
Introduction

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Biographical notes: Eugenio Corti is a Former Professor of Innovation Management and Entrepreneurship at the University of Sannio, Benevento, Italy until 31 October 2006. At present he is the CEO of the 'European Centre for Space Applications' (GEIE), and a Member of the Editorial Board of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management (IJEIM)*.

At the beginning of 2005, I made to the Rector of my University, the proposal to organise an International Seminar with the following title 'The role of the Universities for the entrepreneurship development of the local territory', which should have been organised inside our University with few invited speakers from different European Countries and also from Third Countries.

The main reasons for such proposal were based on the success of two quite interesting projects, which I have promoted and managed since the previous year for my University. The first one has been financed by the Italian Ministry of University and Research and it was based on the promotion and the support of spin-offs from the local University, and the second one has been financed by the European Union and it was based on the design and experimentation of a new educational model in E-learning on the subject of international technology transfer. In the last project I identified as partners the University of Luton (to-day University of Bedfordshire) – UK, the Tribhuvan University of Kathmandu – Nepal and the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore – India.

Those two projects contributed to increase the interest of the University of Sannio for the entrepreneurial culture from the point of view of Education and training.

The international seminar was held on 5 April of the same year. The Rector, Prof. Aniello Cimitile, made a welcome speech to the participants and also the introduction to the seminar. Then we had quite good presentations of the subject made by two Professors from the University of Sannio, Prof. Maria Rosaria Napolitano and myself, and by nine professors from other countries. We were able to have in the seminar, the conclusions from Prof. Luigi Nicolais, at present Italian Minister of Innovation, and at that time was Regional Minister for Research, Innovation and University.

Several students and also some professors of the local University were attending the seminar, which lasted a full day with interesting discussion at the end.

In the morning of the day after, I remember that in the Hall of the Hotel Villa Traiano, where the foreign speakers spent the previous night, we had a nice meeting commenting the Seminar of the previous day, and at the end all the present speakers made the decision to rewrite the presentation under a form of a typical scientific paper,

and the speakers asked me to organise a formal proposal to the *International Journal on Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management (IJEIM)* of the Inderscience Enterprises Ltd., where I was still a Member of the Editorial Board, to evaluate the future papers and to publish the good ones in a suitable Special Issue.

Then from this important decision we started a long period of work, first of all in writing down the full papers, then to send them to the blind referees of the Journal, to make the suggested improvements and finally to get back the last evaluations for the best papers. Notice that at the beginning, the total number of speakers was 11, but 6 of them during the long period of work decided to abandon the idea to prepare a good paper to be published, therefore, now we have five papers of this Special Issue. Such papers were a very good scenario of what is going on not only in Italy but also in four interesting countries, such as Finland, India, Estonia and Greece.

Let me now say few words about the five papers presented in this Journal. The first one by Prof. P. Kyro and K. Hyrsky of the University of Helsinki (Finland) deals with a quite important subject: describes the actual situation in such country about the women entrepreneurship situation, which is going to change radically. This paper describes the long transformation of the way women start and run businesses in different industrial areas in Finland. But the important point for the authors is to show how the government's decision-making have changed in the last years providing an opportunity to break gender neutrality in the Finnish government's policy programmes in education, training and support systems, which might improve equality among women and men.

The second paper of Prof. M. Manimala of the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, India, is focused on the very well known vulnerability of the SMEs due to the 'newness' and 'smallness'. Of course, as the author wrote in this paper, most of the involved people, such as policy-makers, researchers, consultants, are sure that the SMEs need suitable education and training of their own employees, but from a nice survey in India it comes out that very few SMEs perceive such needs. Therefore, the author proposes a model for entrepreneurship education, which could be helpful for the local SMEs.

