



ENTREPRENEURSHIP LEARNING: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Other Documents:

1. ***Case studies***
2. ***Background note: Regional and trans-regional cooperation in entrepreneurship learning***

1. Introduction

Increasingly open markets, a shift to service-driven economies and concerns about employment are now the backdrop to discussions as to how governments, enterprises, and labour policy specialists respond in the bid to meet competition. Central to the debate is the role and contribution of education systems in promoting productivity and sustainable economic growth, and in particular the quality of education through-put, increasingly considered essential to equip economies to head off the challenge in the global market place.

Within the European Union, this debate kicked off in 2000 when EU Heads of Government agreed the 'Lisbon' strategy – a programme designed to assist the EU in confronting growing pressure from other regions e.g. USA, Japan and the Pacific Rim, and more recently, India and China. Put simply, the task of the Lisbon strategy is to ensure the necessary conditions are established across the EU to create more and better jobs while ensuring concerted economic growth.

One question, in particular, prompted by the Lisbon process is how to create more commercial opportunity from the Member States' education systems and in particular how the SME world, which accounts for 99% of EU enterprises and two-thirds of its workforce, could be better supported by the education system. Integrating entrepreneurship learning more directly into all levels of the education system has emerged as one area to tackle this concern.

While entrepreneurship learning is still an evolving policy area, and its design and delivery very much under-developed, the objective of this paper is to prompt discussion as to why and how entrepreneurship learning could be addressed in the ETF partner countries, where, as within the EU, the concerns of jobs and competitiveness are equally burning issues.

The paper, which along with the presentations by experts to be delivered at the ETF Advisory Forum meeting (Turin, 7-9 June 2006), borrows on experience of entrepreneurship learning from a range of ETF partner countries which is slowly emerging, as awareness as to the potential contribution of education to productivity and competitiveness takes hold.

2. Objective and structure of the paper

The objective of the paper is to assist workshop participants to better understand the challenges and opportunities that more strategic entrepreneurship learning can ultimately bring to ETF partner countries' economic performance and employment.

The paper identifies five issues which taken together are intended to provide an introduction to general trends and evolving policy and practice in the field of entrepreneurship learning.

The paper is complimented by five discussion notes drawn up by field-based entrepreneurship learning policy makers and practitioners which elaborate on issues addressed in the paper.

Each of the five issues is framed around a question designed to encourage workshop participants to consider possible policy options and implications for bringing forward entrepreneurship learning in the ETF partner countries. The workshop questions, which are the starting point for workshop discussions, are as follows:

- are alternative governance arrangements necessary to develop strategic entrepreneurship learning policy and practice?
- what are the implications of the entrepreneurship core competence for curriculum and teaching?
- can the education and training system do more to promote awareness of and readiness for self-employment?
- how can universities optimise business opportunities?
- is there value in regional and trans-regional cooperation on entrepreneurship learning?

The outcomes of the discussions will be delivered to the plenary meeting of the Advisory Forum on 9 June. The recommendations will then be considered by the ETF and the European Commission with due regard to ETF work programme priorities from 2007 onwards.

3. What is entrepreneurship learning?

Surprising as the question may appear, despite the increasing political attention being given to entrepreneurship through the education systems and wider learning environment within developed economies, a hard and fast definition remains elusive.

Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that it is still not clear where entrepreneurship learning should begin (i.e. at which point in the education system), the nature of the learning, what is or should be taught and who does the teaching. The result is that there remains no clear consensus on the nature and purposes of entrepreneurship learning (Pittaway, 2005). Another difficulty is that there is a poor research base and a lack of 'accepted and shared paradigms, models and theories of entrepreneurship education' (Alberti et. al, 2004) which frustrates the range of interest groups in getting to an agreed understanding and definition.

A review of the literature highlights two clear trends in the entrepreneurship learning environment.

The first considers entrepreneurship learning as primarily the resolve of the business world, prospective entrepreneurs and the SME advisory community and where universities (usually through specialist courses e.g. MBA) and private training organisations are the key providers, and where specialist knowledge and skills required for business start-up and development are the key objectives.

A second, and more recent development, is the notion of entrepreneurship learning as key to nurturing a broader set of traits which provide an essential foundation for an entrepreneurial character or personality. The introduction of entrepreneurship education particularly in early schooling is considered critical here, where young minds are most open to influence and ideas, and when the seeds of the entrepreneurial mind-set can be sown.

It is this second notion of entrepreneurship learning which is now taking prominence in the European Union. Driven by a concern on the one hand to 'revitalise the economy and [Europe's need for] more people willing to become entrepreneurs,' (European Commission, 2005a) and the wider interest of preparing young people for the world of work and everyday life (European Commission, 2004b), on the other, the 25 EU Member States are now embarking on an ambitious project to develop the entrepreneurial potential of its young people by actively promoting the knowledge, skills and attitudes which together create general entrepreneurship competence (European Commission, 2005b).

Interestingly, however, while the notion of entrepreneurship is clearly articulated (European Commission, 2005b) and the objectives of entrepreneurship teaching are spelt out (European Commission, 2004c), entrepreneurship learning itself remains undefined.

For the purposes of this paper and the workshop proceedings, entrepreneurship learning is defined as all forms of education and training, both formal and non-formal, including work-based learning which contributes to entrepreneurship spirit and activity with or without a commercial objective.

The emphasis given within this definition borrows on the provisions for entrepreneurship education and training within the European Charter for Small Enterprises which gives particular prominence to the role of primary, secondary and tertiary education (including the research and development (R&D) environment where high-level skills and knowledge are translated into business opportunities) and non-formal learning in developing the entrepreneurship mindset and skills as well as the contribution of work-based learning.

As such, the human resource provisions of the charter go some way to creating a lifelong entrepreneurship learning framework and have been the impetus for further policy reflection on the role and contribution of entrepreneurship learning to Europe's competitiveness.

4. Are alternative governance arrangements necessary to develop strategic entrepreneurship learning policy and practice?

Part of the difficulty in getting to a definition is that entrepreneurship learning does not have a clearly defined policy home. Responsibilities for the range of entrepreneurship learning activities have been scattered across a number of public authorities, business support organisations and service providers (e.g. universities, foundations and private training companies). The off-shoot of this spread of interest groups and stakeholders is that there has never been a clear defined policy effort for entrepreneurship learning. Rather, the learning provision in the form of business education, SME training and specialist university courses usually with a management bias, evolved without any clear over-arching framework or indeed any linkages between the various delivery strands.

The increasing recognition of the potential of the early education process in laying the ground for longer-term entrepreneurship development, and the adjustments required to an increasingly complex and dispersed delivery system, however, has generated the demand for a more coordinated and strategic planning of the enlarged entrepreneurship learning environment.

A first review of entrepreneurship learning in primary and secondary education in the EU15¹ by the European Commission in 2004 concluded that entrepreneurship was not being sufficiently addressed across the schooling system, confined to isolated projects with little coherence between the range of actions and no coordinating framework to support the entrepreneurship learning effort (European Commission, 2004b). Similar conclusions were drawn by the ETF in the same year in its assessment of entrepreneurship learning in the countries of the Western Balkans and Moldova. It highlighted particularly the risk of an 'in box' policy culture within the various administrations concerned with entrepreneurship learning, resulting in a plethora of entrepreneurship learning activities with little or no coordination between them.

