

The didactics of Practice Enterprise and the PICASP Project

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This paper has the purpose of describing the innovative didactics and teaching approaches in the development of entrepreneurship considering the experience of Practice Enterprise realized in the PICASP Erasmus+ Project¹ by the University of Bologna² and SERINAR.

The experience of international projects

The Laboratory of Practice Enterprise of the University of Bologna (The first Simulimpresa in a University Body in Italy – Fig. 1), named Perting, supported and intervene in many European Projects³ like:

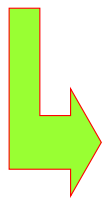
Fig. 1 – Ther first University Laboratory of Simulimpresa in Italy



The homepage
[2001 – 2012]

Progetto
Tempus

- + images
- + languages
- + contents
- + business: e-commerce



¹ PICASP is a Capacity Building in Higher Education project inserted in the Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
² Gualdi D. (2001), *L'impresa simulata*, Paramond ed., Torino
³ Bianchi M. (2004), *La simulazione d'impresa negli interventi di sviluppo dei paesi in transizione*. 5° Workshop dei Docenti Ricercatori di Organizzazione Aziendale, Roma 5-6 Febbraio 2004

DOCSMES

Regional Joint Doctoral Programme in Entrepreneurship and SME Management for Western Balkan countries .

This project, for a total amount of Euro 949,738, is coordinated by Prof. Massimo Bianchi of the University of Bologna and has as partners the main universities of the Western Balkans (Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo), the University of Barcelona and that of Nice. DOCSMES aims to create a Doctorate in Entrepreneurship and Management of Small and Medium Enterprises. This doctorate was inaugurated on 9 February 2012 with 21 participants from the Balkan partner countries and with professors from the University of Bologna together with those of the other project partners.

Progetto Tempus CHTMBAL

Network for Post Graduate Masters in Cultural Heritage and Tourism Management in Balkan Countries

his project, worth Euro 849,899, is coordinated by the Gabriele d'Annunzio University of Chieti Pescara (Prof. Sara Santoro) and has the University of Bologna, the Universities of Albania and Kosovo as partners.

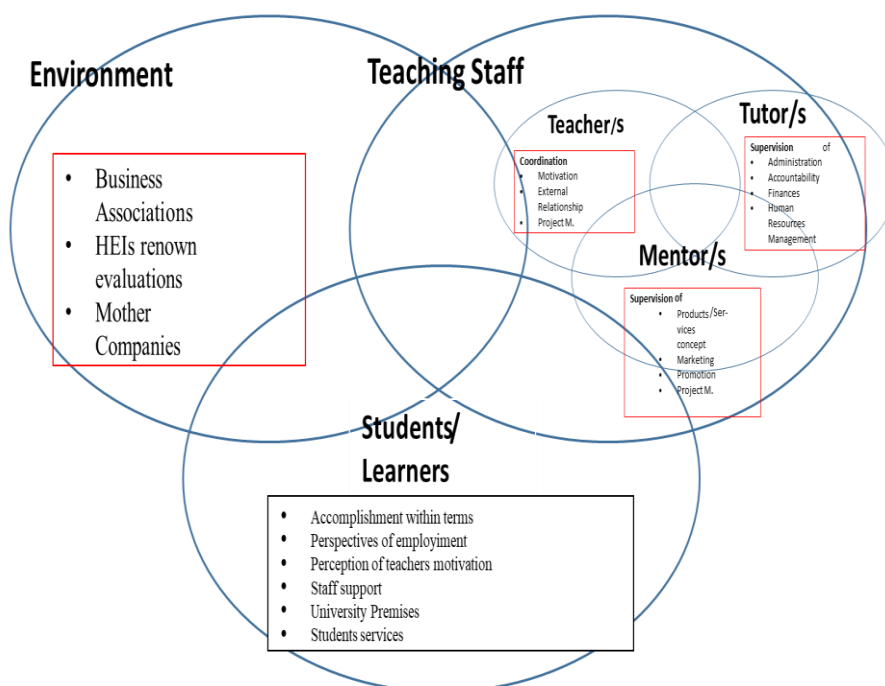
CHTMBAL aims to create two Masters in Cultural Tourism at the Universities of Scutari (Albania) and Prizren (Kosovo) and has the Universities of Warsaw and Tarragona together with the Telematic University of Marche as European partners. The teaching will be provided by the Partner Universities together with the Local Universities.

Progetto Erasmus PICASP

Pilot courses in Practice Enterprise to implement the University-Enterprise Cooperation for the development of Caspian Area

The budget of PICASP is Euro 882.359 and it is coordinated by the University Gabriele d'Annunzio di Chieti Pescara (Prof. Oliva Menozzi) with the partnership of Vilnius University, Universities of Azerbaijan, Poland and Kazakhstan with the support of SERINAR and the Eupen-Pen Network .