The third paper of Prof. T. Mets, J. Andrijevskaia and U. Varblane of the University of Tartu, Estonia, focuses on the contradictions in the development of entrepreneurship in Southern Estonia, region where their University is located. This paper analyses the conflict of abilities and interests which come out from the contacts between the University and the local territory. This paper ends up with interesting suggestions on how to facilitate the cooperation between the University and the local small business, and also on how to develop suitable knowledge-based entrepreneurship in Southern Estonia.

The fourth paper of Prof. M.R. Napolitano and A. Riviezzo of the University of Sannio, Italy is based on the analysis of the situation of the Italian University from the point of view of entrepreneurship education, which should play an important role in the general picture of the social and economical development of any country with special emphasis on the less-developed areas, with particular emphasis on the Italian situation. This paper provides a crude picture of the current situation of entrepreneurship education in Italian Universities, and the results from this survey are not at all comfortable.

The fifth paper of Prof. S. Vliamos of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece, deals with the observations that the entrepreneurial activities are not related to the level of economic welfare, as new entrepreneurs are pushed by the needs and not by the opportunities. Therefore, according to the author, the Greek Government fosters entrepreneurship by supporting innovation practices in the labour market and

inside the schools and Universities, promoting education and training, which are necessary to sustain the innovation and development of the country.

I would like to emphasise that the Universities involved in this Special Issue, besides the University of Sannio, are as I have said:

- Helsinki School of Economics and the University of Helsinki, Finland.
- Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, India.
- University of Tartu, Estonia.
- National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

and it is my pleasure to stress the point that the Professors of those Universities accepted my last proposal to present at the beginning of 2006, a very ambitious project, by the name ENDEAVOUR, to the European Union under the Erasmus Mundus Programme, with the University of Sannio as the proponent, project which has been recently financed.

The title of the ENDEAVOUR project means 'Entrepreneurial development as a vehicle to promote European Higher Education', and the overall objective of ENDEAVOUR is to promote the EU entrepreneurship education outside the EU, to enhance the attractiveness of Entrepreneurial Development Higher Education in the EU and to attract third country students to learn this subject matter in EU countries. In particular, the project aims to increase the interest in the EU Universities as an educational destination of choice, especially for academically talented students.

The secondary objective is to increase competitiveness and promote a quality offer of the EU entrepreneurship higher education through improved accessibility and structured cooperation between the EU and third-country institutions, implemented by means of the creation of a suitable network. The specific objective is to develop a sort of Marketing Strategy to promote the EU entrepreneurship higher education in Europe (outside EU) and Mediterranean Area, Asia and Middle-East and, finally, Latin America.

The outcome of the project will be studies, analyses, surveys and ICT tools. Finally, a network of project stakeholders will be established, a Web Portal will be published and managed, a series of local workshops will be held and a promotional road show will be carried out.

The Promoter of the project is the University of Sannio, and Maria Rosaria Napolitano, full Professor of Strategic Marketing in this University, became the Project Coordinator of the project, when I retired last year, but I am still collaborating with her as an external consultant.

It is interesting to take into consideration the list of the Universities involved as partners:

- 1 University of Tartu, Estonia.
- 2 Universidad de Sevilla, Spain.
- 3 Université Paris Dauphine, France.
- 4 National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece.
- 5 Second University of Napoli, Italy.
- 6 University Carlo Cattaneo, Italy.
- 7 University of Salerno, Italy.

- 8 Helsinki Business School, Finland.
- 9 University of Bedfordshire, UK.
- 10 Marmara University, Turkey.
- 11 Petrozavodsk State University, Russia.
- 12 Lobachevski State University of Nizhni Novgorod, Russia.
- 13 Universidad de Congreso de Mendoza, Argentina.
- 14 FATECE (Facultade de Tecnologia Ciência e Educação), Brasile.
- 15 Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB), India.
- 16 School of Economics and Management – Tsinghua University, China.
- 17 Kunming University of Science and Technology, China.

From the above-mentioned list the four Universities involved in the present Special Issue are partners in the ENDEAVOUR project, therefore, this Special Issue will become one of the basic document to diffuse the entrepreneurial culture all over the world.