

INTEGRATION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP INTO HIGHER EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES) IN LITHUANIA AND LATVIA: FOCUS ON THE ASSESMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

UZŅĒMĒJDARBĪBAS INTEGRĀCIJA AUGSTĀKAJĀ IZGLĪTĪBĀ (IZGLĪTĪBAS ZINĀTNES) LIETUVĀ UN LATVIJĀ: AR UZSVARU UZ IZGLĪTĪBAS PROCESA NOVĒRTĒŠANU

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Abstract. The purpose of this article is to highlight the aspects of integration of entrepreneurship into higher education (Educational sciences) in Lithuania and Latvia with the focus on the educational process. The article provides a theoretical insight on main concepts in entrepreneurship covering the aspect of challenges of entrepreneurial teaching and learning in higher education institution (HEI). Approaches and methods used to support entrepreneurial teaching and learning in higher education are introduced as well. As the result, the theoretical model for the assessment of the effectiveness of educational process with respect to entrepreneurship is designed and the criteria for its analysis are provided. The implications of the article could be useful for university educators, who seek to educate students most effectively with a real intention to become entrepreneurs.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, educational process, higher education, Educational sciences

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays entrepreneurship is considered to be the effective strategy for development and growth of societies since it leads to technical and innovative changes and causes economic growth as well as converts the new knowledge to modern products and services. Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between societies, economic growth and entrepreneurship.

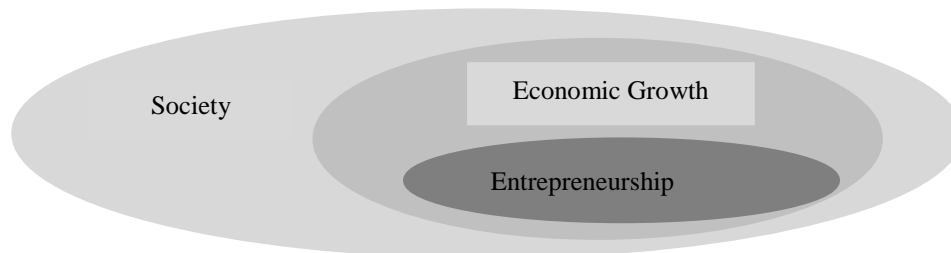


Fig. 1: The relationship between societies, economic growth and entrepreneurship

That is very important for Lithuania and Latvia, who are currently moving towards innovation driven society model. According to Lisbon strategy for growth and employment, the important role of higher education in promoting entrepreneurial skills is now widely recognised. The article is based on the working definition provided by Gibb et al. (2013, p. 94): "Entrepreneurship in higher education is designed to empower staff and students to demonstrate enterprise, innovation and creativity in research, teaching and studying as well as pursuit use of knowledge across boundaries".

The idea of the integration of entrepreneurship into higher education is especially relevant for Baltic countries, which have the similar historical background, transition period and traditions in higher education, and are currently seeking to re-arrange their educational systems. Moreover, the process of rapid economic convergence of European Union countries forces the higher education in Baltic countries to be competitive not only on local market but on international market as well. That means that universities in Lithuania and Latvia have to re-think their models of the preparation of the graduates, as well as of organising the study process

and research work. The tendency stressed by comparative research data (Entrepreneurship in Latvia and other Baltic Countries, 2013; Entrepreneurship in Education in Baltic Sea Region, 20015) is that Lithuania and Latvia's universities and higher education system on the whole should take steps toward changing their classic role, which was merely producing knowledge towards entrepreneurship universities, which produce knowledge and create ideas and also transfer them to action in alignment with process of local, regional and international economic development. However, it is pointed that Lithuania still lacks a clear strategy of entrepreneurship integration into higher education. The same problem has been identified in Latvia's higher education system (Entrepreneurship within Non-business studies, 2010). The context analysis of Baltic countries' higher education systems shows that the overall situation with the spread of entrepreneurship in higher education is generally very weak. The overall teaching of entrepreneurship in higher education is quite poor, especially within non-business and non-economic courses. In Lithuania noteworthy entrepreneurship teaching examples can be found, however higher education curricula even in business studies often lack coaching on how to start one's own business and acquire relevant skills. In Latvia entrepreneurship courses are missing in non-economic fields of study, and more generally inter-disciplinary approaches are rare. The low level of entrepreneurship-related abilities, knowledge and skills in the Lithuania and Latvia's universities has prompted the idea of current research. **The aim of the article is** to design a theoretical model for the assessment of the educational process in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Latvia and Lithuania with respect to the implementation of entrepreneurship integration strategy. **The objectives of the article are** to define the notion of entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship as well as to highlight the principles of sustainable integration of entrepreneurship in Educational studies in the HEI of Latvia and Lithuania; to design a theoretical model of the assessment of the educational process with respect to entrepreneurial agenda and to provide criteria for its analysis. The theoretical analysis of entrepreneurship is based on postmodern paradigmatic theory emphasizing the role of a university teacher as a facilitator of change, promoter of organizational learning that enhances HEI ability to pursue intelligent learning processes in a way that increases the organization's effectiveness and capacity for continuous improvement as well as on adult learning theory (Browne-Ferrigno, Muth, 2003). This idea has to shape the entrepreneurship development programmes with regards to contents, methods, patterns, etc. **The main method of the research** is scientific literature analysis.