The ETF review additionally recommended that countries' entrepreneurship learning effort take note of the wider drive in developed economies to create more integrated lifelong learning frameworks and where inter-dependencies between different parts of the learning system were evolving. Furthermore, given the increasing recognition of the different public authorities, private sector and broader interest groups now working on policy, design and delivery of entrepreneurship learning, the ETF recommended the establishment of national entrepreneurship learning partnerships – an alternative governance arrangement whose task is to bring more policy coherence and efficiency to wider entrepreneurship learning effort.

Four Western Balkan countries have since followed up this recommendation (Albania, Serbia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro). The partnerships have drawn on experience from Norway, the pioneer of more structured cross-stakeholder cooperation in entrepreneurship learning.

All four Western Balkan entrepreneurship learning partnerships have generated great interest amongst the stakeholders on the subject as well as being instrumental in developing inter-organisational learning (ETF, 2006a). Nonetheless, the partnerships are still young and will need time to consolidate. Moreover, as with the Norwegian experience, the primary policy learning point to date for the Western Balkan partnerships is that their success and sustainability depends on good political support from a range of ministries (education, labour, economy, in particular), social partners and other non-governmental organisations which have an interest in entrepreneurship promotion. A second is that they require 'one-vision' as to how the learning system will contribute to the longer-term competitiveness of the countries. Ensuring these essentials are in place is now the task of each partnership as they move from the establishment phase to strategy building and first efforts at entrepreneurship delivery in 2006.

A third factor is that strategic entrepreneurship learning development also takes time. A primary risk, therefore, to the process for strategic entrepreneurship learning is that it can fall hostage to short-termism defined essentially by policy switching as administrations change following the classic four year government cycle. And herein lies the value of partnership.

¹ Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

Sustainable partnerships require the solid voice of enterprise and social partners, who along with other key players from civic society, must have a strong hand in ensuring continuity in policy, seeing through the longer-term delivery of the entrepreneurship learning plans. And partnership at central level for policy making and monitoring needs to be accompanied by partnership at local level involving schools, communities and enterprises to ensure that the policies can be successfully implemented.

The first discussion note to be presented in the workshop addresses governance arrangements for strategic entrepreneurship learning and borrows on the experience of Norway. This paper demonstrates how the impetus for a national framework was generated not at central level but by local authorities and enterprises concerned that the education system be more responsive to the needs of the local economy.

A further feature highlighted is the fragility of partnerships once established despite a recognised need as to their importance and the need for flexibility in allowing them to evolve.

What emerges in the presentation is a complex web of interconnections with multiple layers of relationships at national and local level which have been established to ensure that an entrepreneurship learning policy can be successfully executed in all schools across a geographically large country. The workshop identifies the challenges, risks and opportunities associated with partnership building at national and local levels, including range of different players.

The workshop question:

- Could the Norwegian partnership model, comprising a national policy making framework, backed up by local partnership delivery arrangements, be considered by ETF partner countries in their bid to develop more strategic life-long entrepreneurship learning?

5. What are the implications of the entrepreneurship core competence for curriculum and teaching?

While the lion's share of the development and delivery of entrepreneurship learning to date has concentrated on third level education, increasing attention is now turning to earlier parts of the education system. The concept of the 'enterprising child' is now increasingly considered central to the development of an enterprise culture.

With organisations – commercial or otherwise – increasingly having to cope with higher degrees of uncertainty, deriving from factors both internal and external to the organisation, new forms of working and greater flexibility of workers to adjust to new orientations is more and more required. The individual's 'intrapreneurship' capacity to be able to respond and adapt to these changing and often complex circumstances is now increasingly recognised. It is this issue which has been the behind the calls for a rethink on entrepreneurship and the need for the education community to respond to the challenge of a revised 'entrepreneurship paradigm'. A key challenge is

to move the focus of entrepreneurship teaching away from the narrow business orientation towards the notion of development of the enterprising person in a wide range of contexts and the design of organisations of all kinds to facilitate appropriate levels of 'effective' entrepreneurial behaviour.....Such a shift in focus will place major demands upon teachers and their institutions (Gibb, 2002:258).

It is against this enlarged paradigm that an EU policy initiative on 'core competences for lifelong learning' identifies entrepreneurship as a 'life skill'. Entrepreneurship is defined as:

an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation, risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects. This supports everyone in day to day life at home and in society, employees in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by entrepreneurs establishing social or commercial activity' (European Commission, 2005b).

Although this definition remains open and loose, what is clear is that the entrepreneurship competence is an aggregate of a range of other skills and attitudes (e.g. problem-solving, planning, team work, creativity, risk-taking) which together will provide an essential building block of an entrepreneurial character or personality. How these more general skills and attitudes will be developed through the

education process in a systematic and structured way, including the assessment processes which will be required, remains to be defined.

The off-shoot of this enlarged concept of entrepreneurship for the learning system is that schools and the wider learning community will have to consider how to promote attitudes and behaviours which can effectively prepare the individual to live with the high levels of complexity and uncertainty which are a standard feature of daily living in the 21st century.

To date, there is no evidence in partner countries of any strategic development of the wider concept of entrepreneurship in the learning systems. The issue, likewise, is barely addressed in the developed economies of the European Union. Given that the entrepreneurship core competence issue is such a new phenomenon part of the difficulty at this stage is that it is not that clear as to what needs to be taught and how it should be taught.

The second presentation in the workshop provides one example as to how the core competence issue is being addressed in Sweden. Based on a pilot school operation, the case study presented focuses on one high school (16-19 year olds) which demonstrates a mind-shift in terms of curriculum design and pedagogy with pupils taking more responsibility for curriculum development and the teaching process evolving more towards a coaching approach, perhaps more successful for young adult learners. Ensuring the commitment of teachers is emphasised as critical to the success of the pilot and eventual transfer to other schools. Interestingly, while 'creating own business' is a central feature of the school's curriculum, the success of the pilot is measured by increased levels of motivation of pupils and teachers. The organisational change in the school itself has injected a spirit of enterprise and culture of 'what next?'

Notwithstanding the entrepreneurship core competence developments, there will additionally be the need to develop the harder commercial skills and the corporate focus. This will require more specific entrepreneurship features in the curriculum or as part of a wider extra-curricula activity but where the school is directly involved. This is where partner countries are already demonstrating good practice.

The introduction of the mini-enterprise approach into schools where pupils 'learn the ropes' by following a classic company cycle (business plan, set-up, marketing, sales etc) is a common pedagogic method across many partner countries. A common feature, however, is that the greater part of this activity is supported and delivered by non-statutory service providers. However, what is not clear is the extent to which the efforts are impacting on systemic reform and modernisation within the early education system itself. This prompts the question of sustainability.

In the interest of maximising effort and overall impact, partner country institutions, schools etc., as well as donor organisations, would do well to ensure that all local and donor-supported projects include a 'mainstreaming' clause at the project design phase to ensure that good policy learning and practice from a project will be integrated into the wider education environment.

