Role of student association in changing the old educational paradigm

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Abstract:

In the time of great and continual changes, universities are among the institutions that have changed the least. Changes require new capacity and skills, in order to live with them, predict them and initiate them. Unfortunately, universities often cannot provide trained and adaptable workforce and knowledge that can be adapted to local need. Without adequate higher education, no country can ensure sustainable growth and progress. In the process of change, special attention is on the ways of teaching. This paper will present possible ways of changes in teaching and preparing students to cope with changes through two cases of extra-curricula activities and training for university staff.

Keywords:

Entrepreneurial University, Entrepreneurship Education, Extra-Curricula Activities

Introduction – The time of change or why we have to change

We live in times of great and continual change. Instead of gradual adjustment to changes, the situation in which known behavioural patterns are disappearing at an increasing rate (*"world turned upside down"*, Kirby 2004:513) demands that we develop capacity and skills of living with the change, predicting and even initiating it (Drucker, as cited in Kirby, 2004:514).
Everything changes, from the way we live, learn, how we treat disease, to the speed with which these changes occur. Unlike before, when the exchange of ideas required our actual physical presence and could happen only in one place and at one point in time, today we can communicate with many different people from different parts of the world at the same time. Information and communication revolution eliminated the problem of physical distance, but, more importantly, it allowed the linking of knowledge in a way that has been unknown until now. Information became available globally. Thomas Jefferson, who had enhanced the library concept and the right to borrow books for free, could not have imagined the likelihood that 20 million people could electronically and almost simultaneously access digital libraries and use their content (Negroponte 1995). In today's world, everything has changed – in terms of knowledge, technology, globalisation; there are more and more natural resources in limited quantities (including energy), there are serious threats of global warming and the complexity of the world we live in is ever increasing – everything changes, except for the old ways of thinking that remain the same ("yet the old ways of thinking persist", Peat 2007:923*).* We still think that we can have full knowledge of the problem (system) and that we can control and predict the world around us. However, problems can no longer be clearly defined and isolated, and addressed in that manner. We will always lack information, and predictions will be successful only under certain conditions. Knowledge from one area spills over to other areas, boundaries between scientific disciplines are lost, which requires new capacity of people to use those possibilities.

There are numerous causes of accelerated change: rapid economic and cultural globalization, a shift from an energy-based industrial economy to a service and knowledge economy, the emergence of the "knowledge society", dazzling technological innovation as a consequence of the confluence of the GRIN technologies (genomics, robotics, informatics and nanotechnology), accelerating urbanization, shifting age demographics, radical changes in geopolitics – the end of the cold war, disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the emergence and expansion of the European Union, pressures for protection and care about the environment and climate change (O'Hara, 2007). The mentioned changes together are rapidly changing the society, changing the way of life and thinking, and sometimes it is very difficult to keep track of them. At the same time, no one can afford not to use the luxury of opportunities brought by the changes in the environment, because by doing so they lose the chance to live in a better world. But that depends on the knowledge and skills needed to identify opportunities and convert them into products, processes and organisations that improve the quality of life of every individual.

The ability to innovate and create new knowledge, which is later converted into new products and services, has always been a prerequisite for development. Competitive advantages are no longer based on possession of natural resources, but on possession of specific knowledge and

skills (Porter 1990, David and Foray 2002). Growth today is more a function of accumulation of knowledge, rather than accumulation of capital. According to 2002 World Bank report[1], investments in research and development, education and software, that is, investments in what makes a knowledge base, in OECD countries exceed or are equal to investments in physical equipment. Companies invest at least a third of their funds in intangible assets, such as employee training, research and development, licensing, design and marketing.
International competition has imposed and increased the importance of application of knowledge and possession of information. Using knowledge better than one's competitors is the key to success in today's global market. In doing so, companies are required to actively participate in the creation of that knowledge, which imposes the need for connecting with universities, as institutions whose primary activity is "production of knowledge". Investing in the development of a country's knowledge base is a fundamental prerequisite for survival in the global market. 1998/99 World Bank report states: "the need for developing countries to increase their capacity to use knowledge cannot be overstated." (World Bank 1999:16). Penetration of knowledge in all spheres of life is the fundamental characteristic of our time, and the ability to use that knowledge a prerequisite for survival and development.