2. RESULTS

2.1. The challenge for entrepreneurial teaching in Educational sciences

A number of scholars purport that the question of whether entrepreneurship can or cannot be taught is now irrelevant, since it has been proved that it can (Henry, Hill, Leitch, 2003, p. 108), and therefore educators should move ahead. While it is not a difficult decision for universities to run entrepreneurial courses, it is, however, a challenge to academicians to choose teaching methods that align to their course objectives, environments and even the type of students in the program. If scholars are able to dodge the question "Can entrepreneurship be taught?" they still will have to face the next question, i.e. "How should it be taught?"

Entrepreneurial teaching and learning involves exploring innovative teaching methods and finding ways to stimulate entrepreneurial mindsets. It is not just learning about entrepreneurship, it is also about being exposed to entrepreneurial experiences and acquiring the skills and competences for developing entrepreneurial mindsets. An entrepreneurial HEI provides a range of learning opportunities to facilitate innovative teaching and learning across all faculties. Such a HEI should be encouraging innovation and diversity in its approach to teaching and learning across all departments as well as developing entrepreneurial mindsets and skills across all programmes. Extracurricular learning opportunities are an important complementary part of entrepreneurship teaching and learning provision. An innovative HEI should offer a range of informal learning opportunities to students to inspire individuals to act entrepreneurially. An entrepreneurial learning experience provides opportunities to develop

important skills and competences. These are essential for both graduate entrepreneurs as well as entrepreneurial graduates entering into employment. A HEI that values entrepreneurial learning commits to regular review, validation, and the updating of course content and learning outcomes across all study programmes. External stakeholders are an important source of expertise that can be used in entrepreneurial teaching and learning. Regular engagement with external stakeholders encourages long-term collaborative relationships that can provide useful inputs to understanding future skills needs as well. For a curriculum to stay up to date and relevant, the entrepreneurial education offer needs to be continuously reviewed and updated. Therefore a HEI should integrate the results of entrepreneurship research into its teaching.

In recent years, the interest in experiential learning techniques in higher education has grown (Melnikova, 2008, p. 276). Experiential learning can be described as learning that arises out of reflection on experience, leading to purposive action in order to test out the 'hypotheses' that arise out of this reflection. This action in turn leads to further experience and reflection, so that experiential learning can be seen as a continuous cycle or spiral within the educational context. This learning can be promoted either through reflection on past experience or through reflection on either planned for experience, such as work placements, or on simulated experience enacted within the educational context. Hence, experiential learning education can be divided into three types: (1) field-based experiences (such methods as internships, mentorship, etc. that involve working with practitioners); (2) prior learning assessment; and (3) experiential classroom-based learning (teaching methods that involve students learning by doing) (Kolb, 1984). These methods are aimed on integration of theory and practice and could be implemented in Educational sciences curricula.

As Shaw et al. (Shaw, Carter, 2007, p. 420) reminds, there is no set approach to entrepreneurship education, therefore it is necessary to experiment with pedagogy and curricula in the field of Educational sciences leading to some innovative entrepreneurship curricula and programs. The report (2007) emphasises the need to use experience based teaching methods in order develop entrepreneurial thinking and states explicitly that “traditional educational methods (like lectures) do not correlate well with the development of entrepreneurial thinking”. It follows then that traditional modes of assessment (like exams) do not facilitate the development of entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours. The most popular teaching methods in entrepreneurship education, according to the Winslow-Solomon (2000) study, are creation of business plans, case studies and lectures, respectively.

The entrepreneurship literature highlights the role of action-orientation and experientially based learning. Creating a simulated context for student learning, therefore, requires a project-based activity. Pedagogies need to enable a context whereby students do something entrepreneurial and in doing so learn experientially.

2.2. Theoretical framework for the assessment of the educational process with respect to entrepreneurship integration strategy

On the basis of the theoretical analysis the criteria for the assessment of the effectiveness of the educational process in HEI of Latvia and Lithuania have been extracted.