A second area where entrepreneurship learning is more developed in partner countries is as part of vocational education delivery. One project in particular supported by the ETF, involving nine vocational schools in North West Russia and Ukraine (2001-2003), stands out not only in demonstrating how the introduction of entrepreneurship learning as a stand-alone subject in the curriculum across the participating schools had a positive impact on pupils, but also in how the new emphasis on entrepreneurship in the curriculum generated wider organisational and cultural change in the schools. Key to the reform project were curriculum reform, teacher training, management development, school governance arrangements and links with the economy. A key result from the project was that each school's activities evolved into commercial enterprises where products and services developed through the learning process where brought to the market.

To conclude, a head-start on entrepreneurship learning through building up the basic skills which contribute to the core competence of entrepreneurship in early education will be an essential building block for developing the entrepreneurship character and an essential first step in lifelong entrepreneurship learning development. If partner countries are to seize the opportunity of ensuring that their education systems more directly contribute to their entrepreneurship potential, primary and secondary education systems need to be prepared. And from the inside this will require a revised policy framework, where adjustments to all levels of the curricula will be needed and where those who will be delivering on the policy (school directors and the teaching body) have been prepared for the challenge.

The workshop questions:

- Should ETF partner countries embrace the entrepreneurship core competence policy of the European Union?
- How could this be approached?

6. Can the education and training system do more to promote awareness of and readiness for self-employment?

Structural changes to the labour market, the development of peripheral hiring policies by enterprises and growing interest in self-employment is generating increasing interest in self-employment in developed economies. As regards ETF partner country regions, two distinct features are identifiable.

Firstly, in those countries undergoing market transition, self-employment is often the only option available to those whose employment has been terminated following down-sizing of large, unproductive plants and where weak local economies have not sufficiently developed to absorb the lay-offs. For example, national income figures for the Russian Federation, Moldova and Ukraine indicate that the share of income derived from self-employed entrepreneurs ranged from 20 to 35%. For Georgia the figure in the same year was 72% (World Bank, 2000).

The relationship between economic hardship and the individual's propensity for self-employment, therefore, is essentially defined by necessity as opposed to choice, and very often is a pull-factor to the informal economy (Kolev and Saget, 2005). A series of ETF regional labour market reviews in the Western Balkans in 2005 underlines this point (e.g. ETF, 2006b).

Turning to the middle-income group of countries and territories from the Middle East and North Africa, while self-employment again is the only option available, there are indications that personal choice is a factor, founded in culture and tradition. Hakim and Carrero Perez (2005) identify various segments of the self-employed ranging from the poorly skilled to professionals with strong business growth and technical innovation. A further factor in the Middle East and North Africa region is that significant efforts are being made by a range of actors to directly engage with the informal self-employed, including the provision of learning and advisory services to win them and encourage them to join the formal economy. The experience from the Middle East and North Africa region prompts the following question in particular: could other ETF partner countries, particularly those with high levels of self-employment e.g. Albania (63%) (ETF, 2006b) or Kyrgyzstan (60%) (Kaser, 2005), consider providing learning services to the informal self-employed?

While efforts, often project/donor driven, are being made across the ETF partner country regions to develop the understanding of self-employment as a credible labour market option, in general, the issue is receiving insufficient attention by policy makers. The implications of this are that many of those with an interest in creating their own job are at risk of seeping to the shadows of the informal economy (Gribben, 2005). Could more be done to develop the potential of labour market entrants and the unemployed to consider self-employment?

What types of measures could public authorities promote to make self-employment a real labour market option? And, what particularly could the employment, training and education services do together to promote self-employment in the communities where they are located?

A review of policy papers and service delivery in the Western Balkan region suggests that the evolving careers guidance and counselling services are missing an opportunity in giving more consideration to self-employment as a labour market option. More specific consideration of the potential contribution of the careers guidance and counselling services to promoting self-employment or micro-enterprises is warranted.

These issues lie at the heart of a specific EU-supported effort (€1.25m) the southern and eastern Mediterranean region which kicked off in late 2005 and whose objective is to boost youth employment. School-based entrepreneurship learning, self-employment promotion and support for micro-enterprise development is being strategically addressed in the vocational education and training system. The project which features as part of wider programme to ensure that the education systems are able to respond better to the labour market, will build on existing policies, structures and delivery mechanisms

and where cross-country cooperation, in terms of exchange on policy innovation, curriculum and teacher development, is built into the programme.

The third theme for the workshop, which is presented as a case study, is taken from Tunisia. It highlights how the Tunisian authorities have taken a strategic approach to promote self-employment. The project demonstrates how the Ministry of Education and Training has assigned responsibility for the development of self-employment support services to the national training and employment agencies which, in partnership, have cooperated in the design and delivery of a three-phased self-employment support service to meet different parts of the employment market.

More interestingly, is that a fourth development phase (DEPRO) is in the making. This will bring the self-employment promotion activities more directly into the secondary school system.

The workshop questions:

- What policy learning value can be taken from the Tunisian self-employment case study for other ETF partner countries?

7. How can universities optimise business opportunities?

While the latter part of the 1990s was preoccupied with large-scale dismissals of workers as technology filled the space in labour-intensive industries, the beginning of the new century has been characterised by concerns as to how technology can be developed to promote create jobs and growth. And with it came increased expectations of the university and research community in contributing to the commercialisation of technologies and business spin-offs. In more developed economies, this has generated structured cooperation between universities and enterprises, not only to maximize the opportunities that innovation can bring to an economy, but also as to how the knowledge and skills of university graduates could be better attuned to the demands of the labour market.

A 2005 review of Tempus-supported, university-enterprise cooperation across all ETF partner country regions concludes that cooperation between the business world and universities is poorly developed. Part of the problem is put down to the ailing state of industry, unable to act as a viable partner, while cooperation with the SME community is extremely weak. More fundamentally, however, is the conclusion that universities and businesses essentially operate in different worlds: one concerned with the short-term, day-to-day business survival (small enterprises); the other more concerned with the longer-term - the development and delivery of education (the university community). In brief, the universities surveyed in the report demonstrate very little 'entrepreneurship spirit.'

With increasing interest in ensuring that university graduates enter the labour market with immediately employable skills, efforts are being made to adapt curricula to enterprise requirements in a range of sectors (e.g. pharmaceuticals, tourism and hospitality, chemicals, textiles). There are good examples of universities and enterprises cooperating on curriculum reform and improving its labour market relevance (e.g. environmental technology in Azerbaijan and Egypt). But these are isolated examples. The review notes that, in general, in the curriculum reform effort 'industry is more involved as a recipient of "products" developed by the universities and not an active partner' (ETF, 2006c).

A second issue is that university-enterprise mobility schemes designed to promote the transfer of knowledge between the business and university worlds (e.g. staff exchanges, student placements) are not being sufficiently exploited.

A third area of the study investigated the extent to which universities were engaged in common ventures with enterprises, in particular on technology transfer projects and business incubators. Here the results are more encouraging. Technology transfer centres have been established across all ETF partner regions, usually on the initiative of universities, and demonstrate the value that knowledge from universities can have when applied to commercial setting. The Mediterranean region stands out particularly for its efforts in university/enterprise technology transfer initiatives.

In terms of determining how the university worlds in the partner countries are actively contributing to entrepreneurship development, what conclusions can be drawn from this survey?