The role of tertiary education in the development of society

Education is the foundation for creation, dissemination and application of knowledge, as well as for building technical and professional capacities of a country. Investments in education and training have rates of return for society and individuals that are comparable to rates of return of investments in physical capital. According to the EU report (Fuente and Ciccone 2002), the estimate for OECD countries is that an additional year of average school achievement contributes to the overall productivity of the country by about 5% immediately and 5% in the long-term. This second effect relates to contribution of human capital to technological development, e.g. to the development and application of new technologies and continuous improvement of existing production processes. Studies have also shown that an additional year of education also affects salary increase at the individual level, up to 6.5% in EU countries and that this effect on salary growth can go up to 9%. There is also a connection between growth of individual salaries and "on-the-job training", where one year of education/on-the-job training affects salary increase up to 5%. This connection between salary growth and employee education is becoming more prominent in times of rapid technological change. It has been proven that better educated employees affect the increase of productivity, and that they are a direct source of innovativeness and long-term competitiveness of companies (Fuente and Ciccone 2002).

World Bank report (WB 2002) emphasizes the importance of tertiary education[2] in building society's capacity to accept change and development, and for poverty reduction. Tertiary

[1] Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2002

[2] According to World Banks' definition (WB, 2002), universities are a key element of the tertiary education system, but a diverse and growing set of other private and public institutions is also part of that system. These

education offers better and more life opportunities to poor students by increasing their employability, social mobility, creating opportunities for greater income and reduction of inequality.

Successful institutions of tertiary education have the ability to connect and create synergies between the following three dimensions:

- Training of skilled and adaptable workforce, including scientists, professionals, technicians, teachers in primary and secondary education, future employees in government, public institutions, as well as business leaders;
- Generation of new knowledge;
- Ensuring access to existing knowledge bases in the world and adapting that knowledge to local needs (WB 2002:4).

Social growth and progress is a measure of quality of these synergic effects, since they contribute to reducing the increasing wealth and reducing poverty of a country (by increasing the level of employability, and through empowerment of people involved in the higher education process).

Inevitability of change of university

Tertiary education plays a central role in society's response to the challenges of globalisation. Without adequate higher education that secures critical mass of educated and qualified people, no country can ensure sustainable growth and progress, and developing and underdeveloped countries will not be able to decrease the gap that separates them from industrially developed countries. The latter are already today at the stage of post-industrial society, and this gap is only increasing. It is precisely the inadequate preparedness of universities in countries in transition and developing countries to answer the requirements of global competitive society that is emphasized as one of the principal reasons for their marginalization and lagging behind in the world economy. It is shown that countries with lower GDP per capita spend less per student in higher education; all new EU member countries (data from 2002, author's note) spend less per student than the EU25 average (EuroStat 2005).
In addition to emphasizing the importance of tertiary education, also emphasized is the need for university reform and its adaptation to new conditions that exist in the environment, together with the need for flexibility and readiness to respond to constant and rapid changes brought on by globalisation, with which dissatisfaction with what tertiary education offers is expressed. Governments of many countries encourage creation of closer links between tertiary education and business, in order to reduce the gap that exists between tertiary education and the needs and demands of the economy. Universities must face the globalisation process,

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are: colleges, community colleges, technical training institutes, nursing schools, research laboratories, centres of excellence, distance learning centres, and many more. They all form a network of institutions that support the production of capacity necessary for development. In further text, we will talk about the tertiary education system and universities, as institutions within that system.

understand and accept the changes which that process brings, and define the strategies to "come to grips" with them (van Ginkel, 2002), which will enable them to actively participate and contribute to the development of the environment in which they operate. According to the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells, effects of globalisation on universities will be more dramatic than industrialisation, urbanisation or secularisation together (cited in Neave 2002). "The University is no longer a quiet place to teach and do scholarly work at a measured pace and contemplate the universe as in centuries past. It is a big, complex, demanding, competitive business requiring large–scale ongoing investment." (OECD, 2004).

Unfortunately, universities haven't so readily accepted the criticism and initiatives for change, or assumed the role that was expected of them by the society. Confined to their "ivory tower", many universities were unprepared to face the fact that they are isolated from what is happening "out there", and that they must meet the demands of the economy and global competition. A large number of universities continued to function as before, ignoring demands for change. "Of the institutions that had been established in the Western world by 1520, 85 still exist – the Roman Catholic church, the British Parliament, several Swiss cantons, and some 70 universities. Of these, perhaps the universities have experienced the least change (Kerr 2001:115)."

