



INTEGRATING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND WORK EXPERIENCE INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

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WARM GREETINGS FROM WEXHE!

The WEXHE Project consortium greets the long-awaited spring of 2019 with brand new issue of the WEXHE Journal, dedicated to showcasing the project's outputs and further exploring the work-based learning (WBL) landscape in Europe. Since our last publication in July, great progress has been made on the development of the replicable models for implementing entrepreneurship, traineeship and work placement programmes by universities and businesses – the packages will be out soon. Stay Tuned! In the meantime, this issue highlights the best case examples from each category, that we have discovered in the WEXHE project regions. We invite you to dive into a collection of the stories that illustrate successful WBL practices through entrepreneurship initiatives, traineeships and internship programmes from across Europe.

In the first section, you can get acquainted with the initiatives that foster the development of entrepreneurial skills of the students in various learning environment. Read how Ljubljana's University Incubator aims to transform the innovative

business ideas into a viable start-up. or how Venture Club Münster, initiated and run by students, promotes entrepreneurship in the region. Learn how "Discovery Panel" at the Munich School of Business switches the focus of entrepreneurship training from sole "idea generation" to a more practical "idea implementation". Finally, do not miss the Cyprus Entrepreneurship Competition – an inspiring case in which "everyone is a winner in so many ways".

Our selection of the cases that focus on work placements will transport you to sunny Spain, where University Carlos III of Madrid serves as an example of the university that successfully integrates "curricular practices in companies". This section will also take you on a journey around Poland where "Orange is the New Smart" - the Polish Telecom Giant Orange's work with Kozminski University to better prepare students for the labour market. Explore how the University of Warwick introduces practice-learning training in social work in their Master Programme.

In the traineeship section, learn how enthusiastic graduates face the re-

al-life challenges and support the Municipality of Hollands Kroon in undertaking change whilst developing their professional skills. Additionally, take a peek at how a multiple award winning company Cosylab, d. d., Control System Laboratory provides motivated students with the opportunity to put their theoretical knowledge in to practice.

Last but not least, we host an initiative of the SAPS project funded by the Erasmus+ Support for Policy Reform programme, which aims to improve the perception of SMEs of the benefits of engaging apprentices from Professional Higher Education (PHE) Institutions and Technocampus in Mataro, Spain, that promotes innovative teaching and attempts to bridge the gap between businesses and students.

We trust that this edition of the journal will keep you updated about the current state-of-the-art of the WBL practices in Europe and motivate you to promote good practices in your region.

WE WISH YOU A PLEASANT READING!

OUR GOAL:

The goal WEXHE aims to achieve is two-fold: to help bridge the gap between practical and theoretical learning in HE, and skills set of graduates and the skills they require in their early careers.

The WEXHE project aims to create an impact on a wide range of different stakeholder groups in the educational and business ecosystem:



Higher Education Leadership & Staff:

HEIs will benefit from better aligning their curriculum to the demands of practice. HEI lecturers will benefit from getting access to validated work experience models, which can be adapted to their HEI environments.



Students & Graduates:

Students will benefit from greater access to high quality work experience, and graduates to high quality internships that will support their careers.



Industry:

Enterprises will gain guidance and quality tools designed to support their role in providing work experience for students and graduates.



Policy Makers:

Policymakers will benefit from a better understanding how work experience can contribute to the modernisation of HE, and its contribution to employment, economic growth and social goals.

THE YUZZ-EXPLORER

MAXIMISING THE REGIONAL ENTREPRENEURIAL POTENTIAL



The YUZZ-Explorer is a 5-month start-up accelerator program that targets novice entrepreneurs who are in the age bracket of 18-31. The program is initiated by the University of Cantabria, the Government of region of Cantabria (Spain), Banco Santander, and other three institutions in the region. Currently there are 52 YUZZ-explorer centers throughout the Spanish geography. In each of these centers collaborations are established

between a university in the area, Banco Santander and Santander International Entrepreneurship Centre (CISE). The purpose is to spur job creation and regional growth through training and personalized coaching of youngsters with a promising idea. The trainings are mainly provided by CISE which is a centre jointly founded by the University of Cantabria, the Government of Region of Cantabria, and Banco Santander.

How is the program structured?

The YUZZ-Explorer is designed as a 5-month program targeting novice entrepreneurs. The core activities of the program are structured along three interrelated phases: Concept or Ideation, Business, and Growth.

The Concept or Ideation phase brings together trainees and their business ideas with experienced entrepreneurs who will act as their mentors. The purpose is to help trainees conceptualize and solidify their business ideas. Once the idea is

formulated in clear and concrete terms, the trainees transition to phase two, Business. During this phase, the trainees along with their mentors explore the marketability of their business idea. At the same time, attempt is made to build a team capable of translating the idea into practice. Finally, once the market viability of the idea is determined, the trainees go to phase three, Growth. During this phase some practical aspects of implementing the business idea are considered. It is important to note that the output of each phase is summarized into a detailed business plan, which will be presented in front of a jury by the end of the program.