Firstly, it is important to emphasise that data employed in this study, and the trends suggested, reflect a biased sample of universities across the ETF partner regions. The survey data captures only those universities and enterprises which responded to the mail-shot. Secondly, the research concentrated

solely on those universities which are participants in Tempus-funded projects and therefore are not likely to be a representative sample of the wider university community in the various ETF regions. Only by introducing a comparative sample would it be possible to assess the wider practice of university/enterprise cooperation.

Nonetheless, from the data gathered, a first conclusion is that efforts to ensure that enterprises are more fully engaged into the curriculum reform process will need to be reinforced if graduates are to bring added value to the labour market. If, as the study suggests, curricula modernisation is a one-sided affair, the opportunity for ensuring that the most highly educated in society will simultaneously have the knowledge and skills required by employers, is being missed.

Secondly, the underdevelopment of university-enterprise mobility schemes is another missed opportunity in forging the necessary linkages and confidence-building measures between partners who together have a critical role in promoting innovation and prospects in the economy. With 'little awareness of the mutual benefits of cooperation' (ETF, 2006c), more efforts are required to ensure that this necessary first step is made to ensure that the university world is more directly engaged in the wider efforts to promote innovation, productivity and competitiveness of each region or country.

Thirdly, it is clear that interest and motivation for university-enterprise cooperation is best developed around technology institutes and engineering faculties. This is where potential for innovation, knowledge and skills can be translated into commercial opportunities. Success here should be built upon by way of more systematic entrepreneurship learning for technology undergraduates and researchers to optimise the potential of their ideas/products on the market.

By way of EU policy reference, all countries participating in the Bologna Process will need to make concerted efforts to bridge the university-enterprise divide. Mainstreaming entrepreneurship learning, across the university system in the EU, particularly within science and technology courses, is additionally recommended by the European Commission to ensure spin-offs and innovative start-ups and as a means of helping researchers acquire entrepreneurial skills (European Commission, 2006). This recommendation follows a broader policy push within the European Union whose aim is to close the gap in research and technology development between the EU and US, Japan and the Indo-Sino tigers (European Commission, 2005c).

Finally, the inter-dependencies between the different parts of the entrepreneurship learning system have been emphasised earlier in this paper. The point is made again here but with reference to establishing good basic knowledge, skills and interest in mathematics, ICT and science and technology as a spring-board for youngsters to take the hi-tech skills route as they move through the various parts of the education world leading to the university. As part of its core competence policy package, in 2005 the European Union embarked upon a long-term project to establish an essential building block for future competitiveness. With a greater thrust towards developing primary and secondary education in science and technology, ICT and mathematics, the objective is to generate a community of young people who will be ready for more advanced studies at the third level in the technology field and ultimately for a more progressive technology economy.

In this regard, as part of its mandate to relay relevant EU policy signals to its partner countries, in March 2006, the ETF initiated a core competence policy development project with five countries: Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. The policy learning outcomes of this project will eventually be shared with the wider ETF partner country community. In the meantime, participants at the June 2006 Advisory Forum meeting, particularly those with education policy responsibility, may consider taking note of the EU core competence policy package (see European Commission, 2000b).

The second case study to be presented in the workshop looks particularly at how one faculty – the faculty of mechanical engineering at the St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, has designed and managed a turn-around process where a mind-set change towards market-oriented education and research lies at the heart of reform and modernisation strategy.

The workshop question:

- How could universities or faculties in ETF partner countries be encouraged to adopt a more strategic, turn-around process where entrepreneurship learning is a central feature of teaching, learning and research?

8. Is there value in regional and trans-regional cooperation on entrepreneurship learning?

Given that the concept of lifelong entrepreneurship learning is only just emerging, those embarking on any strategic developments in the area face a number of constraints:

- an under-developed body of policy knowledge;
- no common vocabulary; poorly defined concepts;
- a complex and multi-dimensional area, little researched or reported;
- no readily accessible resources for best case practice (e.g. curriculum, teacher training, assessment, accreditation);
- no common data sets or indicators for performance monitoring and development;
- few established networks for policy/practice information exchange (apart from third level business education programmes).

A first step to address these constraints will require a concerted effort of those interested in lifelong entrepreneurship learning to come together for dialogue and planning with a view to building knowledge, policy capacities and delivery arrangements at the various levels of the learning system. In this regard, organisations, schools/entrepreneurship learning providers, social partners and governments could consider the development of knowledge sharing, policy benchmarking and better practice networks to further intelligence in the entrepreneurship learning field.

Although there are no readily identifiable networks of entrepreneurship learning policy makers or practitioners (third level business education aside), assuming there was sufficient interest, and by way of example, a range of mechanisms established for promoting policy learning and knowledge-sharing in other sectors could be considered as possible reference points. On policy performance, for example, the EU Member States operate a system of 'open coordination' on key policy areas whose objective is to benchmark progress. Drawing policy lessons from other jurisdictions is central to the 'open coordination' process. Likewise, the ETF partner countries have cooperated on different aspects of vocational education, training and employment reform usually at ETF 'regional' level, with objectives of policy exchange and information sharing. In this regard, information exchange, multi-country projects and regional peer reviews have contributed to better understanding, coordination and cooperation across a range of client groups (education and labour authorities and social partners, in particular).

On entrepreneurship learning, in particular, Albania, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have come together as a first international network on entrepreneurship learning and where all countries have committed themselves as a group to more systematic policy reflection, policy improvement and policy transparency on entrepreneurship learning. Under the auspices of the European Charter for Small Enterprises, the objective of the network is to share experience on entrepreneurship learning and to close performance gaps.

In 2006 the countries signed up to a rigorous brief of both self-assessment and independent assessment where entrepreneurship learning policy performance indicators (e.g. accessibility of training, affordability, core competence, non-formal entrepreneurship learning, quality assurance) will define national progress. A regional performance league table is expected to prompt further development as all countries will be automatically engaged into a regional benchmarking process. Developments in this network are backed up by a multi-agency support framework involving the OECD, EBRD, ETF and the European Commission (DG Enterprise).

The final presentation in the workshop considers options to reinforce regional cooperation on entrepreneurship learning. Based on the experience of Western Balkan cooperation, this presentation goes further by putting the case for trans-regional cooperation, e.g. countries from the range of ETF partner regions voluntarily cooperating on a number of pre-defined entrepreneurship learning policy areas.

The workshop questions:

- What is the value-added of regional and trans-regional cooperation on entrepreneurship learning?
- What areas of cooperation, in particular, could be most appropriately addressed in a trans-regional way?

9. Summary and conclusions

Increasingly open markets and the resulting interdependencies in the global trading system now present major challenges for national learning systems as governments, enterprises and other interest groups concerned with human resource development determine how the knowledge and skills of the workforce can contribute better to broader efforts to head off competition. In the drive to survive, economies will have no option but to 'opt in' to adapting their learning systems to cope with growing competitive pressures.

The first issue emanating from this paper is the increasing recognition of the 'enlarged entrepreneurship learning field' – no longer the province of the MBA world and transcending all parts of the learning system. ETF partner countries are therefore invited to consider adopting a broader paradigm of entrepreneurship learning which incorporates all parts of the learning system and where investment into the early parts of the education system, where the potential for promoting the mindset and values of an entrepreneurship society is at its best, will be paramount.