However, there are also a large number of those who have, aware of their role in the society and community in which they operate, engaged in the not at all easy task of reform and creation of modern university. Thus, the process of restructuring of higher education (Bologna Process[3]) has been started in Europe, which has been accepted by almost all European countries. Although it encounters difficulties in implementation, the aim of the process is worth the effort: create a single European space of higher education to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and increase international competitiveness of European higher education.[4]

Other documents of the European Commission, such as the Lisbon strategy, mention the importance of higher education for the development of society and the need for reform of universities with the aim "to make the European Union (EU) the most competitive and dynamic knowledge–based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion."[5] Never before has importance of higher education for economic and social development been so explicitly emphasized. To a large extent, efforts to reform the European higher education system are a consequence and need for a unified European Union strategy in the struggle with the U.S. and Japanese economic competitiveness and advantage. In order to readily respond to challenges set before them by the Lisbon Strategy, European universities must redefine their own mission, vision

[3] Bologna Declaration signed on June 19, 1999, as a joint declaration of ministers of education of 29 European countries, represents the key element in the development of European higher education system.

[4] The Bologna Declaration on the European space for higher education: an explanation, Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences and Association of European Universities (CRE), European Commission, 2000

[5] The role of universities in the Europe of knowledge, http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11067.htm, downloaded on July 4th, 2005

and activities, and replace the traditional approach with a new, entrepreneurial approach, if they want to survive in the long-term. "The essential condition for the European university to become entrepreneurial and to support the European competitiveness is to acquire the capabilities of applying in economy and society the knowledge it produces and not only to produce knowledge. It is only the European entrepreneurial university that has the capacities of properly exploiting the opportunities provided by the Lisbon strategy. **Thus, the shift from the traditional European university to the entrepreneurial European university is imperatively required."** (Andea et al. 2005:30)**.** The transformation of traditional university to "entrepreneurial" doesn't simply mean turning a university into a business. The entrepreneurial character of university opposes the notion of universities as "passive and helpless instrumentalities whose fate is determined by irresistible external demands" (Clark 2000).

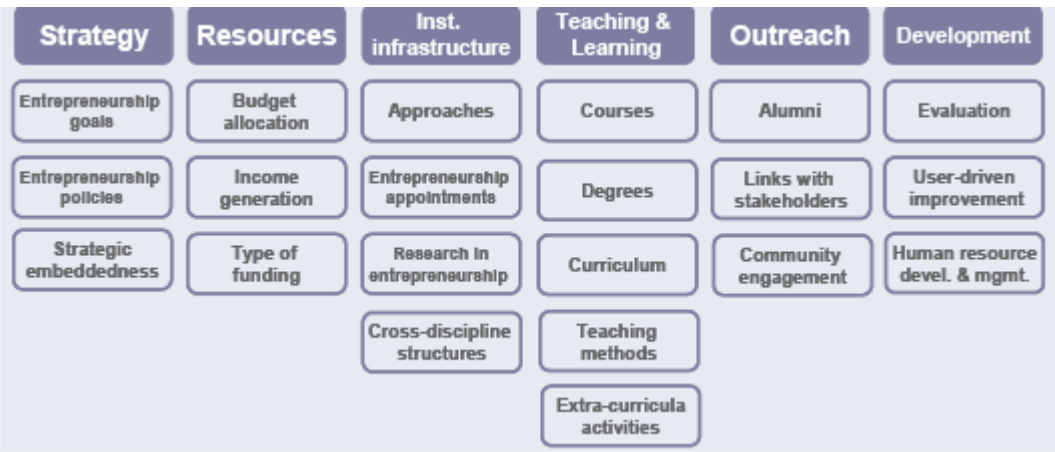
What can be changed and how?

Entrepreneurial university needs to provide entrepreneurship education that has potential to encourage entrepreneurship, to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among students and provide them with relevant entrepreneurial skills. This will have, according to *Survey of Entrepreneurship in Higher Education in Europe* (2008), a positive impact on future economic growth, job creation, innovation and wealth generation.
Becoming an entrepreneurial university does not mean to focus on only one approach to entrepreneurship – starting one's own business, but, according to Gibb (2005), when, among other things, a university:

- communicates with all stakeholders in the community,
- promotes the creation of entrepreneurship support organizations,
- accepts wider responsibility for student and staff personal development,
- recruits entrepreneurial staff,
- ensures that the concept of entrepreneurship is embedded in all faculties/disciplines and integrated in the curriculum,
- encourages inter-disciplinary activities.