The first group of the criteria emphasizes the role of the HEI as a provider of diverse formal learning opportunities of development of entrepreneurial competencies:

- Supports curriculum change to stimulate and develop entrepreneurial mindsets and skills through new pedagogies, student-centred, cross-disciplinary and practice-based learning (e.g. living labs, the use of case studies, games and simulation),
- Provides support and training to staff in creating new curriculum related to entrepreneurship,
- Provides mechanisms for students to engage in review and feedback on courses,
- Introduces new mechanisms for supporting students, including experiencing starting new ventures within the students' formal education or delivering entrepreneurship education with practising entrepreneurs.

The second group of the criteria emphasizes the role of the HEI as a provider of diverse informal learning opportunities of development of entrepreneurial mindsets and skills:

- Supports access to student enterprise clubs, awards and societies,
- Organises networking events between students and entrepreneurs / businesses,
- Engages students in business idea / plan competitions as part of their extracurricular opportunities,
- Formally recognises extracurricular activities.

The third group of the criteria emphasizes the role of the HEI in validation of entrepreneurial learning outcomes which drives the design and execution of the entrepreneurial curriculum:

- Codifies the expected entrepreneurial learning outcomes in relation to knowledge, skills and competences in all degree programmes,
- Ensures students have a clear understanding of the entrepreneurial learning outcomes expected and achieved,
- Validates entrepreneurial learning outcomes at the institutional level,
- Recognises entrepreneurial learning outcomes in the students' records of achievements.

The fourth group of the criteria emphasizes the role of the HEI in the cooperation with external stakeholders with the aim to co-design and deliver the curriculum with them:

- Regularly reviews and assesses the involvement of external stakeholders in course design and delivery,
- Provides a mechanism for staff to work with external stakeholders to develop and deliver high quality course content,
- Integrates external stakeholders' experience and expertise into the development and delivery of extracurricular learning activities and support services,
- Supports a diversity of collaborative partnerships with local communities and organisations, local and regional governments, chambers of commerce, industry and HEI alumni.

The fifth group of the criteria emphasizes the role of the HEI in the integration of entrepreneurship research into the entrepreneurial education offer:

- Encourages staff and educators to review the latest research in entrepreneurship education,
- Provides a forum whereby staff and educators can exchange new knowledge and ideas, incorporating the latest research,
- Provides access to inspiration from other HEIs through networking and sharing good practices.

A theoretical model for the assessment of the effectiveness of educational process with respect to entrepreneurship provides a starting point for the construction of a methodological framework for monitoring of implementation of the entrepreneurship strategy in HEI in Latvia and Lithuania that would respond a global trend towards more systematic provision of entrepreneurship integration particularly in higher education institutions. On the basis of the designed model an empirical study will be carried out in the universities of Latvia and Lithuania.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Lithuania and Latvia need a coherent model of integration of entrepreneurship into Education sciences, however, the model cannot be just copied from some other European Union country due to: Baltic countries have certain traditions in higher education that are presupposed by historical background and transition period; entrepreneurship in non-business studies, especially in Education sciences is a new issue for all European Union countries; in Baltic countries Education sciences are currently under pressure and are forced to change their conservative purpose and compete with other branches of science in research, preparation of graduates, arrangement of study process etc.

Experiential learning has risen to the forefront of entrepreneurship education, as universities respond to research that encourages both real-world projects and extracurricular learning activities to better teach entrepreneurship, such as internships, business plan

competitions, etc. Therefore the methods of experiential learning could become a basis for developing entrepreneurship teaching pedagogies in Educational sciences. Education for and in enterprise provides students with a learning environment that would support them in their endeavour.

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KOPSAVILKUMS

Šī raksta mērķis ir akcentēt uzņēmējdarbības integrācijas aspektus augstākajā izglītībā (izglītības zinātnēs) Lietuvā un Latvijā, koncentrējoties uz izglītības procesu. Raksts sniedz teorētisku ieskatu par galvenajiem uzņēmējdarbības jēdzieniem, aptverot izaicinājumu aspektus uzņēmējdarbības mācībā un mācīšanos augstākās izglītības iestādē. Rakstā tiek piedāvātas pieejas un metodes, lai atbalstītu uzņēmējdarbības mācīšanu un mācīšanos augstākajā izglītībā. Kā rezultātā ir izstrādāts teorētiskais mācību procesa (attiecībā uz uzņēmējdarbību) efektivitātes novērtējuma modelis un kritēriji. Raksts varētu būt noderīgs augstskolu pedagogiem, kas vēlas efektīvāk izglītēt studentus ar nodomu kļūt par uzņēmējiem.