Fig. 2 – Main Roles in Practice Enterprise (Simulimpresa)



Innovative didactics

The main PICASP objectives are: Developing new teaching methodologies including Practice Management with Practice Enterprise; Developing courses in Entrepreneurship and SME Management; Enhancing the exchanging of best practices with EU partners through mobility of academic and technical staff; Enforcing stakeholders' involvement in curriculum development and graduates placement; Establishing Standards and Providing Quality assurance in didactics and sustainability.

In this projects the Author intervene as Tutor and Coordinator of classroom activities within the typical roles that characterize the Practice Enterprise Didactics (Fig.2)⁴.

The prevailing teaching methodologies are traditional lessons, case analyses, conferences and conventions, but new teaching approaches are also being advanced, a summary of which is given in Fig. 3.



Fig. 3 – Main innovative didactical methods

Seminari	In seminars and conferences you can find smart professionals who have important things to say, furthermore in these events there are often final discussions between speakers and the audience, sometimes even the possibility of meeting the speakers themselves to delve deeper into specific themes, thematic handouts and other interesting initiatives.
Tutorials	A tutorial is a method of transferring knowledge and can be used as part of a learning process. More interactive and specific than a book or lesson, a tutorial seeks to teach by example and provide the information to complete a given task. A tutorial can be taken in many forms, ranging from a series of instructions for completing a task to an interactive troubleshooting session
Esercizi tecnico pratici	To be done individually or in a group
Workshops	A workshop is a real laboratory, made up of large tables with many chairs around them, of speakers-tutors sitting elbow to elbow with the spectators-actors.
Case study	Study of cases more or less guided by the teacher or by a questionnaire to be answered with questions divided into phases of the case or in a single solution.

⁴ Tampieri L. (2005), *La Perting s.r.l impresa simulata e i progetti di sviluppo imprenditoriale nei Paesi in Transizione*; in M. Bianchi, L. Tampieri "Life Long Learning and Managerial development in transition countries (Cases on strategy, management and performance control)"; Il Ponte Vecchio ed., Cesena.

Problem based learning (Apprendimento basato su un problema)	It is a student-centered teaching method in which the discussion and solution of a problem constitutes the starting point of the learning process.
Online/Distance learning	Online or distance learning in which Massive Open On Line Courses (MOOCs) are spreading, i.e. online courses open to all consisting of lessons, chats between participants, exercises, cases, with at the end once attendance and passing have been verified of tests at the end of each lesson, they issue a certificate.
Practice Enterprise	Creation of a virtual organization by the training group with the management of the main company functions and interaction with other simulated organizations present on the network.

In each of these methodologies different learning techniques can be used which we summarize a Fig.4.

These techniques aim to go beyond learning simple technical knowledge but to develop attitudes and behaviors appropriate to the role covered and the problems that are expected to be addressed. Many of these are linked to the management of small and large emergencies in which, by definition, there are margins of unpredictability for which it is necessary for the operator to deploy creativity, synthesis and decision-making skills.

Learning techniques	Description	Learning techniques	Descrizione
Buzz-groups	Small, intense discussion group usually involving 3 people answering a specific question or looking for very specific information. The entire plenary group is divided into small groups. It's called group buzz (lively) because it imitates the sound of people in intense discussions	Independent project	A project is assigned to present to each participant or to small groups. At the end, each group presents the project which is the subject of discussion
Snowballing	Each participant will ask their online contacts to respond to a survey and in turn post the survey link to 10 friends. The results will be analyzed	Peer learning	Exchange of knowledge between peers that the teacher stimulates by having students talk about their knowledge and experiences

	individually and overall through a final discussion		
Brainstorming	Literally "brain storm". Group discussion in which participants intervene "freewheeling" and without censorship to bring out new ideas and solutions to the problems raised	Team work	Tasks, problems to solve or projects to prepare assigned to working groups with the intervention of the teacher, of tutors (who supports the teacher in case the class is divided into several small groups) or of mentors or external experts assigned to tasks similar to those for which training takes place.
Crossover	Transversal teaching with the use of IT supports and the possibility of combining different knowledge. An interpretation of multidisciplinary made possible by interconnection	Viaggi o visite di studio	Events planned to immerse participants in concrete experiences and case studies covered in the course
Quizz	Series of questions asked to individuals whose answers are discussed by the group	Computer-assisted learning	The program or part of it is carried out on the basis of computerized programs that include texts, videos, tests and interaction with the teacher (actual or virtual)
Presentazioni individuali	Group members are invited to prepare reports on a particular subject or problem and present them to the class or group who will then discuss them	Role play	Participants simulate roles on the basis of a plot, giving a personal interpretation and interacting with the other "actors"

