



Innovation, Entrepreneurship and the University - a European Perspective

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Historically...



- ... no culture of entrepreneurship in many European countries (but not all!)
 - Tim Berners-Lee, a European, invented the web while working at CERN(Switzerland) but commercial exploitation in USA!
- Young people were encouraged to study to become employees of large corporations or the government.
- “European innovation policy in the past has been dominated by a focus on research and development (R&D), and an assumption that innovation is about science and technology” ([Lisbon Council](#)).
- But this is changing...



The effects of crisis in Europe



- The problems with the banks (Ireland, Spain, ...)
- The problems with the debt-ridden governments of southern Europe,
- The tough austerity policies and the lack of/anaemic growth in the Eurozone,
- ... are pushing governments and people towards empowerment of the human potential, risk taking and innovation, as alternatives to growth.



A flurry of initiatives across Europe...



- Government-led:
 - Horizon 2020: emphasis on innovation, on SME participation, on cooperation between SMEs and universities/research centers
 - Member states:
 - Long tradition in UK (e.g. business parks at Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Southampton, etc.)
 - Spain: Innova (Barcelona Tech), Espai Empren, Lean Startup Creation, ...
 - German Länder...
 - Greece: National competition for innovation prizes (funded by banks), entrepreneurship courses in some universities (e.g. U. of Crete)
- Privately-led:
 - Banks (usually) create investment funds, with some public funding and some VC funding.
 - VCs presence not as strong as in the US; VCs very weak after financial crisis.
 - Co-working, Incubators and accelerators,...
 - Maker spaces: taking advantage of 3D printing and open innovation, e.g. <http://www.greatrecovery.org.uk/>



The University Link



- Innovation and risk taking are naturally linked to young people (or to people with a young, inquisitive, adventurous mind),
- Universities have large communities of young people,
- Therefore, Universities should be natural incubators of innovation and entrepreneurship,
- And this is already happening in many places around the world – USA, UK, ...



What is being done today



- Universities, across Europe, usually provide introductory entrepreneurship courses (make your own business plan, etc.), or more advanced ones in Business Schools,
- Universities host national or regional competitions with awards for innovating ideas in business,
- Universities create centers for entrepreneurs' support (technological, legal, etc., e.g., see program Innova at UPC, Barcelona).
- However, contact of students and young researchers with VCs and/or successful entrepreneurs tends to be sporadic and educational efforts tend to be fragmented and not interdisciplinary (e.g. only in business schools).
- Some Universities offer advanced/innovative curricula (see UK example...)



The Team Academy Idea in the UK



- Followed by a couple of Business Schools in the UK (Bristol, Newcastle and Falmouth):
 - First year students start with 100 pounds each and start companies in groups.
 - Through the three year program, they are coached in their groups by professional coaches and business school faculty (trained as coaches vs. mentors).
 - Students take courses as needed, from any department and any faculty; when they graduate they get a degree and a company!
 - So far successful and innovative.
 - More info at <http://www.akatemia.org.uk/what-is-team-academy/ta-worldwide/>



What Remains to be Done



- Develop curricula/set of courses and labs for entrepreneurship and innovation, of interdisciplinary nature, especially between schools of engineering, business, health, sciences.
- Provide incentives to faculties and departments in Universities.
- Systematically develop links between such programs and entrepreneurs, VCs, industry executives/senior managers, etc., at various levels: advisory, mentoring, lecturing/teaching, student projects leading, etc.
- Provide university facilities, infrastructure, resources, for ideation, seeding new projects, working on proof-of-concepts, etc.
- Some of the US universities programs and centers could serve as best practices (e.g. UC Berkeley).