Online and face-to-face training opportunities

The program provides a wide range of learning opportunities that help participants develop their innovative ideas into a working business model. Specifically, the program provides a blend of theoretical and practical trainings in the form of tutorials, expert teachings, and roadshows. Both the expert trainings and tutorials are provided by volunteer experts who work in one of the partner organizations of the program, such as the employees of Banco Santander. While up to 10 sessions of expert trainings are organized for each cohort, there are five compulsory tutorial sessions.

The roadshows on the other hand are delivered by highly experienced entrepreneurship professionals on different topics of practical relevance such as Design Thinking, Lean Start-up, and Business Model Canvas. The Roadshow training – although not compulsory for the completion of the program – entitles attendants to receive an additional certificate labelled

“Roadshow Training Certificate”.

Additionally, the trainees are given the opportunity to complement their face-to-face training sessions with an online course that is exclusively designed for YUZZ-Explorer program. The online program contains 21 modules on a wide variety of topics relevant for entrepreneurial competitiveness. Successful completion of the online courses once again entitles participants for an additional certificate under the heading of “UNIMOOC”. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the program also facilitates peer learning amongst YUZZ-Explorer program participants and the wider YUZZ-Explorer professional network that contains 200 partner organizations.

Achievements so far

Since its inception in 2009, the idea of YUZZ-Explorer has quickly spread across the country, with 52 YUZZ centres already established in Spain. Perhaps the most remarkable achievement of the program is that it has resulted in the creation of close to 100 companies in a single year with an average survival rate that is greater than three years. In recognition of its success, the European Network for Local Inclusion and Social Action (ELISAN) awarded the program in the category of “Best European Practices Supporting Youth Self-Employment” in 2016. ■

Image Credit: rawpixel.com via www.pexels.com.

This article is based on a case study originally written by the Chamber of Commerce of Spain, developed as part of the WEXHE Project. For more information on WEXHE, please visit www.wexhe.eu.

LJUBLJANA'S UNIVERSITY INCUBATOR

BOOSTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

(LUI) is an initiative of the University of Ljubljana (UL) that aims to transform the innovative business idea of staff and students into a viable start-up. Although LUI was more focused on merely creating entrepreneurial awareness and spirit amongst the academic community through workshops and other entrepreneurial events, it quickly became apparent that it is critical to marry the awareness creation events with an actual entrepreneurial support. As such, LUI expanded its scope to include activities of practical relevance such as matching of entrepreneurs with prospective partners, personal coaching, and targeted trainings. LUI currently stands as one of the most successful accelerator programs not only in Slovenia but also in Central Europe.



Personalised approach to incubation of ideas

Although an initiative of UL, LUI does not get any funding from the university, as it relies on competitive public tender and the fees it charges for its trainings and lectures. LUI is run by a team of five dedicated employees who serve in different roles. However, depending on the need, external employees are contracted.

LUI provides a 3-month incubation program for staff and students that have a promising business idea. The support includes a dedicated mentorship, workshops, lectures, courses, and networking & collaboration opportunities. Under each cycle, a total of 14 start-ups are selected, with the “quality” of their business project being the sole criterion. Once ad-

mitted into the program, groups get continuous guidance and mentorship for up to 50 hours. At the same time, they could participate in the events organized by the centre.

Support is provided in two phases. The first phase focuses on business model development i.e. identifying target customers, designing the appropriate service/product strategy, and market entry strategies. The second phase focuses on actually setting up the company, as such networking and building partnership along with a host of other free or subsidized services are provided to the start-ups.

What is unique about LUI is that attempt is made to personalize the support to the specific needs of the start-up, rather than following a generic approach.

Results so far

The result achieved by LUI has been nothing short of remarkable. In order to have a good understanding of the actual impact of the centre, it is important to classify the results into two groups: intangible and tangible.

On the first category LUI is undoubtedly contributing to the creation of an entrepreneurial culture in Slovenia. This intangible impact is not only limited to staff and students who directly participate in the incubation program and other events but also to companies (over 150), investors, and regional authorities that collaborate with LUI. The incubator has also been successful in quantitative sense. Specifically, LUI has supported 139 start-ups, which managed to raise a capital of around €20 million*. The start-ups have contributed to the creation of over 400 jobs in the region. Lastly, LUI was also a runner up for Central

European Start-up Award in 2016 in the category of best accelerator or incubator program.

Going Forward

Going forward, LUI aspires to become a world-class incubator with a global reach. As it is espoused in its strategy document from 2017-2022, internationalization and networking are the key components of LUI's long-term vision. ■

Image credit: Ljubljana University Incubator.

