

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR EUROPEAN STUDENTS: A WAY TO EXCHANGE STUDENTS AND TEACHING STAFF

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ABSTRACT

Participation in Erasmus Programme in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme will improve the excellence of education in Institutions of Higher Education by providing the possibility of bilateral student and teaching staff exchange with leading European academic institutions. In addition, another important aspect of Erasmus is the possibility of organizing Intensive Programmes (IP) where students and teachers from different academic European Institutions will study specific topics in a compact way - short time. It is common knowledge that the experience of studying abroad enriches students' lives in the academic and professional fields. Teaching Staff exchanges have similar beneficial effects. In order to improve the quality and to increase the volume of student and teaching staff mobility in Europe, to develop the quality and to increase the volume of multilateral cooperation between higher education institutions in Europe was born this Intensive Programme entitled Entrepreneurship Education for European Students, already approved by the Portugal National Agency for the Management of the Lifelong Learning Programme and will be operational next academic year. So, this paper describes the Entrepreneurship Education for European Students Intensive Programme as playing an important role in the lives of participants and in the development of Higher Education in Europe.

KEYWORDS

Entrepreneurship Education; Student and Teaching Staff Mobility; Polytechnic Institute of Bragança; Erasmus Programme; Intensive Programme; Lifelong Learning Programme.

1. INTRODUCTION

International exchanges have become an important and add valued attribute of Higher Education Institutions life. Since the last years many nations and stakeholders have become increasingly interested in student flows for a variety of reasons; these include the recognition that students need global skills in order to compete in a global economy, the imbalance in many countries of supply and demand for post-secondary education, and the transformation of education into 'big business' which has led to increased competition to attract international students (Altbach, 2004). These factors have meant that international student mobility has become an important part of the global Higher Education landscape (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). Many studies show that a period spent in a foreign country not only enriches students' lives in the academic and professional fields, but can also improve language learning, intercultural skills, self-reliance and self-awareness. In addition, many employers highly value such a period abroad, which increases the students' employability and job prospects (European Commission, 2011a). So in this way, ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is the EU's flagship education and training programme enabling students to study and work abroad. In addition, it funds co-operation between higher education institutions across Europe. The programme not only supports students, but also professors and business staff who want to teach abroad, as well as helping university staff to receive training (European Commission, 2011a). The aims of Erasmus Programme include promoting mobility, developing individual skills and competences and increase international understanding (Papatsiba, 2005). The international mobility of students has risen significantly in the last 23 years, more than 2.2 million students have participated since

it started in 1987, as well as 250.000 higher education teachers and other staff since 1997 (this type of exchange was also expanded further in 2007), (European Commission, 2011a). In addition to exchange actions, Erasmus helps higher education institutions to work together through intensive programmes, networks and multilateral projects (European Commission, 2011b).

In order to contribute for increase volume of student and teaching staff mobility in Europe, to develop the quality, to improve the volume of multilateral cooperation between higher education institutions in Europe, to facilitate the development of innovative practices in education and train students' entrepreneurial competences, the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (IPB) developed an Intensive Programme - Entrepreneurship Education for European Students (E3S) -, with focus on subject areas: business and administration; economics and marketing and advertising. This Intensive Programme already approved by the Portugal National Agency for the Management of the Lifelong Learning Programme will be operational next academic year. The main objective of E3S is to develop the entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial culture with the goal of increasing one policy of promoting self-employment in the students from Bachelor and Master Degrees, in different fields of study. For this purpose and according with the rules, the consortium involves 7 participating institutions from 5 different countries participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme [Escuela Politécnica Superior de Zamora (SP), Universidad de Valladolid (SP), Universidad de León (SP), University of Pitesti (RO), University of Ljubljana (LT), Opole University of Technology (PL) and Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (PT)].

As a result, this paper discusses a commitment to exploring and explaining new policies where students and teachers from different academic European Institutions will study specific topics in a condensed way.

For that reason, this paper is organized as follow: section 2, project objectives and innovative Intensive Programme will be described; section 3, presents the methodology, as the main pedagogical, didactical approaches and work programme; the management, monitoring and project evaluation will be described in section 4; and finally, the envisage outputs of E3S project are described in section 5.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND INNOVATIVE CHARACTER

This proposal follows a strategic option that Polytechnic Institute of Bragança has been developing in the last five years, with the intention of promoting the employability of their newly graduated students, through self-employment. For that reason, the IPB has created, three years ago, a Pro-Presidency which has provided a range of activities, with the aim of promoting the entrepreneurial spirit within its student community, as well as, helping the newly graduates (Bachelor and Master Degree) starting their own businesses. Also created a space called "*Business Incubator*", with the capacity to accommodate five business projects and that has served to support the creation of thirteen small companies by students. And provide consulting and counseling services to students, who intend to become entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship IPB's office has provided, also, a set of training modules related to the different contents like: Administration, Management, Economics and Finance. Entrepreneurship modules, which integrate the IPB extra-curricular training, are orientated for all students who attend undergraduates' programmes or master degree in IPB, without distinction of the undergraduate they attend. These Entrepreneurship modules are recognized 6 ECTS credits.