This complex concept of entrepreneurial university can be analyzed and checked through six dimensions offered and used in the *Survey of entrepreneurial universities in Europe* (2008), which also can be used as a guide towards more entrepreneurial universities. According to this model, entrepreneurial university needs to embed entrepreneurship in the overall strategy, the structures of the institution need to be established towards supporting entrepreneurship education, university needs to offer a wide range of different entrepreneurial learning opportunities, quality of education needs to be ensured, but also scalability and sustainability of education. Finally, entrepreneurial universities need to communicate with the wider community in order to offer students practical experience, through various outreach activities.

Figure 1: Six dimensions of entrepreneurship education



Source:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/support_measures/training_education/highedsurvey_en.pdf

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning entrepreneurship is the core of entrepreneurial universities. Although all EU countries adopted the idea of teaching and learning entrepreneurship as a way to become more competitive, a survey among higher-education institutions (HEI) in Europe[6] showed that only 48% of HEIs have entrepreneurial education. This means that approximately only 10 million of 21 million students in Europe have the opportunity to engage in entrepreneurship during their studies. Besides that, in many institutions entrepreneurship is still just a part of other courses (business courses) and the subject of entrepreneurship accounts for less than 25% of course curriculum.

Unfortunately, the problem with entrepreneurial education is much deeper when measuring the real impact of this education. Comparing institution performance with regard to number of courses, *Survey of entrepreneurial universities in Europe* (2008) showed that the distance between the highest and lowest performing institution is relatively small. This means that all HEIs offer almost the same number of entrepreneurship courses, which do not have a real impact on entrepreneurial performance.

In order to improve teaching methods, but also the impact of entrepreneurial performance, HEIs need to ensure student and staff development. The idea is to work more with students on extra-curricula activities which can supplement in-curricula activities. Extra-curricula activities can help by engaging all the interested students, ensuring networking and contacts with business life in society, incorporating other entrepreneurial activities and providing an overview in real life. These activities inspire students to start their own, new businesses and give them new ideas. They are crucial for learning from experienced entrepreneurs and successful business people. Extra-curricula activities prepare students better for their professional lives and careers.

These activities usually include various seminars, workshops, company visits, matchmaking events, competitions (business plan competitions, for example), but also mentoring and personal coaching. In this paper the case of student organization Entrepreneurs Without Borders (EWoB) will be presented as an example of extra-curricula activity at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, in which students design and manage different projects with and for local entrepreneurs. Teachers are also engaged in this organization, but only as mentors.

[6] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/support_measures/training_education/highedsurvey_en.pdf, accessed November 5, 2011

The second case, the case of the European Entrepreneurship Educators Programme (3EP), is focused on staff development and best practice exchange among entrepreneurship teachers from Europe. Through this project, entrepreneurship teachers had the opportunity to share ideas, learn new ways of learning and teaching, but also to get an overview of work of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship support organizations from different European countries. One of the results of the project is a *think tank* that will promote entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial spirit among European HEIs.

Extra-curricula activities as a means for the development of entrepreneurial learning – case of student organization Entrepreneurs Without Borders (EWoB)

Extra-curricula activities form an essential part of entrepreneurship education. As a supplement for intra-curricula activities, extra-curricula activities help build the capacity of students to accept and implement the change, influence their personal and social development and empower them to gain experience using academic knowledge in practice, which leads to a better overview and understanding of real life situations.

Extra-curricula activities cover wide range of activities, out of which the most common is a membership in student organizations. One of such student organizations is Entrepreneurs Without Borders (EWoB), a non-governmental student-led organization founded at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2008, USA, with a sister chapter established in 2009 outside of the United States at Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, Croatia. EwoB, in the USA and Croatia, offers young people the opportunity to connect with communities around the world, develop business-based projects that solve local economic and social issues and to become a force for the public good working towards social change and integrating classroom learning into practice.