This article is based on a case study originally written by Miha Zimšek (University of Ljubljana), developed as part of the WEXHE Project.

DISCOVERY PANEL

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION



It is common to see entrepreneurship learning activities focus on the ‘idea-generation’ aspect of a business start-up. However, equally important for entrepreneurial success is the ability to transform business ideas in to commercially viable products

or services. Through an innovative entrepreneurship module entitled “Discovery Panel”, (which started in the Münster University of Applied Sciences (MUAS) and is now implemented in the Munich School of Business) students are connected with entrepreneurs and their already existing business ideas so that they can assist them in evaluating its commercial viability. Pioneered by Prof. Todd Davey, this approach changes the focus from idea generation to allow students to understand the practicalities of transforming an idea in to a viable business proposition.

How does it work?

The purpose of Discovery Panel is to help students understand the entire innovation process while enhancing their transversal skills such as team work, communication, inter-cultural understanding and leadership. To this end, the program brings on-board researchers, entrepreneurs and/or NGO’s (stakeholders) who have a business idea but might not necessarily have the resources to verify its commercial viability and further develop it.

The first task students perform in the Discovery Panel is to thoroughly understand the specific idea

and needs of the stakeholders. Here, it should be noted that the ideas presented might have different level of development. Following that, students undertake a preliminary investigation of the proposed product/service and its target market to acquire a basic understanding of the factors at play. Then, guided by the findings of the preliminary investigation and the feedback of both the stakeholders and Prof. Davey, the students carry out a more focused and in-depth study. The process concludes with a presentation, where students give a concrete recommendation to the stakeholders including a detailed product/service, price, place and promotion strategies.

The module is offered as a semester course where there is a 1.5-hour weekly meeting for 3 months. What is noteworthy about the arrangement of the course is that the total time is evenly divided between theory – lecture and explanations, and practice – time spent on solving the stakeholders’ problem.

Drivers and barriers

The main driver behind Discovery Panel is that it creates a win-win situation for the external stakeholders and students. The participating stakeholders benefit from the research output and the concrete recommendations provided, while the students benefit from the practical insight that is gained by working on real cases. On the other hand, the difficulty of finding a lecturer with the relevant practical experience and the resources required to bring external stakeholders on-board were mentioned by Prof. Davey as the main barriers. Yet, despite some of the challenges, the course has been successful, particularly in terms of developing student soft and hard

skills. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the module has recently been introduced in Munich Business School. ■

Image credit: Münster University of Applied Sciences.

This article is based on a case study originally written by Andre Perusso (Münster University of Applied Sciences) developed as part of the WEXHE project For more information on WEXHE, please visit www.wexhe.eu



Venture Club Münster (VCM) is a non-profit association devoted to the topic of entrepreneurship. What makes it unique is the fact that it is not only initiated but also run by a group of dedicated students who believed Münster universities alone were not sufficiently addressing the topic of entrepreneurship. The aim of the club is, therefore, to activate the entrepreneurial potential of students in the region by organizing a wide variety of events that bring together students, experts, accomplished entrepreneurs, and other relevant stakeholders.

How does the VCM promote entrepreneurship?

VCM promotes the topic of entrepreneurship by organizing a number of events out of which two take place on a more regular basis: ‘Let’s Talk’ speeches and Workshops.

Let’s Talk speeches are organized as a 2-3 hours’ event, where entrepreneurs from corporations or start-ups share their stories with an audience. At the end of the speech, the audience will be given a chance to ask questions. The events are normally open to anyone interested in participate. The objective is to inspire participants to

THE VENTURE CLUB MÜNSTER

INSTILLING ENTREPRENEURIAL VALUES FOR STUDENTS

embark on an entrepreneurial journey.

The workshops, on the other hand, address more specific aspects of entrepreneurship. Moreover, the number of participants is limited to a maximum of 30 people. The workshops are normally divided into two parts: mentoring and action. The mentoring phase familiarizes participants with the technical aspects of the topic of interest, while the action phase gives them the chance to put what they have learned into practice.

In order to facilitate the smooth running of its events, VCM follows a standard procedure consisting of four steps. The first step is defining the general theme of its events. Here an attempt is made to develop a theme that is not only interesting but also broad enough to attract a diverse audience. Secondly, a suitable expert/entrepreneur is invited to speak at the event. Once the speaker has expressed his/her willingness and availability, the VCM teamwork on the practical details of the event, such as scheduling, advertising, sponsorships, and catering arrangement. Lastly, at the end of every event, feedback is collected from both the speakers and participants, and is used as an input to consistently improve the quality of subsequent events.

How is the VCM organized?