In adopting such a broader paradigm in their countries, ETF partner country administrations responsible for different parts of the entrepreneurship learning system must be ready to consider alternative forms of governance, involving a range of stakeholders, working in partnership and with 'one vision'; and which can see through the necessary policy adjustments and delivery arrangements over a significant period to allow for the results of the investment to bear fruit. A policy perspective, therefore, of less than one school generation would arguably be insufficient.

Secondly, any national partnership arrangements for promoting entrepreneurship learning will be of little value unless they are mirrored by parallel arrangements at local level which will ensure that the policy is implemented and is effective. The challenge here particularly will be to engage schools, their teachers and administrators into understanding and delivering on the required reforms which the new entrepreneurship learning paradigm will have for curriculum, teacher training and the schools' interface with local enterprises. As schools and the teaching profession are already overloaded with a reform drive in many ETF partner countries, there is a risk that building in the extra feature of entrepreneurship learning could backfire. A phase-in strategy, building on good demonstration models, perhaps using a pilot reform approach, could therefore be one option to win over the teaching profession which will be key to the reform.

Thirdly, while the case for a wider application of entrepreneurship learning beyond the corporate and commercial sphere has been developed in this paper, the direct contribution to business development and growth will continue to an objective of the wider entrepreneurship learning effort. In this regard, the paper has argued that the promotion of self-employment, in particular by education, training, employment and SME support services, has been a missed opportunity and requires more policy reflection and support, in the bid to create entrepreneurial opportunity and employment.

Perhaps a bigger missed opportunity in ETF partner countries, in terms of potential for jobs and competitiveness is, what appears to be, a failure of universities and enterprises to appreciate the mutual benefit of more direct cooperation. Government intervention to facilitate and support the knowledge potential of the university establishment and its transfer to the market in ETF partner countries is something that requires more reflection. It is very possible that the availability and quality of research infrastructure at partner country universities is the 'disabling' factor in university-enterprise cooperation. This would need to be investigated further. If universities' innovation capacity is undermined by the lack of research technologies, the potential for knowledge transfer to industry and commerce will remain constrained. The Tempus study suggests that the problem is more fundamental - one of mind-set - that universities may simply be failing to grasp the understanding and importance of their relationship with the market and their potential, in terms of contributing to better competitiveness. The university entrepreneurship mindset and infrastructure are inter-dependent and self-reinforcing. Consequently, they must be developed together.

This paper set out clearly stating that the entrepreneurship learning was an evolving policy area; its design and delivery underdeveloped. It has also highlighted the growing recognition of entrepreneurship as a 'way of life' beyond commerce - a core competence - and where the challenges in terms of curriculum adjustment and pedagogy remain to be addressed. An evolving policy area inevitably means uncertainty as to policy viability. Without an established body of policy knowledge as to what works well and under which circumstances, those setting out on the entrepreneurship learning route are handicapped by having few policy learning reference points. The final recommendation to the Advisory Forum workshop on trans-regional cooperation seeks to address that gap through the sharing of policy intelligence, partner countries developing policy models together and exchanging better practice.

ETF partner countries represent a unique community of transition and middle-income nations, each increasingly subject to competitive forces and having to respond. Working singly or in cooperation with other countries on strategic lifelong entrepreneurship learning are two options which partner countries may take as a step forward in ensuring the education world contributes to meeting the competitiveness challenge.

Standing still is a third option.

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP LEARNING: CASE STUDIES

April 2006

CASE STUDY 1

Governance arrangements for entrepreneurship education in Norway

Svein Frydenlund, Norway

The workshop question:

- Are alternative governance arrangements necessary to develop strategic entrepreneurship learning policy and practice?

Policy learning value of the case study

- National policy: national partnership arrangements require an overall common vision and an overall common objective notwithstanding that the different partners may have additional specific objectives;
- Local partnership: for the implementation of a national entrepreneurship education strategy, local partnerships are essential in seeing through the strategy set at central level. These partnerships should involve schools, community groups, local enterprises and other interested parties;
- Joint financing: financing of the work plan is met by the three key ministries which have signed up to the strategy;
- Keep trying: if an attempt at national strategy development is not successful, determine why not and try again.

Context

Attempts to develop a national approach to entrepreneurship in Norway began in the mid-1990s. At that time entrepreneurship education, particularly non-tertiary level, was more and more considered as an important area for the wider development of Norway's economy. First discussions on entrepreneurship resulted in an agreement in 1997 among seven ministries to establish a national strategy for entrepreneurship education. The Ministry of Education took the leading role. The strategy building exercise was difficult mainly because the range of ministries had different agendas. There was no one common vision, or one common agenda. The attempt at developing a common strategy did not succeed principally because the objectives were difficult to operationalise.

In 2004 a second attempt was taken to establish a more strategic development of entrepreneurship education. This time the strategy building was confined to three ministries: the Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Regional and Local Government and the Ministry of Education. The initiative was taken particularly by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government which was keen to engage the local education system more directly in local economic and social development. Simultaneously, although not a Member State of the European Union, Norway and particularly the Ministry of Education and Research was keen to incorporate some of the policy signals from the EU's Lisbon strategy into its national policies - the contribution of education to economic competitiveness and growth.

A national strategy (2004-2008) has been agreed and is now effective. The strategy has a national agreed vision and objective.

Vision

The Norwegian education system shall be among the best in the world in entrepreneurship education.

Objective

The education system shall contribute to value creation, founding of new businesses and innovation in Norway and by stimulating attitudes, knowledge and skills in pupils, students and teachers at all levels and in developing an entrepreneurship culture.

What should be noted is that all three ministries involved in the strategy have their own specific objectives but the overriding objective of creating more entrepreneurship potential and economic well being in Norway remains the common objective.

The strategy is defined overall by public-private partnership although the employers are signatory to the national strategy. The involvement of employers is at implementation level. The key driver of the strategy is the Ministry for Local Government and Regional Government:

Key aspects of the strategy:

- Primary education emphasis is on attitudes, skills, creativity and innovation (core entrepreneurship skills) with total commitment of local authorities and communities as 'owners' who facilitate the entrepreneurship in education;
- Lower and upper secondary emphasis is on more applied knowledge and skills developed through youth enterprises and in association with non-statutory service providers;
- Partnership agreements formalised between schools and local business and industry with international cooperation at school level;
- Higher education emphasises a wide range of entrepreneurship education options, with the specific development of Master and Doctorate programmes in entrepreneurship and innovation;
- Cooperation agreements between teacher training institutions and enterprise.

Strengths

- Policy partnership at national level sends clear signals to society as to the importance of the development of entrepreneurship learning
- Partnership ensures synergy of different policies and different ministry objectives: a) education: enhanced preparedness for life and work; b) trade and industry: enhanced employability skills for economy; c) regional and local development: balanced and sustainable livelihoods for wide spread of communities and lessening the risk of de-ruralisation;
- Innovative governance: preparing people for jobs which still do not exist;
- With strong community interest in enterprise development and job creation, development of entrepreneurship learning has strengthened support and involvement of local communities and businesses in the school's planning, management and education delivery

Weaknesses

- Wider ministry involvement could have brought greater government support;
- Voluntary approach of schools means that some schools are not following the strategy; more pressure from central government (Ministry of Education and Research) should have been built into the strategy;

- With no centralised budget the strategy depends on priorities and annual allocation from the 3 different ministries. This can lead to lack of balance in the overall delivery process depending on the different ministry priorities to the various action lines.