Fig. 4 – Innovative learning techniques

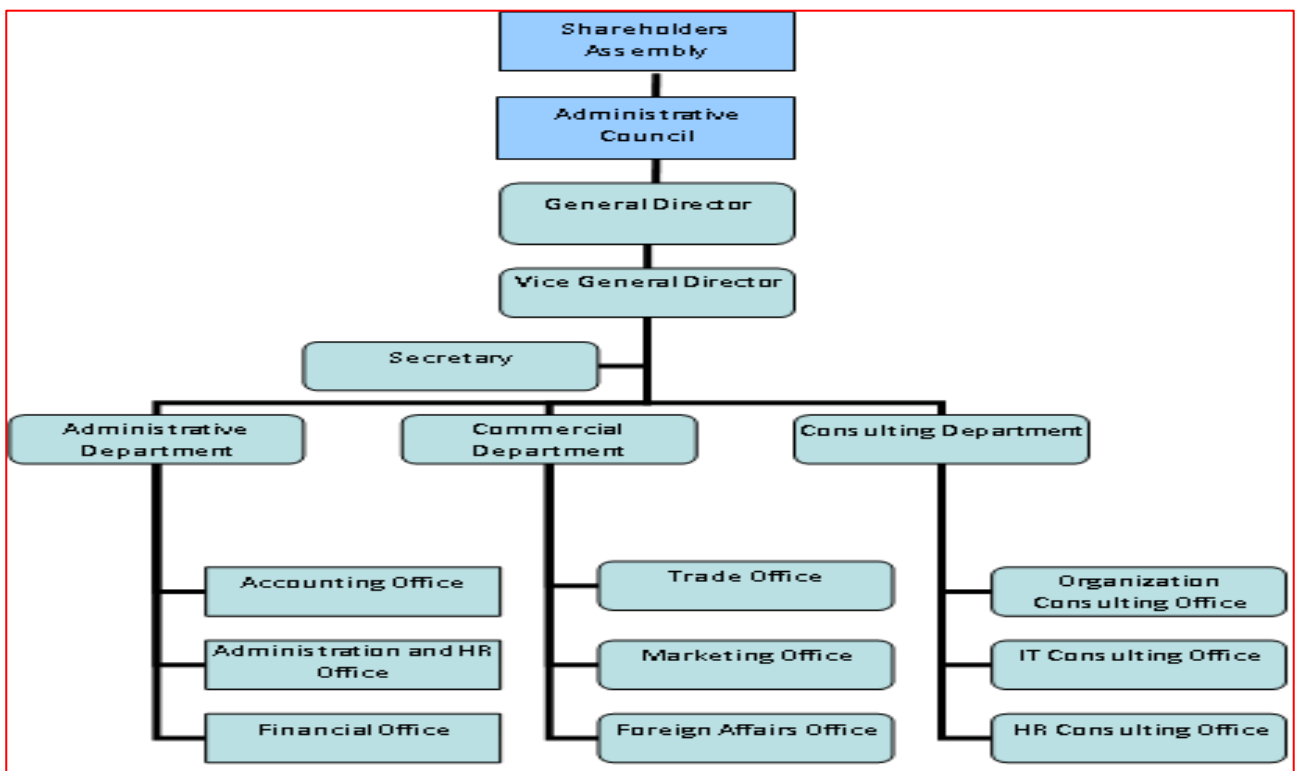
For this reason, the teaching approach must also be adequate to stimulate these abilities and to approach teaching based on multidisciplinary, peer learning and learning by doing, i.e. learning based on the concrete execution of tasks through simulation or role-playing games

The Laboratory of Simulimpresa by the University of Bologna and the support of SERINAR

In the Practice Enterprise basic structure, (Fig.5) each function / area aims to realize the following educational targets:

- Definition of the educational process: each student rotates among the different departments, carrying out tasks connected to each job and to the goals achievement;
- Development of behavioral capacities, both internal to the simulated enterprise, and external with other foreign companies;
- Providing adequate and consistent responses to the needs of real companies;
- Learning to manage a role with the process of know-how transfer;
- Increasing the basic motivations through greater participation in the processes of learning, cooperative environment;
- Deciding on a daily basis and taking responsibility for solving real problems that occur with a customer, supplier or postal delay, etc..
- How to learn and work in team.