The VCM does not receive any financial support, neither from the universities in Münster or from the government. Rather, it is funded by membership fees from its student-members and sponsorship from external organizations. Currently, VCM has around 150 active members who collaboratively work to handle the various tasks associated with hosting an event (from advertisement to arranging food and drinks). Once a student joins the VCM as a member, he is allocated to one of its six departments (HR, IT, Finance and Law, Sponsors & Relations, Marketing and Operations). Here, an attempt is made to find a good fit between the student’s field of study and the department they work for.



Positive impact for the region and for VCM team members

Although difficult to quantify, it is fair to say that the activities of VCM are positively contributing to increasing entrepreneurship awareness in the Mün-

ster region. Additionally, participants and other stakeholders not only get inspired to start their own business but also acquaint themselves with relevant principles of entrepreneurship. Also, the entrepreneurs giving speeches as well as the corporate sponsors use the events as a platform to promote their businesses.

Last but not least, according to VCM’s CEO Friedrich Grimm, perhaps the main beneficiaries of this initiative are VCM members themselves, who get a chance to put the knowledge they acquired from their field of studies into practice as well as gain a range of relevant competences associated with organizing large events (teamwork, raising funds, and conforming to legal requirements). As Mr Grimm put, by being part of the VCM one is also an entrepreneur. ■

Image credit: Venture Club Münster.

This article is based on a case study originally written by Andre Perusso (Münster University of Applied Sciences), developed as part of the WEXHE Project. For more information on WEXHE, please visit www.wexhe.eu



CYPRUS ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETITION

WHEN EVERYONE IS
A WINNER IN SO MANY WAYS

Cyprus Entrepreneurship Competition (CyEC) is an annual contest that has been taking place since 2003. The competition aims at cultivating entrepreneurial attitude among young scientists, startup founders and high tech entrepreneurs in Cyprus. It challenges the participants to transform their ideas into real business opportunities and later lead forward-thinking companies. CyEC is sponsored by the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry of Cyprus and Powerstar, a British engineering market leader in smart energy solutions. The competition is held on the premises of the University of Cyprus.

Competing vs. Learning

Though the event is manifested as a business plan competition, the overall idea is rooted in an educational initiative. The CyEC participants work under careful guidance of the assigned mentors, who are internationally accomplished entrepreneurs, to transform innovative ideas into economically viable business projects. As the participants go along various stages of the event, they learn to apply entrepreneurial thinking into practice and sharpen such soft skills as being an effective presenter, working in a team, integrated problem-solving, etc. What is more, the business plans, developed and polished during the competition, get exposed to potential investors who may find them worthy of additional financial support.

Going in line with traditional standards of a competition, the first three CyEC finalists are given monetary rewards.

What's on agenda?

First, those wishing to participate have to submit a 3-page executive summary of their project in which they describe the essence of their business idea, its advantages, its target audience and the composition of a team. The CyEC Jury panel, consisting of academics and entrepreneurs, evaluates the summaries against the metrics in innovation and feasibility of the idea.

When successfully passing the evaluation stage, participants are invited to a Kickoff Weekend, which is an obligatory prerequisite for taking part in the actual competition. All in all, a Kickoff Weekend is a three-day action learning workshop that exposes participants to the most relevant entrepreneurship techniques and principles, such as Lean Startup, Effectuation, Business Model Canvas, etc.

The competition itself includes several phases, i.e. teaming, idea generation, prototyping, commercialisation and marketing. Participants are expected to develop a presentation with their business proposition and submit it to the CyEC Jury that considers proposed high tech ventures and selects the finalists. The finalists, in their turn, have to defend their business proposals in front of the CyEC Jury. The competition is rounded up with the Award Ceremony at which the three winners are announced.

What has CyEC given to Cyprus?

To Cyprus, CyEC was an opportune event to spot talented minds in the high tech domain, as well as to increase the awareness of business-oriented entrepreneurship in the country. Since the competition invited experts and entrepreneurs from various fields, it allowed local talents to explore different business sectors and create/co-create at the confluence of cognate or semi-cognate areas. Alas! In 2016 CyEC seized its existence, but left behind a significant legacy to be remembered. . ■

This article is based on a case study originally written by Novatex Solutions Ltd, developed as a part of the WEXHE Project.



UNIVERSITY CARLOS III OF MADRID

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY

Although young, University Carlos III of Madrid is quickly asserting itself as one of the most successful universities in Spain. Among other things, the university is well known for a solid graduate employability, which is greatly facilitated by its educational programs that integrate “curricular practices in companies”. STEP is one of such programs at the university that aims to boost graduate employability by providing a mix of classroom and work based learning opportunities for recent graduates. The program specifically targets the generic competency of graduates, i.e. interpersonal relations and teamwork that are so essential to become successful in the world of work. The program is undertaken in collaboration with national and international organizations in the region who are willing to host and systematically follow up the professional developments of attendees of the program. The program is designed as an open program to every graduate of the university, for all bachelor and master’s graduates regardless of their fields of study, because the university believes that the professional competencies targeted are universally applicable to all groups.

