



Infusing European education with an entrepreneurial spirit

University students in China were given 1,000 RMB (\$146, €112) each and told to turn their ideas into reality: 'go into the streets, market the products and build something.' A year later, most of them had something to show for their efforts.

As soon as they left school, they were in business. "We also see this culture of entrepreneurship in places like India and the US, but we don't see it in Europe. This has to change," says **Martin Schuurmans**, chairman of the governing board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). "I do not believe entrepreneurship is in the genes - I believe we can do a lot to build young people into entrepreneurs."

Schuurmans feels "we (should) use education to build a culture of entrepreneurship." This is not about a business school developing another entrepreneurship class. It is about building entrepreneurship into engineering and technology and the arts and learning by doing, he told INSEAD Knowledge on the sidelines of the 7th European Business Summit recently.

Drive for relevance in universities

"A thousand years ago, Europe had the best universities producing the greatest scholars. In the US, the best universities began only two hundred years ago yet they are relevant today and we are not. How can we do what they are doing so well?" argues **Maria Olaska**, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Poland.

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What we expect from graduates of universities today is very different from what we expected from them in the past, she says. Today we want them to be good in their disciplines and be innovative and creative, start companies, have the ability to take risks and back up decisions. This creates incredible challenges for universities.

She admits it is not easy to change the mindset of university faculty and to involve them in innovative activities. To enable that process, there should perhaps be more sabbaticals and exchanges among universities, as well as between universities and businesses. A closer competitive university system, the mobility of teachers and more support for academic staff may help to bring about the change that is needed.

She also sees a fundamental problem between businesses and universities. "When you ask companies when they would like something to be ready, they say 'yesterday'. When you ask universities the same thing, they say 'in two years' time'. There is a fundamental clash of expectations and we need to bring those two cultures together."

Rewards and visibility

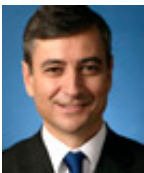
Do we reward entrepreneurship in Europe and does

it have enough visibility? asks Schuurmans. “We see this happening in other parts of the world but not in Europe. These are some of the things that we can do to encourage an entrepreneurial culture. EU is picking it up but there is still much to be done.”

Schuurmans notes that in a recently-published list of the top 200 most influential people in Holland, all were elderly, there were no entrepreneurs and none of them was active in Europe. “Awards in entrepreneurship are necessary. We are not recognising entrepreneurship sufficiently,” he argues.

But how compatible is this with the European culture of greater equality?

Jean-Philippe Courtois, president of Microsoft International, says there is a fit and a need. At Microsoft, they have an award called the Imagine Cup which rewards students for the most innovative software development that can make a difference in the world.



“You cannot imagine the passion at every level as they go from institution to country to the global level. The pride is just immense. When I meet them two or three years after they win the Cup, they proudly tell me that they’ve got a business going and that they are doing this and that. We need more motivation and recognition like that.”

Transforming people and companies during the crisis

The crisis has undoubtedly affected investment in training and people. According to **Paul Depuydt**, CEO of Alcatel-Lucent Bell, “the last thing you want to do, is to let go the competences that you have during the crisis.” Rather, there is a need to transform the people and the company in the new economy.



To achieve this there is a need to keep on reskilling, to have the ability to integrate between businesses and technologies, and to encourage creativity.

In order to stimulate entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity, Alcatel-Lucent has an innovation boot

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camp that lasts three months. It is an opportunity for staff to connect with the team and to leverage skills. The employees come with an idea and develop that idea. The process is completely open and not prescriptive; to date they have taken up two internal ventures, which came out of the boot camp.

“If we don’t do this, a venture capitalist might, and we lose people,” he says. “This is one of the ways we get people buying into the transformation and contributing to it.”

Traditionally, most companies focus on retaining and attracting employees. In the last three or four years, Alcatel-Lucent has been taking an approach whereby staff reflect on their role and future in the company. “We help them to find their strengths and weaknesses, and get them additional work experience to enrich themselves and the company,” says Depuydt. “We also invite people to step into the processes themselves and they tell us they’d like a review or a sounding board on where they stand.”

Sometimes the company loses some employees because they get a valid reflection of their role and their future. On the other hand, it can enrich the people who stay, encouraging them to find their role in the company.

“Those are the things that have guided our people and the company through the transformation,” Depuydt says.

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