Opportunities

- Both national and local strategies for entrepreneurship learning create greater awareness for more sustainable and inclusive approaches to socio-economic development; entrepreneurship learning approach is an opportunity for society as well as enterprise;
- Partnership approach at local level on entrepreneurship learning is having a wider effect across curriculum and school innovation with greater energy, enthusiasm and readiness for other changes;
- Greater development of public-private partnerships helps create efficiencies in education delivery.

Threats

- Schools have continuous burden of change with frequent demands, and interest in entrepreneurship learning delivery may not be taken seriously; wider strategy of change in the school system needed to ensure priorities are clear;
- The partnership approach at national level does not have private sector voice; there is no clear strategy as regards commitment of industry/commercial/private sector which relies on local commitment only;
- No performance indicators or tracking systems to determine value and impact of entrepreneurship learning have been established. Without hard results, entrepreneurship learning could be seen as another 'fad'.

CASE STUDY 2

Developing the entrepreneurship core competence at school level: Broby Grafiska Utbildning (Sunne, Sweden)

Christer Westlund, Sweden

The workshop questions:

- Should ETF partner countries embrace the entrepreneurship core competence policy of the European Union?
- How could this be approached?

Policy learning value of the case study

- National policy: school based reform should be anchored in a national policy to ensure support and ultimate transferability of good experience;
- Organisational change: ensuring core competence delivery requires a culture shift and organisation change within the school – not only a matter of curriculum reform and teacher training;
- Entrepreneurship learning goes further than skills for enterprises but addresses skills for life;
- Demonstration value: initiating change process around schools already demonstrating openness and innovation to ensure pilot's success
- Resources: change process does not require additional finance or resources – only the resource of motivation.

Context

Local, regional, national and more latterly international authorities are increasingly convinced that entrepreneurship promotion within the school system will have enormous potential for individuals, society and the economy. The EU entrepreneurship core competence provisions for lifelong learning are one example of trend to take entrepreneurship at all levels of the education more seriously.

While different types of approach to develop the entrepreneurship core competence will be necessary for different age groups in the education system (and these remain to be developed), one high school in Sweden (15-19 year olds) has taken the initiative to meet the challenge for introducing the entrepreneurship core competence. In essence, the school has gone through a radical reform process in terms of how curricula is devised, involving a re-think on teaching practice and a broader sweep of organisational reforms all designed to mainstream the entrepreneurship spirit in day to day school life.

Essential elements to the reform are: a) good backing from national and local administrations, b) a committed teaching and management group to go with the reform process, c) mainstreaming the key elements of the entrepreneurship core competence into core subjects of the school's curriculum (team working, problem solving, risk taking, innovative ideas, planning, using learning for further development opportunities) and an 'intra-murus' facilitator with knowledge and skills to instil the features of the entrepreneurship core competence in the curriculum, pedagogic practice and the wider culture of the school.

Central to entrepreneurship promotion in the schools is that it is not only about getting young people to think about careers in business. Rather, the issue is that entrepreneurship is developed to assist young people in developing opportunities and to be able to realise them through the learning process. And the measurement of learning process is not 'the correct answer' but how the answer was arrived at.

The results from the first year of delivery of this innovative approach to entrepreneurship in the school system are very encouraging with heightened motivation and self-confidence among pupils and a more motivated staff group. Nonetheless, reform is still at an early stage but the school is quietly confident that progress will be sustained as the entrepreneurship drive moves into its second year.

Strengths

- New notions of learning and teaching process bring wider innovation to the school environment;
- National policy framework to support school based reform with innovation/change fund;
- Local authorities allow for 'free space' for innovation in the school.

Weaknesses

- Post-school tracking system not in place to determine progress and destination of pupils;
- Entrepreneurship core competence factor more evident in certain subjects; the entrepreneurship value for each subject on the curriculum needs to be more transparent and clearly defined;
- Overhaul of pre-service teacher training necessary to ensure that teachers arrive into the learning situation with full understanding of entrepreneurship core competence and its implications for curriculum and pedagogy.

Opportunities

- The 'self-start' culture developed through the entrepreneurship core competence drive in schools will have knock-on implications for the local community, local businesses and the wider economy
- Organisational change as a consequence of the development of the entrepreneurship core competence can re-establish levels of good motivation for young people in the learning process as well as among the teaching profession
- Successful pilot projects can engender further innovation both within the school as well as prompting policy reform at national level

Threats

- Successful transfer results from one target group to another, from one school to another can never be assured
- Increased interest of young people to join the pilot high school has introduced new demands on the wider school resources which local authorities are slow to respond to;
- Enterprise spirit engendered through the high school could be eroded during next phase of education (university) unless additional entrepreneurship learning provision is made available.

Recommendations

- Ensure that entrepreneurship education and the entrepreneurship core competence is accepted at national policy level, even initially as a pilot development;
- Create an innovation fund particularly targeting groups of teachers to develop and promote the understanding of methods and materials for promoting awareness, understanding and practice for entrepreneurship core competence development;
- Establish a national entrepreneurship learning task force with mobile support unit to develop awareness and understanding of the requirements for curriculum, pedagogy and organisational reform which the entrepreneurship core competence development will require;
- Create networks of schools, teachers, directors, school governing boards to build up further knowledge and political support for continued reforms
- Ensure linkages between entrepreneurship learning developments at the various levels of the education system continue
- Engage with parallel initiatives outside of the school which have a contribution to make to the core competence development.

CASE STUDY 3

Training and self-employment in Tunisia – the FORTI Initiative

Tahar El Mili, Tunisia

The workshop question:

- Can the education and training system do more to promote the awareness of and readiness for self-employment?

Policy learning value of the case study

- National development policy: self employment, small enterprise development and youth training are key pillars of the national development policy of Tunisia;
- Partnership: partnership between various delivery organisations to ensure a good interface and complementarity between the range of measures to promote self-employment and micro-enterprise development;
- Phased development: build the self-employment training support services in phases; this allows for tried-and-tested methods and materials and wider developments, as well as a build-up of confidence of other partners to join the system later e.g. general education system;
- Finance: self employment training has little value unless backed up with start-up finance.

Context

The FORTI initiative has three objectives:

- Prepare young labour market entrants for self-employment
- Develop training providers
- Coach young entrepreneurs during risk phase of business start-up

FORTI began in 1995 as a pilot project in the central-west region of Tunisia to develop self employment and micro-enterprises. In a second phase (1999-2002) the project further developed its training products and was extended to five additional regions in Tunisia. A third phase ran from 2002-2005 and concentrated on the vocational training system. Each phase of the programme formed an integral part of consecutive national development plans which had emphasised the importance of entrepreneurship training for small businesses. Based on the national development plan, the initiative was immediately integrated into economic and social policies where SME development was key to jobs and growth.

The present FORTI initiative comprises three core pillars promoting self-employment of different target groups. The FORTI package is as follows:

CEFI: Entrepreneurial skills in vocational education

CEFE : Enterprise creation and training for business creation

CEFOC : Entrepreneurial skills in continuing training

A fourth phase of development is now underway (DEPRO) which aims to promote awareness and first entrepreneurship skills within the school system targeting the 12-14 age group. DEPRO will lead immediately to the next phase of training (CEFI).