The structure of the program

STEP is designed as a 36 credits specialist degree program with two mutually reinforcing components: Academic training and company placements.

The academic trainings are conducted face to face with a frequency of around one mandatory session in a month. University Carlos III of Madrid takes full responsibility of the academic course offerings. Four blocks are designed as part of the academic training sessions: development of communication skills and

interpersonal relationship, leadership, negotiation, and teamwork. The idea is that these four transversal competences would put graduates in a better position to enact their field specific knowledge and skills and hence, will lead to greater specialization.

The academic trainings are provided in conjunction with an internship in a company that lasts for a maximum of one year. The internships are also structured in a way that maximize the professional development of participants. As such, the host company is expected to provide a plan outlining the learning outcomes and support mechanisms. The plan needs to be approved by University Carlos III of Madrid before the enrollment of the graduate in the program. Additionally, the company is expected to assign a tutor that guide and follow up the graduate.

At the end of the internship program participants are expected to produce a report detailing the knowledge, skill, and experience that they have acquired during their stay at the company. This personal reflection of participants is complemented by the evaluation report provided by the tutor from the host company.

Growing interest among graduates

The positive feedback of the participating companies who indicate the program is responsive to their specific needs is one of the encouraging results of STEP. The program is also growing in popularity amongst graduates of the university with over 140 participants already enrolled into the current cycle of the program. To put this in context, the first cycle had only attracted interest from 14 participants. ■



More information about the program in: <http://portal.uc3m.es/portal/page/portal/sopp/programaSTEP>

Image credit: University Carlos III of Madrid

This article is based on a case study originally prepared by Spanish Chamber of Commerce developed as part of the WEXHE Project. For more information on WEXHE, please visit www.wexhe.eu

WARWICK STUDENTS IN ACTION

INTEGRATING PRACTICE LEARNING PLACEMENT INTO A MASTER PROGRAM



Once it comes to social work, the importance of practical experience is undeniable. In this regard, the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Warwick offers practice learning placements in their Master program in Social Work that require students to delve deeper into the intricacies of their future profession by being deployed to the real work setting. The placements are designed to acquire the competences in critical

thinking, leadership, teamwork, communication and decision-making.

Placement overview

There are two practice learning placements incorporated in a full-time 24-month Master program. Placements are organized within the first and the second years of the program and last 70 and 100 days respectively. Each placement is preceded with sessions on professional skills development which brief students on placement practicalities and the skills required for their successful completion.

To identify the most appropriate organizations for the placement, in the 1st year, students compile a practice placement profile that is reviewed by a Personal Tutor and then processed by a Practice Placement Coordinator. For the 2nd year, the same profile is complemented with yet another one which presents students' reflections on their previous placement experience as well as their learning needs for the final placement. Both profiles serve as application forms and viewed by hosting agencies, which come

from private, independent and voluntary sectors, as well as Warwickshire County Council, Coventry City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

Raison d'être

The need in such experience for students is drawn from a growing concern raised by potential employers and their demand in 'work-ready' graduates. To shape such workforce, practice learning placements allow students to contextualize theories in practice, develop professional skills and build on employability capabilities. As explained by one of the program graduates, practice learning placement 'makes learning real for [students]', what eventually benefits employers and their potential employees. Additionally, the circulation of students at various placement hosting agencies broadens professional networks of both parties.

Acquired competences

To ensure the continuity of the acquired competences at different stages of learning and practice, Professional Capabilities Framework, developed for continuing professional development, was taken as a baseline. In regard of the practical learning placement, there are 3 layers of competences to be demonstrated by students: prior the first placement (readiness for practice), after the first placement, and at the end of the program (after the second placement).

Readiness for practice is indicated by numerous categories, e.g. possessing basic communication skills, an ability to establish rapport with users, an ability to work in a team, willingness to learn

from feedback and supervision, alongside with basic social work values, knowledge and skills. After their first placement experience, students are expected to demonstrate an ability to solve issues of a small-scale complexity. Eventually, graduates should be able to apply their knowledge and skills when working with a wider range of users, to address more complex situations, as well as to work autonomously and look for appropriate support, if needed. ■

Image credit: University of Warwick.

This article is based on a case study originally written by Scott Revers (University of Warwick), developed as a part of the WEXHE Project.



ORANGE IS THE NEW SMART

A POSTGRAD STUDY
PROGRAMME
INITIATED BY A POLISH
TELECOM GIANT WITH
KOZMINSKI UNIVERSITY

Orange Polska, a leading telecommunication company in Poland, recognizes that being a fledgling in a professional field can hinder the employment opportunities of fresh or soon-to-be graduates. To help them out, as well as to get some fresh business solutions, in 2013 the company together with Kozminski University launched a postgraduate program in Internet Marketing with strong practical orientation. More recently, the partnership has found its continuation in the traineeship opportunities offered by Orange.