In addition, the Entrepreneurship IPB office also has great and high level, cooperation with foreign higher education institutions in Europe through the Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci Programmes. In the other hand are a good skills and logistical conditions for teaching and supporting the development of business projects. IPB is, still, one of the first institutions in Poliemprende Program "*Entrepreneurship Program of Portuguese Polytechnics*" which earned, this year, 2nd place in the business ideas competition that is promoted in this program.

Furthermore the fact that IPB has already some experience in Intensive Programmes, and in this field already put into operation, in this last 3 years, the International Business Management Intensive Programme (03963/PBRAGANC01), and even teach an Undergraduate Programme, Joint Degree in International Business Management, that emerged from the European Project (219410-IC-1-2005-1-LT-ERASMUS-PROGUC-1). Although, the large experience in this scope, in the last 4 years, entering into consideration with the two categories of Intensive Programmes - new and renewal, 59 Intensive Programmes approved by the Portugal National Agency for the Management of the Lifelong Learning Programme, for Portugal, 21 IP belonged to IPB, about 36% (European Commission, 2011b).

So, the Entrepreneurship Education for European Students main objectives are: Provide students of different nationalities and different areas of knowledge of skills required and necessary for the creation of business units; Encouraging entrepreneurship and sharing knowledge and experiences within the particular business contexts of each country's that integrate the partnership; Promote the establishment of a network of contacts that enables the creation of businesses with the participation of people of different nationalities; Contribute to the creation of an environment of greater proximity between the participants, in view of a better cooperation around the theme of entrepreneurship.

In accordance with the objectives and in concern with the innovative aspect, the greatest contribution should be expected by the development of tools, for supporting the format of business, which is expected to draw a standard business plan structure, adapted to each partner different realities.

In terms of learning opportunities, skills development, access to information, etc. for the participating teachers and students and promote an element of curricular development, the IP E3S is based on follows activities: Workshops with the presence of students where they will report their experiences about their own business, built with support provided by IPB Entrepreneurship Office; Lectures for Presentation of content related with the theme of entrepreneurship and business science; Group study sessions with support of teachers for implementation of practical work, relates to the preparation of a business plan, which will subsequently be subject of presentation, discussion and evaluation; Study visits to the company's business incubators to the Universities of León and Valladolid to observe all process of hosting companies.

The Intensive Programme E3S will be operational next academic year (2011/2012), therefore is important all institutions involved to realize specific tasks to assurance the success.

3. METHODOLOGY: MAIN PEDAGOGICAL, DIDACTICAL APPROACHES AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Entrepreneurship Education for European Students Intensive Programme will adopt both traditional and modern pedagogical methodologies; e.g. workshops, practical work, group discussion, case studies and study visits, complemented by information and communication technological resources. Methodologies and resources that we intend to perform are as follow: (i) Theoretical classes: Daily sessions of 4 hours adopting an expositive methodology supported by audiovisual resources and for some modules specific software; (ii) Practical classes: Daily sessions of 3 hours adopting interactive discussion supported by audiovisual and computer resources, and/or adopting specific software.

In the last days of the E3S Intensive Programme and to evaluate each group of students, they must present a Business Plan (1 for each institution that includes the partnership) before jury and after returning their countries, they have 15 days (equivalent to 40h) to improve the Business Plan according to the comments of the jury. In the final of E3S we will produce a book with the contents taught during the Intensive Programme. Giving the profile of the teachers assigned by each partner it allows to gather professionals that have good background, skills and experiences that is difficult to have in only one institution by itself.

IPI includes 15 modules that complement and are the basis for a student acquires the necessary skills to prepare a final Business Plan. Then we present the different modules that will be taught over 10 full days. Even beyond the classroom and individual student work, the IP has a Study visits to business incubator (Valladolid e Leon). Thus, in the following we present the modules will be taught in the IP E3S and the respective institution that will teach the module: Module 1 – The Competences for the Entrepreneurship, IPB; Module 2 – Business Design, IPB; Module 3 – Process Design, IPB; Module 4 – Market Research, IPB; Module 5 – Doing Business in Europe, IPB; Module 6 – Business Information Systems, Universidad Salamanca; Module 7 – Microsoft ACCESS, Universidad Salamanca; Module 8 – Marketing and Strategy, Universidad Valladolid; Module 9 – Innovation, Opole University of Technology; Module 10 – Quantitative Methods for Management, University of Ljubljana; Module 11 – SPSS - Statistic Framework, University of Ljubljana; Module 12 – Investment Analysis, University of Pitesti; Module 13 – Project Management, University of Pitesti; Module 14 – Business Economy, Universidad Leon; Module 15 – Enterprise Financing Models, Opole University of Technology.

This IP has as target students from Bachelor and Master Degrees in different fields of study. Candidate selection will be performed according to: Adequacy of the student's vocational area to the project; Present Bachelor and Master Degrees; A motivational letter to participate in the IP. For this IP we plan to enroll 21

students from five different countries and 14 teachers also from these five different countries, 4 native teachers and 9 foreign teachers. Therefore, the planned ratio of teaching staff to students will be 14 to 21.

