far as this participant is concerned the panel lacked a more optimistic and modern vision. Moreover, the issue of multidisciplinary in entrepreneurship was not addressed.

Answers and counter-comments from the panel

Vitor Figueiredo

Vitor Figueiredo was given prior right to speak and said that the National Project for Entrepreneurship Education clearly distinguishes entrepreneurship from Education for Entrepreneurship and Economical Education. He added that the individual dimensions are respected, as well as cross issues such as motivation and team working skills.

He insisted that each school is adapting the program to its own reality and to the context where it is located. Nothing is compulsory, he said, there is absolute respect for pupil's individual characteristics.

Furthermore, he considered entrepreneurship one of the eight components in "lifelong learning" whose importance is undeniable so that Europe "changes its direction and its statistics".

The speaker pointed out that one of the strategies that will lead to a successful education for entrepreneurship at school is the establishment of several partnerships between the pupils and local entities outside the school (Universities, enterprises, etc.). The employers themselves are rediscovering the school the moment they realise the school is counting on them.

Finally, he said he does not see himself as a "policy maker", but as a "policy proposer".

Maria José Baptista (the example of Fundão Secondary School was shared with the audience to complete the previous speech)

The school also provides informal learning and the project on entrepreneurship aims to structure that learning process.

Twelve out of the twenty-four projects developed under the scope of the Entrepreneurship Program were extracurricular. She gave several examples: - the solution for a technological problem at a local cheese factory, the launch of a medical jelly, the substitution of a chemical technology by a natural one at a sausage factory; all these projects were successful and involved pupils, University and local enterprises. The advantages are numerous, but the most important one is that these projects managed to reduce the distance between the businessmen and the school.

The Program actually takes into consideration the pupil's diversity and adjusts to their learning profiles. This means that the pupils work according to their own rhythm and for their own good. At last, it was mentioned that the program also plays a major role in the development of competencies for teachers and the staff.

Rui Magno

Rui Magno repeated that, in his opinion, it is possible to put this proposal into practice. He considers that having extra time would confer people the availability and motivation to search for new competencies; on the other hand, people would feel compelled to compensate their income loss by starting new businesses. These two effects would reinforce each other mutually. In conclusion, we would have not only happy and fulfilled employees, but also less unemployment.



The way the employers treat the human resources is hopeless. The majority of the employers (70%) did not complete the compulsory school attendance (9 years) and only 3% have a degree.

The speaker answered that reducing the working time is not meant to be a popular idea, it is actually necessary because people need room for development. He added that often workers and employers expect different results and objectives. As a consequence, the workers feel motivated and have a desire for personal development regardless what the employers think of that, as long as that development happens during the free time. He added that, except for some disadvantaged groups, training should be paid by the trainees because they are the ones who actually benefit from it. Once again, 20% of extra free time is a strong encouragement to the acquisition of skills for entrepreneurship and these skills are very important in a Europe unable to compete against countries with cheaper working costs.

Anthony Mendes

It is important to emphasise that at the University of Illinois there is a proper philosophy backing the promotion of entrepreneurship and that philosophy does not include the introduction of new curricula. Instead there is the articulation and combination among the existing curricula in order to encourage entrepreneurship. Multidisciplinary is on the basis of this philosophy and the students have to carry out full projects (from the idea to the implementation and the evaluation of results). As an example he indicated a project from Nutrition students who created the *Nutrition Bars* at the University; they were responsible for the nutritional aspects, but also for all the aspects related to the project's feasibility, including the price. Anthony Mendes gave another example, this time from Engineering students who were challenged to build an arm prosthesis to be used in developing countries. Regarding who the users were, the production costs had to be reduced. To sum up, the philosophy at the University of Illinois is train the students how to put their ideas into practice.

As far as Anthony Mendes is concerned, the pupils should start learning something about entrepreneurship at primary school; this would be the appropriate age.

At last, he mentioned that many students have an innate entrepreneurial competency; it will reveal itself no matter what teaching actions the student attends. This means, however, that innate entrepreneurship can drive the students to drop out of university because it lacks in motivational mechanisms. For instance, rigid evaluation systems often discourage the students who have an innate entrepreneurial profile. It is actually a challenge to keep all the students motivated and interested.

Ana Sofia Ferreira

One of the best strategies to foster entrepreneurship is the junior enterprises launched at the universities. They are, in fact, a great supplement to the traditional academic teaching.