Since its inception some 25,000 clients have benefited from FORTI of which 40% are female. Further, FORTI graduates report being more motivated and, apart from the entrepreneurship learning, have developed interpersonal skills.

Self employment creation for CEFE graduates is 35%. A key factor amongst those who have established their business is that they request continued coaching. This has required further investment in training of coaches.

Strengths

- The FORTI Initiative fully integrated into national development plan and economic and social strategies; strong government support and recognition of the FORTI initiative
- Sound support and delivery infrastructure
- Client feedback and success of programme is the excellent
- Good independent evaluations at end of each phase have determined next phase development

Weaknesses

- Coaching system still needs further development.
- Inflexible training staff can be resistant to widening their scope of work
- Interfaces between different parties in the project framework can act as a constraint
- Training centres can lack a sense of entrepreneurship despite this being the key feature of the programme

Opportunities

- A wide range of tried and tested products, designed to progressively build up the knowledge, skills and attitudes of young people for self-employment and micro-enterprises;
- A resources of learning materials for young people, backed up with training and support materials for training staff

Threats

- Coaching activities can often only be evaluated in the long-term and risk not being supported due to short-term planning;
- Some partners in the project, including training staff can be resistant to development of the initiatives.

Recommendations

- The FORTI Initiative could be reinforced with broader community support actions involving schools, NGOs where broader awareness-raising activities could create the opportunity to build a community enterprise spirit which would impact further on young minds;

- Entrepreneurship issues should be introduced earlier into the education system to allow for broader development of attitudes and behaviour conducive to entrepreneurship development. For consideration: enterprise clubs, information days, youth entrepreneurship competitions.
- Any support activities for self-employment should combine awareness raising, training and follow-up coaching.
- Self-employment training must be combined with micro-credit support services.

CASE STUDY 4

Creating the enterprising faculty: the change process at the faculty of mechanical engineering at St. Cyril and Methodius University, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Dr. Marija Zarezankova Potevska, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The workshop question:

- How could universities or faculties in ETF partner countries be encouraged to adopt a more strategic, turn-around process where entrepreneurship learning is a central feature of teaching, learning and research?

Policy learning value of the case study

- Enterprise culture and mind-set change within the university setting must happen from within;
- Strong leadership within the faculty with good vision is necessary to see through reforms;
- Cultivate reform around younger faculty staff; engage students into the entrepreneurship reform strategy; ensure continued development of staff and opportunities;
- Develop a business plan for the faculty and see it through; sharing reform knowledge with other parts of the university brings added value to the faculty;
- Enhanced awareness of high-skills requirements for building a developed economy;
- Twinning with US and EU universities allows quick capacity building and introduction of new ideas into curriculum and courses;
- Develop culture of public-private partnership which drives further entrepreneurship opportunities for the faculty, staff and students;
- Learning value and potential of student enterprise internships (for faculty and students) and student mobility measures in the region.

Context

With the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and the introduction of market reforms, significant reductions in public and private sector support for education resulted in the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University St. Cyril and Methodius" (UKIM), losing its established links with industry, a tradition of scholarships from both industry and government and a huge loss in students interested and able in resource terms to follow courses at the faculty. For the purposes of comparison, 900 students enrolled at the faculty in 1985. By 2002 this number had fallen to 190. With the close of large production units in the period of 1990 - 2000, the faculty lost its link to the enterprise world. Innovative enterprises turned to research capacities outside the country and the market was lost.

A turn-around strategy was developed from 1996/97 borrowing on the knowledge and experience of key staff from the faculty who underwent change management training at the Arizona State University (USA) in 1995/96.

Reforms concentrated on:

- Development of quality basic and applied research capacity;
- Curriculum modernisation, with entrepreneurship training and SME focus, as a central feature of all undergraduate and post-graduate courses as well as career planning and counselling;
- Acquisition of leading technologies for teaching and research;
- A technology transfer strategy with particular emphasis on SMEs;
- Less reliance on government support and more pro-active donor identification to new projects;
- Development of management, entrepreneurship and small business training modules for the industrial engineering and management programme, in particular (excellent mix of technical and business knowledge upgraded delivery);
- A marketing drive across the entire high school network in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to revive student interest in mechanical engineering required for the local and regional economy;
- Design and delivery of non-formal training courses to a growing SME market.

The reform process witnessed significant resistance from teaching staff within the faculty but 'new blood' from younger recruits with staff development opportunities with sound leadership by the dean of the faculty ensured the reforms were realised. Additionally, an unforeseen consequence of the opening of a Macedonian branch of the Association of European Studies for Industrial Engineering and Management provided access to students to new ideas and practice from other parts of Europe who themselves became a force for change and innovation within the faculty.

The entrepreneurship modules developed for faculty students, initially (1997) only for one major, are now compulsory for all students enrolled at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. The European Credit Transfer System introduced 2002/03 offers new programmes to students with a strong focus on practical involvement in the day-to-day enterprise activities.

From 2006, the entrepreneurship learning modules are being offered to other faculties in the university. During this process the faculty is also training staff members from other faculties on the entrepreneurship training packages. The next step (2007) is to put the entrepreneurship training materials on-line for self-learning by all university staff and students.

The next institution building step is to establish an 'incubator centre' for the purpose of supporting students with innovative business ideas to ensure that those ideas can be realised in commercial terms.

A Tempus Joint European Project application (December 2005) has been submitted to the European Commission with the objective of making the on-line training available to other universities in the Western Balkan region.

Strengths

- Faculty committed to continuous change which is central to its entrepreneurship mission; strong vision and understanding of entrepreneurship in the management of the faculty; good leadership;
- A rolling programme of staff development opportunities to ensure access to latest knowledge and developments, as well as teaching practice (study visits, exchange of staff, guest lectures); role of university in economic development and industrial competitiveness now well established;
- Creation of a Centre for Research and Development and Lifelong Learning (CIRKO) - ensures that the teaching process and research are developed simultaneously; CIRKO has been very successful in fund-raising;
- Cooperation with the university's small business support centre, with a focus on self-employment support for graduates, small business career guidance;

- Potential to offer post-secondary entrepreneurship adult learning services.

Weaknesses

- R&D efforts of a faculty would be reinforced by a national research framework and support instruments which do not exist;
- Ministry of Education and Science needs to make more effort to promote science and technology in the country's efforts to establish a knowledge-based economy;
- Only an informal system in is place to determine how successful graduates are in the labour market which hinders any impact assessment of courses and their contribution to employment or performance within enterprises.

Opportunities

- A national entrepreneurship learning partnership now helps the various partners to fill information gaps and consider common strategies and enable the university to develop further entrepreneurship potential; the partnership could provide a dialogue area for developing a national science and technology strategy as part of the wider plans to develop the competitiveness of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- The faculty will continue to maximise the opportunities it has within its international partners, including funding support options (bilateral donors, Tempus programme, Erasmus scholarships).

Threats

- No national framework for science and technology, research and innovation;
- Because of severe public spending restrictions, limited government support to promote young staff as faculty members where innovation and potential lie.