With this E3S IP the expected learning outcomes are: Understanding the process of innovation and creation of technology-based firms; Be able to know the procedures and mechanisms for protection of research results; Be able to formulate a generic business strategy in the all fields; Understanding the legal process of the company's constitution and registration of brands and patents; Be able to select the best and most appropriate options for business financing; Be able to prepare a business plan. The competences acquisition will be assessed in the English language. And the recognition of the acquired competences along the program will be guaranteed by 6 ECTS attribution. Being in IPB, 1 ECTS credit equivalent to 27 working hours (10 contact hours and 17 hours of self dependent study), 6 ECTS represent 162 hours of work: Personal Preparation (Pre-course) = 38 hours; Theoretical Classes = 56 hours; Individual study and Working Group Sessions = 16 hours; Study Visits = 12 hours; Conclusion of work for evaluation (After Course) = 40 hours. The ECTS provided by E3S IP will be fully recognized in students Diploma or as a Supplement to the Diploma, according to the course the student is attending in each institution. Dissemination of the course materials will be available via e-learning resources.

4. MANAGEMENT, MONITORING AND PROJECT EVALUATION

The Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, as the intensive program coordinator, will centralize the project management activities, namely those related to contractual, financial, coordination and quality assurance actions. After the approval of the proposed intensive program the partners will analyze the approved financial plan for the project and adjust the action plan according to the Portuguese funding agency comments. Selected students and teachers from partner institutions will receive a contribution for travel expenses based on real costs and the maximum financed by the Portuguese National Agency, after presenting travel tickets and other relevant documents (indicating dates of arrival to and departure from Bragança).

In order to monitor the IP, Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, as its coordinator, will enhance the following activities: Information about this Intensive Programme will be added to the website (www.intensive.ipb.pt) and will be used as contact point for partners and students. Information about selection of future students and application forms will also be available on-line; The implementation of an evaluation strategy will be done as requested by the National Agency, through the use of Students Final Report in electronic format to be delivered to students in the last day of the Intensive Program. For teachers we will use the Individual Report, developed by the International Relations Office and applied to all incoming teachers. This report will be evaluated by the intensive course coordinator and the International Relations Office in order to make possible changes for futures editions. The results will be communicated to all partnership participants, students and teachers, and will also be available on-line, publicly, at the IP website. The effective flow of information is essential for the success of the intensive programme. Results will be disseminated through: Internet: the programme information will be presented on internet websites of all participants institutions.

5. CONCLUSION AND THE ENVISAGE OUTPUTS OF E3S PROJECT

Europe competitiveness, innovation and economic growth depend on being able to generate future professionals with the skills and attitudes to be entrepreneurial, whether by building their own enterprise or innovating organizations (Kelo *et al.*, 2006, Brooks & Waters, 2009). Entrepreneurship education is the first and perhaps the most important step for embedding an innovative culture in Europe. There is a consensus that entrepreneurship should not be exclusively taught in business school, but, instead, that it should be included in educational programs, from college to University, in business or non-business related courses (Gibb, 2002). Concerning the studies addressing the outcome from Entrepreneurship education, the results show that the curricula programs increase some attitudes and the overall entrepreneurial intention and that inspiration is the programs' most significant benefit (Souitaris *et al.*, 2007; Carey & Matlay, 2010). For that reason, the Higher Education Institutions have an important role in the formation of students that claim skills in entrepreneurship, as well as help them build their own business. In accordance with the European

Commission recommendations based on the Lisbon Programme, Higher Education Institutions should integrate entrepreneurship across different subjects and courses, especially within scientific and technical studies (European Commission, 2011c).

Therefore, given the relevant and large experience that Polytechnic Institute of Bragança have in this field, and it was explained it above sections, and in order to contribute and exchange knowledge and experience with other European partnerships emerged this Intensive Programme, which the main outcomes are: Recognition of E3S IP by every partner and accreditation of the 6 ECTS in the students Diploma; The publication of a book with all topics taught during the IP; Workshop where students and teachers may present their works and exchange knowledge; Website containing all course material and outputs for download, providing for communication between students and teachers and offering results and further material for a continuation of teaching activities in the home institutions after the IP and/or for third parties interested in using the material, publicly available; All information disseminated will be available for the students IP via e-learning system; The professors involved in the program will certainly have the opportunity to share ideas/knowledge/experiences in entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial area taking to their own countries new ideas to include in their curricular programs, or even develop partnerships in other level such as scientific research or future master proposals.

Finally, with the implementation of the this Entrepreneurship Education for European Students Intensive Programme our intention is to improve the quality and to increase the volume of student and teaching staff mobility in Europe, to develop the quality and to increase the volume of multilateral cooperation between higher education institutions in Europe, to enlarge the degree of transparency and compatibility between higher education and advanced vocational education qualifications gained in Europe, to facilitate the development of innovative practices in education and training at higher level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others, to support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning.

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