What is it about?

Orange has been actively engaged into educational initiatives at different levels, starting from elementary schools and reaching higher education institutions. One of such initiatives became the cooperation with Kozminski University. Together they developed a program that carries unique pragmatic features. The program includes 200+ hours of practical classes held in computer labs and conducted by well-renowned lecturers with outstanding professional credentials in e-marketing and e-business. The invited speakers come from such companies like GoldenSubmarine, VML Poland, Ideo, Freshmail, Socjomania, T-Mobile, IQS, Deloitte Digital, FutureMind, PBI, etc. Due to the program launch, students are given access to a wider range of databases, e.g. EBSCO, Emerald and ProQuest. The program also provides some flexibility in learning by allowing students to take selective modules individually.

To encourage academic and professional growth, Orange awarded scholarships to the high-achieving students in the program. Today, to broaden their professional knowledge and skills for entering the labour-market the company provides them with another attractive opportunity, paid internships. By switching into the “try-before-you-buy” mode, students gain invaluable practical experience, thus increasing their competitiveness on the labour market.



What are the gains?

The benefits of Orange involvement into the educational process at Kozminski University are manifold. Students develop numerous competences that allow them to manage online start-ups, conduct e-marketing activities, analyze consumers' behavior, plan and handle finances, as well as stimulate and commercialize innovation in the online environment. Eventually, program graduates set up their own business in e-commerce or hold executive positions in the sphere of electronic distribution.

The gains for Orange itself spread in several directions as well. Close interaction with students and scientists at the university has brought Orange a number of new business solutions in the sphere of direct marketing. Company employees, engaged into lecturing, are reported to have increased their interpersonal competences. Apart from that, Orange participation in such initiatives helps the company build a positive brand image in the country among its immediate consumers as an innovative firm with entrepreneurial spirit.

Though the program is no longer a collaborative effort of Orange and Kozminski University, it has not seized its existence, and continues to function, yet with other business partners. Orange, in their turn, demonstrate their commitment to the original cause by hosting talented students as their interns. ■

Image credit p.26: Orange TM, open access via Wikimedia Commons.

Image credit p.27: Leona Koźmińskiego w Warszawie, open access via Wikipedia.

This article is based on a case study originally written by Przemysław Ruchlicki (Polish Chamber of Commerce), developed as a part of the WEXHE Project.

THE MUNICIPALITY OF HOLLANDS KROON

TRAINEESHIP FOR DARING AND ENTHUSIASTIC GRADUATES

The call for change was waiting around the corner in the province of North-Holland when four of its municipalities merged into one in 2012. The newly established municipality Hollands Kroon (HK) completely innovated local government by decreasing bureaucracy, promoting self-managing teams, implementing flexible working hours, and stimulating its employees to have more contact with local citizens. However, to successfully implement these changes in an organization with employees that are used to work in a traditional way, Hollands Kroon needed a fresh outlook, creative approaches and enthusiasm. Who has more of the above than the talented graduates, who are eager to face the real-life challenges? With this in mind, Hollands Kroon initiated a two-year traineeship programme open to recent graduates from all disciplinary areas, who would like to support the municipality in undertaking change whilst developing their professional skills.

The five fundamental values of HK

Hollands Kroon is responsible for 48.000 people in the third largest region in the Netherlands, and employs around 350 people that are working in

30-40 self-managing teams. As the municipality of Hollands Kroon has undergone many changes in recent years, the needs of the organization changed over time as well. The content of the HK traineeship has been adjusted to what the organization Hollands Kroon needed. The first generation of trainees were 'daring communicators', the second 'service providers' followed by a generation of 'connectors'. To make sure HK selects the right applicant, Hollands Kroon developed an unusual selection procedure. In order to find the daring communicators, for example, the first selection round was based on the format of the talent show 'The Voice'. Applicants had to pitch and convince the executive board to turn their chair. In the search for service providers, however, HK hired actors who played help requesting passers-by at unexpected moments during the selection procedure. Although the set-up of each election procedure varied, the final round always consisted of a conversation between the executive board and the last remaining applicants.

Daring communicators, service providers and connectors



The HK traineeship programme is team and project-based in nature. In total, four to six trainees are selected, who together, form a self-managing team. Next to three individual assignments, trainees also execute four to six team assignments during the programme. The coordinator presents available assignments at the start of the traineeship. The trainee-team distributes these assignments among each other and formulates an action plan in which the trainees outline what they are going to do, what their goals are, and how they are going to share their activities. The executive board has to approve this plan. After approval, the trainees can work on their group and individual assignments. However, over the course of the traineeship trainees are expected to come up with new assignments themselves – identify the problem, see the potential and generate the solution. The progress of the trainee is supervised by the programme coordinator during each assignment. Additionally, trainees are supervised by stake holding HK employees and provided with personal mentorship for further advice.