Fig. 5 – Practice Enterprise Basic Structure



To this purpose, the objectives of Practice Enterprise are:

- For students to measure themselves in the applicative aspect of Knowledge
- Searching an active learning process
- Knowing the enterprise functioning – although in a virtual context of a learning process properly created

- Valorizing the experience carried out in Simulated Enterprise widening the competencies and knowledge acquired during the course study

Basic of Practice Enterprise

In the simulation of a business, students are required to actively participate in the company activities and to be responsible for them by playing a central role in all the aspects relating to the company management.

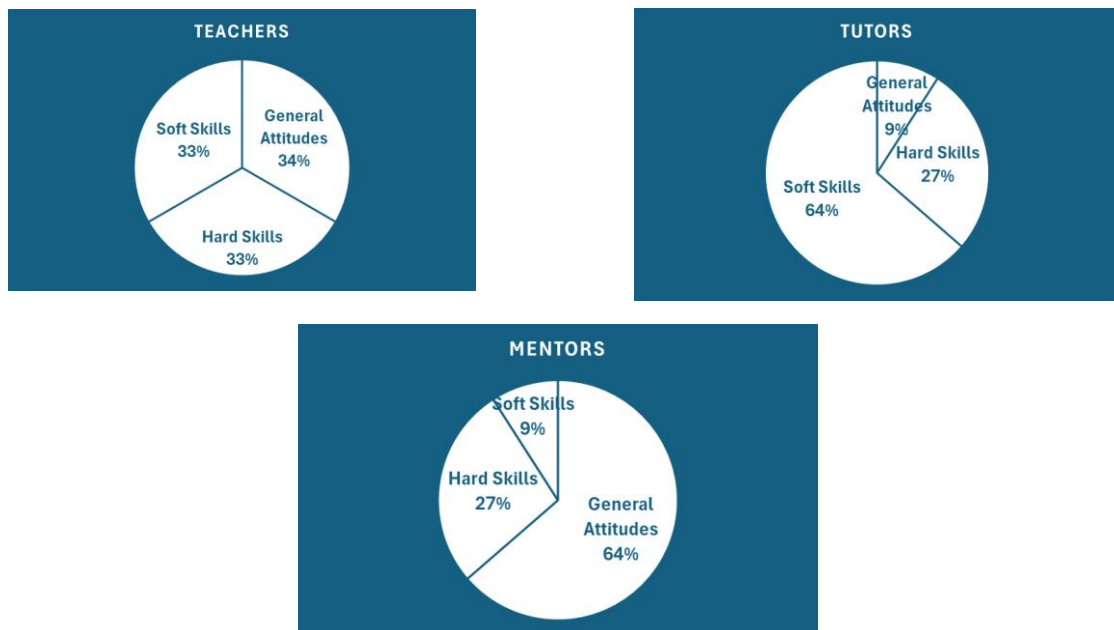
As the recruitment of students is concerned, it can be «institutional» through the normal enrolment in courses (Compulsory, curricular, eligible). If the PE is inserted as module in an existing course the start-up is up to the Teacher in charge to the course.

Otherwise the recruitment is connected to the presentation of PE Courses in the University Platforms. The survey on UE Best Practices highlighted that in this case, the information delivered was many times scarce or not complete particularly as it concerns the students workload and the profile required for students to be enrolled in courses

Each teaching role requires a different attitude and knowledge and the different roles act interdependently even if with some distinctions not only regarding tasks but also regarding aptitudes.

We can distinguish between 1) General Aptitudes, 2) Hard Skills or technical skills, deriving from educational background and previous work experience, 3) Soft Skills or relational and communication skills (Fig.6).

Fig. 6 – Teaching Staff Basic Attitudes



In company practice, staff recruitment will be handled by Learning Analytics aimed at analyzing the data relating to the recipients of the training initiatives, the needs of the employer and the specific

roles, duties and tasks to be carried out in order to prepare the appropriate training path and stimulate attitudes and behavior more suitable for greater effectiveness, efficiency and adequacy of entrepreneurial initiatives.

Conclusions

The Practice Enterprise experience conducted in European projects has undergone incremental refinement from which PICASP has benefited as the results illustrated in other parts of the Report have been able to describe.

What arises as a problem is the rooting of these initiatives, which depends greatly on the will of the University and the teaching staff, as well as on the interest in connections with stakeholders who also for other aspects can be considered important for the development of entrepreneurship and of learners' self-achievement.

The extension of the experiences through the incoming IA will certainly benefit from the experiences once developed by Perting with the Practice Enterprise applied to the virtual reality of Second Life⁵.

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⁵ Tampieri L. (2011) Second Life and enterprise simulation in SME's start up of fashion sector: the cases ETNI, KK Personal Robe and NFP, in D'Atri A., Ferrara M., George J.F., Spagnoletti P (eds), *Information Technology and Innovation trends in organizations*, Physica-Verlag, Springer (pp. 523-530).