Recommendations

- National government with rectors of universities and enterprise to dialogue and plan for the development of a national R&D policy and strategy and where the role and contribution of the research community to small enterprise innovation is a key feature (European Charter for Small Enterprises);
- The creation of a national enterprise innovation fund where universities and enterprise cooperate on research areas of public interest;
- Participation of the Faculty and wider university in wider European research networks and EU Framework Programme activities for further innovation, knowledge transfer and commercial opportunity.



BACKGROUND NOTE: REGIONAL AND TRANS-REGIONAL COOPERATION IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP LEARNING

Gavril Lasku, Albania, April 2006

BACKGROUND NOTE

The workshop questions:

- What is the value-added of regional and trans-regional cooperation on entrepreneurship learning?
- What areas of cooperation, in particular, could be most appropriately addressed in a trans-regional way?

Introduction

The background paper to this workshop has argued that the area of entrepreneurship learning is a new and evolving area. It has additionally been stressed that entrepreneurship learning is a growing policy interest area with the European Union now taking a more strategic position on the issue through a range of policy instruments – education, employment, enterprise and innovation – generated as a result of the Union's aim to become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. Other presentations in this workshop have demonstrated how various countries are developing entrepreneurship learning. However, what is clear from the background paper and the case studies is that most of the development in entrepreneurship learning is happening in an isolated way. What is more, many of the participants at the Advisory Forum meeting, including myself as Head the National SME Agency in Albania, who are now taking a professional or political interest in entrepreneurship learning do not have access to the state-of-the-art developments, benchmark references (policy or practice) or dialogue frameworks to support our fledgling entrepreneurship learning efforts.

Objective

The objective of this note and the presentation is to prompt discussion at the ETF Advisory Forum (7-9 June, 2006) as to the potential value of more structured cooperation between those ETF partner countries from transition and middle-income countries embarking on more strategic entrepreneurship learning and who would see value in working together on this new area of work.

Regional and trans-regional cooperation

Across ETF partner regions there are already a number of instruments that require or encourage cooperation between the various countries in designated geo-political zones. The Western Balkan region stands out in particular where regional cooperation is a political requirement for all countries with intentions of joining the European Union. The conflict in the region in the 1990s reinforced divisions – political, economic and social – that now need to be addressed particularly given the eventual free movements of workers, services and goods which underpin the open European Union economic and political space which the countries aspire to join.

Additionally, more cooperation is now envisaged through the EU's neighbourhood policy, particularly between those countries that border with the EU (to the south) and its candidate countries (to the east).

Multi-country cooperation on entrepreneurship learning is a new phenomenon although the countries of the Western Balkans and Moldova have taken first steps in this direction in the framework of the European Charter for Small Enterprises. There is additionally a broader cooperation framework in the southern Mediterranean region which provides a potential mechanism for structured cooperation in entrepreneurship learning.

The ideas shared through this paper, and the presentation to the meeting, borrow particularly on the experience from the Western Balkan cooperation framework but by way of example only. The intention is to generate further ideas and options involving both the Western Balkan group and other ETF partner regions. As 'opportunity' is the sound-bite of the entrepreneurship learning workshop, I believe there is good opportunity to be had by more structured cooperation between countries keen on further

developing our entrepreneurship potential. But there is still a need for more significant development and this will take time.

My task at this workshop is to share ideas as to how ETF partner countries could synergise opportunities and join forces to mobilise, use and share great ideas for entrepreneurship learning development.

Policy learning and policy benchmarking

We already know that entrepreneurship learning is a political priority in the European Union and that national policies and practice are evolving in that direction. Within the partner countries we have a 'mixed bag' of policy experience it is but generally very much under-developed. Would we benefit from a regular exchange of information on policy performance in this area and by being able to draw on the policy experience from other countries further ahead in policy making and implementation process? If so, we have the option of working bilaterally or even multilaterally. Given the increasing policy attention to the area of entrepreneurship learning by the European Union, my first question is could our cooperation in this area be supported by the European Union (financially and technically) and interface with developments in the 25 Member States themselves?

In this regard, the following issues could be considered:

- *Peer reviews* and joint research projects in the region/trans-region as a first step to developing a database on entrepreneurship learning and to kick-start networking activities;
- Agreement on entrepreneurship learning *indicators* to determine progress on entrepreneurship learning developments (borrow on existing EU/OECD indicators established for the Western Balkan region) including comparative analyses in the region/trans-region and benchmarking;
- Establish task-oriented *working groups* to develop work in specific areas of common interest to partner countries (e.g. early school curriculum for entrepreneurship learning, best practice in career guidance for self-employment).

Information and analysis

To support the policy cooperation process, a regional or trans-regional entrepreneurship learning observatory could be considered which would collate and manage a resource of best policy and practice instruments in entrepreneurship learning. This could link to a resource centre or information point in each partner country interested in participating.

The European Commission's paper 'Education for entrepreneurship' stresses the importance for exchange and dissemination of good practice in entrepreneurship learning although it is not clear as to how this recommendation is being followed up. Additionally, the development of international networks and a coordinated and global effort on entrepreneurship are listed as future guidelines in the EU's 'Agenda for Entrepreneurship'. The question for the Advisory Forum workshop is should we similarly be considering an information resource to assist with better policy and practice on entrepreneurship learning in our own countries? Could efficiencies be created through more coordinated and structured information?

Possible areas for information exchange:

- Inform and share entrepreneurship learning policy, standards;
- Register of service providers, institutions;
- Research and general information, newsletters;
- Education and training modules;
- Teacher materials and assessment tools;

- Donor information/interest support function;
- Development of young entrepreneur virtual networks.

People to people regional and trans-regional networking

The Advisory Forum represents one event where representatives from diverse geo-political regions come together for common exchange on education and training policy for the various regions. In order to generate greater understanding and cooperation on policy and practice, however, the question is could regular and focused networking arrangements be established in the area of entrepreneurship learning?

Conferences, meetings and specific workshops could be considered to develop expertise networks and research capacity in an area where research and information is very under-developed. Cooperation mechanisms could build on existing structures and networks e.g. Euro-Info Centres, EURES.

Conclusion and recommendations

Many of the partner countries represented at the Advisory Forum meeting are facing new challenges in the development of more market-responsive education and training systems. With more and more political and economic emphasis being given to entrepreneurship learning in developed countries it is now becoming the new education imperative. That is likely to be the case in our countries if we are to continue the reforms towards more open and competitive economies.

In this workshop we have learnt that entrepreneurship learning is an evolving field. We have heard that the concept of entrepreneurship learning is taking on new meaning, much more than business development and very much wider than university/MBA provision where our countries are perhaps most developed. The new paradigm is one of lifelong entrepreneurship learning which involves a much wider set of policy partners and target groups.

We have also learnt that our colleagues in the European Union are now engaging in the same debate as that our countries are now beginning to address: 'what to do', 'how to do', 'when to do', 'who should do'?

But for lesser-developed economies we are disadvantaged in that we are generally on the fringe of developments, slower to take initiatives and confined to 'looking on' as other developed nations set the pace. Given that we have a more or less level playing field with our EU partners, we have an opportunity here to be more proactive in lifelong entrepreneurship learning developments both within our own countries and together in cooperation. My recommendation to the workshop is that we propose to develop more structured cooperation across the ETF partner regions on entrepreneurship learning. I have made some suggestions.

We have a lot to learn. We would learn better together.