Former trainees, for example, worked on the tran-

sition to self-managing teams, innovating the planning and control cycle and exploring the future of information technology and its security in HK. The current trainees are already working on process optimization in the municipality and have shifted their focus towards the extremal issues in the area – employability in the north of the North-Holland province.

Opportunities for non-stop learning

The traineeship at Holland Kroon distinguishes itself in various ways. First, it has a creative selection process and focusses on personality traits rather than on academic background. Second, HK trainees become the engines of organizational and cultural change within the organization. Third, operating in self-managing teams inspires independence and strengthens the leadership qualities of the trainees, while working on multiple projects in a multidisciplinary surrounding fosters the ability to think outside the box and therefore changes one's perspective. The experience also allows the recent graduates to develop transversal skills such as time management, teamwork, and multitasking.

The majority of the trainees who completed the traineeship stayed to work in Hollands Kroon as civil servants. Many have mentioned that the traineeship helped them to better understand their own strengths and weaknesses and perhaps more importantly has helped them to identify the path they want to follow in their future career. ■

Image credit: *Hollands Kroon Municipality*

This article is based on a case study originally written by Anna Silvius (University of Groningen) developed as part of the Erasmus + Knowledge Alliance Project "Integrating Entrepreneurship and Work Experience into Higher Education" (WEXHE).



COSYLAB

NURTURING YOUNG TALENT IN SLOVENIA

Headquartered in Slovenia, Cosylab, d. d., Control System Laboratory is a multiple award winning company best known for giving skilled and motivated students the opportunity to put their theoretical knowledge in to practice. Particularly, by offering

selected students a well-designed traineeship that includes working opportunity in the area of control system integration, and software and hardware development Cosylab attracts, and develops talent.



Work based learning at Cosylab

Cosylab provides students/graduates of physics, computer engineering and electrical engineering a series of work based learning (WBL) opportunities that build on each other: Cosy academy, project based learning, and part time/ full time employment.

The first phase in which students/ graduates get acquainted with Cosylab is through Cosy Academy, which is a training program that lasts for about 3 weeks. With a maximum of 12 tasks, the program is estimated to take 80 hours in total. Although candidates are organized into groups of 3-4, attention is also given to independent work. As such, candidates are expected to develop an individual plan that fits with their respective schedules. Each group is paired with a mentor who provides the necessary guidance. Phase 2 involves project based learning, where candidates work on one of the ongoing projects of Cosylab for about one month. Once again, candidates receive

ongoing guidance from their mentors and other team members, which is instrumental for their professional development. With the recommendation of their mentors, some of the candidates get an internship offer in one of the departments.

Two aspects stand out in the work based learning opportunity provided by Cosylab. The first is that there is guidance and feedback every step in the way, which clearly contributes to students' personal and professional development. Secondly, not only the students are given the opportunity to use their classroom knowledge into the practical works of the organization but also can use the data from the projects to complete their course work at the university, allowing a reciprocal pathway of learning between the organization and the university.

Impact of the Cosylab WBL model on student development

The most immediate beneficiaries of the program are students and the company itself. Students not only develop transversal competences such as teamwork, interpersonal communication, and leadership but also deepen their technical knowledge and skill. Moreover, they clearly boost their employability, with Cosylab being one of the main employers of the trainees.

In that, not only Cosylab is able to retain some of the best candidates but also benefits from a range fresh ideas candidates bring during their training and internship. ■

Image credit: Cosylab, d. d., Control System Laboratory

This article is based on a case study originally written by by Samo Pavlin and Miha Zimsek (University of Ljubljana), developed as part of the WEXHE Project. For more information on WEXHE, please visit www.wexhe.eu



APPRENTICESHIPS AT SMES

HOW TO WORK WITH PROFESSIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?

In this blog article we host Learntowork.eu, an initiative of the SAPS project funded by the Erasmus+ Support for Policy Reform programme, which aims to improve the perception of SMEs of the benefits of engaging apprentices from Professional Higher Education (PHE) Institutions; lower the barriers to cooperation between PHE Institutions and SMEs; and establish more regular and structured cooperation between the umbrella organizations for PHE in Europe (EURASHE members) and organizations representing SMEs.

Embracing the apprenticeship culture and starting an apprenticeship scheme in a company is not difficult. However, it might not be very intuitive for an SME who has never done it before, so below are a few hints.

Focus on the needs

When you think of apprenticeships, you probably think of a way to help students acquiring skills by practising their theoretical knowledge.



Identify potential partners

Potential partners are educational organizations that can provide apprentices that match the apprenticeship placements you open. Look at the list of knowledge and skill gaps: In which kind of educational organization are these knowledge and skills taught? Which education level and technical/scientific area? In which study programmes? It is important to look at the closer educational organizations and identify the ones that offer those programmes and could be potential partners. If you face difficulties to find educational organizations, you can contact their national regulatory body or association and they will help you. You can also browse the Learn2Work database of educational organizations to find potential partners (www.learntowork.eu).