Entrepreneurs Without Borders is an international organization with the mission to harness the diverse skills and resourcefulness of students and work towards educating communities about entrepreneurship as a way of thinking and living. Students develop different kind of projects among which is the celebration of Global Entrepreneurship Week, cooperation with local entrepreneurs through consultation projects and marketing plans, charity events, participation at the European Week of Small and Medium Enterprises and study trips to the USA and within Croatia. From 2009 on, 60 students have participated in study visits which enabled them to learn in a different cultural context, share and exchange knowledge and experience, identify opportunities for increasing their entrepreneurial activity, link American and Croatian entrepreneurs, analyse the application of U.S. business models in Croatia, and Croatian in America, benefit communities in need and ultimately change the human condition in areas of global concern. Through practice and application of consulting concepts students have experienced first-hand how to approach, evaluate and provide viable business solutions to 23 small and medium-sized business owners. The sustainability of these projects is ensured by cooperating with education institutions in supporting development of entrepreneurial activities and continually working with the business community ensuring implementation of the solution provided. EwoB is a great example of an extra-curricula activity that supports intra-curricula activities and complements the formal education program, especially through consulting projects for which students are graded within the course Consultation for Small and Medium-Sized Companies. As a student organization, EwoB seeks to contribute to the promotion of the entrepreneurial spirit, entrepreneurial thinking and action in all social contexts, development of entrepreneurial universities and collaboration with students, organizations and entrepreneurs outside of their home institution.

Changing the old educational paradigm with new teaching methods and pedagogies – the case of European Entrepreneurship Educators Programme

A complex and dynamic environment requires from educational institutions an initiative to create programmes which will enable young people to reach their full potential, become more entrepreneurial oriented and more actively involved in the development of their communities. European Union has recognized the importance of entrepreneurial education as an instrument for development of human capital which is the most significant resource for economic development and social cohesion. Through Oslo Agenda, whose aim is to assess the impact of entrepreneurship education on four dimensions: 1) the acquisition of the entrepreneurial competence 2) intentions towards entrepreneurship; 3) employability; and 4) impact on the society and on the economy, the European Commission wants to show that entrepreneurship education does make a difference.[7] Implementing entrepreneurial teaching methods and pedagogies can change the old educational paradigm and enable students to display more entrepreneurial attitudes and skills, become more employable and thus solve some of the most serious social problems. For that purpose the European Union has set aside substantial funds for projects that support the development of programmes, methods and pedagogies which will enhance entrepreneurial capacity of young people.

One of such projects is the European Entrepreneurship Educators Programme (3EP), co-financed by the Competitiveness Innovation Programme of the European Commission for the 2010-2012 period. Within this project Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, together with international partners (National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education from United Kingdom, Turku School of Economics from Finland, Aarhus Entrepreneurship Centre from Denmark) seeks to support enterprise and entrepreneurship educators to develop their practice and thus support the development of entrepreneurial mindset of students across Europe. 3EP aims to improve the image of entrepreneurship in the society, attractiveness of entrepreneurship as a business career, as well as to encourage creativity and innovation in education and training. The project's objective is to increase the number of participants in entrepreneurship education in schools and universities, ensure access to new pedagogies and update teaching methods & materials, solve some entrepreneurship education challenges or problems, create a network of European entrepreneurship educators (3EP Fellows) who will promote entrepreneurship in their institutions and countries and create a legacy of online materials. All partners will organize a six-day international summer school which will be intended for teachers of higher education institutions who teach entrepreneurial courses or who want to incorporate content that builds entrepreneurial competence into their courses.

3EP project is a great example of a programme which enables participants to clearly understand the concept of entrepreneurial learning and how this relates to key issues of preparing the university and its students to respond to the challenges of globalization, competitiveness, citizenship and employability. By getting familiar with various intra- and

[7] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/documents/education-training-entrepreneurship/

cross-disciplinary models of entrepreneurial learning, and exploring different methods of organizing and promoting the curriculum in universities educators will enhance the entrepreneurial learning process within higher education institution. After completion of the project delegates and 3EP Fellows are expected to be motivated to undertake action to deliver change at all levels, supported by trans-national mentors.

3EP programme also offers a unique on-line virtual learning platform (VLE) which supports maintaining contact with European entrepreneurship network, mentors, sharing materials and publishing. 3EP online platform is aimed to support 3EP learning process by providing on-line tools designed to provide access to 3EP resources and materials, facilitate and develop personal achievements and create new networks and connections to deliver specific projects and activities. This ongoing resource will support delegates and 3EP Fellows by maintaining active connections and create a learning community where the practitioners and entrepreneurs will be approached to work with 3EP Fellows via the online support serving as a reality check on their progress.

The 3EP addresses entrepreneurship education in the context of each educator's area of subject expertise, and personal history/background and also within an institutional dimension. The methodology adopted for the programme is person-centred accepting that each person brings their own needs, and contributes their own experiences that enrich the knowledge to be shared within the academy.

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