Get in touch and negotiate

Select the most suitable partners and contact them. Keep in mind both the interlocutor and the momentum are important. Browse their website – if they have a dedicated department to deal with apprenticeships that will be your contact. If not, check if there is a department that seems to be dealing with communication and partnerships with the world of work. Another approach is to contact directly the Director/Coordinator of the study programme or the Lecturers of the subjects you're interested in. You can contact them any time, but the best is to do it at the end of a given school year, so they can consider your placements when planning the subsequent year. Ask for a meeting, introduce your company – it might be a good idea to invite them to visit your facilities – and present the knowledge and skill needs you have identified. Discuss openly any concerns you have and how to address them. During the negotiations, be firm regarding your needs, but also flexible and open-minded to new ideas, as sometimes a potential partner might have a different proposal of knowledge and skills to offer you, which you have not thought about yet, but that can truly benefit your company. ■

*Authored by: Dovile Sandaraite
image credit: The SAPS Project*



THE TECNOCAMPUS ECOSYSTEM

EDUCATION,
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND INNOVATION

When the textile industry of the city of Mataró, Spain started to decline during the 1990's, the city searched for a new socio-economic development strategy. Developed as a collaboration between key stakeholders, Tecnocampus was established as a hub of education, entrepreneurship and industry, growing to become a key element of a revitalising place-based approach to local challenges. Today, Tecnocampus offers three teaching schools, a business park, and an incubator centre situated on over 50,000 m² close to the city centre. The design of the campus reflects the goals of this joint project, allowing for easy access and interactions between the different roles and sections of the campus. Tecnocampus has flourished in pursuing its mission is to create an environment of learning, experimentation and growth for both innovative businesses and educators.

Innovative Teaching

Tecnocampus uses innovative teaching methods and a focus on entrepreneurship to create an ecosystem that fosters creativity based in open social and business relationships. Tecnocampus is dedicated to incorporating and expanding interactive learning techniques. The schools train academic staff to teach in engaging and innovative ways while utilizing new technologies. The end result is not only beneficial for student performance but also for the teaching staff, inspiring more creativity.

Tecnocampus also fosters the development of entrepreneurship by encouraging every degree programme to incorporate entrepreneurship

courses in their curricula. Students are encouraged to generate new ideas and to be imaginative. These entrepreneurial requirements help to keep the cycle of innovative design-thinking flowing.

Another pathway for the flourishing of innovation is the collaborative relationships established between different degree courses, which opens up opportunities to encourage interdisciplinary learning. An emphasis on collaboration is central to many of the entrepreneurship projects developed by students, working in interdisciplinary teams. Special events such as the Weekend Challenge, a hackathon where student teams compete to develop and present innovative solutions to real-world challenges, provide additional platforms for the emergence of creativity and the fostering collaborative learning.

Bridging the gap between businesses and students

Tecnocampus is a hub of burgeoning relationships: between students from different schools, between students and the opportunities to design and create, and, most importantly, between students and businesses. Important factors in the success of the Tecnocampus are the interactions and collaborations it promotes between students and businesses. For instance, the pre-incubator, allows students to set up and develop a business idea next to the incubator space, providing opportunities to see how real businesses develop and grow. The students of this program can often be mentored by the CEOs of different companies, which gives them hands-on experience in starting a business. Tecnocampus thus seeks to foster continuous relationships between the schools, businesses and the incubator centre, based

on an immersive ecosystem approach to learning, working and socializing. Students thus acquire competences that fuse classroom learning with industry experience, enhancing their job readiness.

Impact and moving forward

The creation of Tecnocampus has generated over 500 university-business agreements, the creation of 61 start-ups, and increased the number of daily users and community members within the business park, including both business workers and students. The education approach of Tecnocampus has been very successful, with students winning the acclaimed UPF Emprèn prize for student entrepreneurship in four of the past six years, for example. Tecnocampus has also contributed to a learning and employment cycle for many students, who later establish start-ups or take jobs in the business park that allow them to contribute their experience to new waves of students coming through the schools. Overall, there is much to be learned from Tecnocampus, particularly for small or medium-sized cities or regions that are interested in place-based innovation and development founded on education, employability and entrepreneurship. ■

This article originally appeared in www.uin.org blog section

Authored by: Nia Nesfield and Richard Woolley

Image credit: Technocampus

PROJECT PARTNERS

The WEXHE Project brings together ten partners from enterprises, associations and HEIs based in eight countries in Europe.

Extensive knowledge and expertise of each partner ensures achievement of the project goals regarding WBL policy and practice development in a dedicated manner.



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