



POWER

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University-incubator cooperation and knowledge exchange. Pool of academic experts and start-up challenges.

University-incubator cooperation and knowledge exchange

Purpose of university-incubator cooperation is to foster meaningful cooperation and knowledge exchange between and among universities including students and incubators including the interested start-ups.

Suggested framework of cooperation is based on the following principles:

- flexible framework following defined principles of each stakeholder,
- tailor-made collaboration, that is defined by the context, opportunities, needs, aspirations of culturally different stakeholders involved,
- meetings/events aimed to identify/define/design new cross-border cooperation possibilities among universities and incubators.

The activity allows to explore new avenues and design additional possibilities to meaningfully collaborate

- between university and incubator as well as
- between incubator and incubator.

University – Incubator cooperation has its specifics comparing to classic/traditional business-university cooperation. Set of events organised in the POWER project gave a clear perspective on this:

- Project conference “Erasmus Going Entrepreneurial conference” (October 31, 2019) delegate presentations in Greece organised by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki gave both the understanding on potential of such cooperation as well as specific requirements from each party involved. Especially revealing were discussion panels where all the involved stakeholders

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were discussing on requirements from start-ups, incubators, academics, students and university in general

- Furthermore, the series of webinars 2019-2022 provided insights on the way how to gain maximum out of university- incubator cooperation.
- A set of online lectures and exchange of views between startups, students and teaching staff in May-June 2020 created better understanding on start-up specifics “21st century skills: crisis management “ by New Factory, “Problem solving in times of crisis” by Tetuan Valley, “Crisis – Startup Business as Usual” by New Factory, “Is it the right time to be an entrepreneur?” by Tetuan Valley, “The start-up roadmap: from idea to launch I” and “The start-up roadmap: from idea to launch II” by Alexander Innovation Zone.
- The online conference organised by University of Latvia in 2022 “Higher education institution and business cooperation: potential, challenges and innovations” was as final result discussion of academic experts, startups and students. Aikaterini Papakota, “University of Thessaloniki, Greece Promoting Gender Equality in Start-up”, Sari-Johanna Karpahaa; Dr. Helen Teijonen, University of Eastern Finland “University-business cooperation: potential and challenges”, Prof. Baiba Šavriņa, University of Latvia “Youth employment perspectives and entrepreneurial education using internship”, Kristīne Bērziņa, University of Latvia “Formal and informal barriers in cooperation”, Gundars Kokins, startuper, Riga Technical University “Developing a Customer Centric Journey Map: The Case study of Cambridge Venture Camp”,

Benefits from University-Incubator cooperation

Benefits for Incubators from University-Incubator cooperation

Access to new and high-quality talent

Nowadays larger companies (because of their nature) have more exposure to new talent therefore sometimes it might be difficult for startups to find talent that the corporates are attracting. This happens because university fairs and business cases normally are organized by larger scale traditional companies. Encouraging this University-Incubator cooperation would increase the exposure of the startups to the new generations and would facilitate the access to high quality talent for the startups.

Access to external resources (time and knowledge)

As it is well known, startups often have to grow their projects with highly limited resources. Not only financial, but also time-wise. Since the teams tend to be small and highly efficient, their time is very scarce. This is why, having external people that can help the startup research new challenges is of very high value.

Insights from new markets

Having international University-Incubator cooperation helps startups to become more familiar with other markets. Most of the early stage startups operate in their home country, but have the potential to expand easily to other markets. If they could have insight from people in the markets that they wanted to expand to would be of great benefit to the startups.

Dissemination of their project

Sometimes startups struggle to disseminate their projects to large audiences. The problem of this is not only that they can find it hard to get clients, it is also difficult to find good partners, Disclaimer: This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

mentoring, advice. If the startups can have more exposure to their projects, their chances of having good synergies could increase greatly.

New perspectives of innovation

New eyes and brains can always contribute to new ideas and strategies. One of the best characteristics of startups is that the structure of the organization tends to be quite horizontal, which leaves room for implementing new ideas and encouraging creativity, regardless of the position of the person that suggests the change.

Training of staff

Working through business cases collectively can be a great way to train new staff or employees in junior positions. Since the startup would present themselves and an issue concerning their organization, it is a good opportunity to go through all the fundamentals and strategy of the startup. Not only helping the students, but also the workers excluding the founders.

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Benefits for universities from University-Incubator cooperation



Knowledge and experience from different areas

Incubators and accelerators comprise new advanced companies that apply innovative business and new tendencies of economy. Incubators and accelerators can be seen as indicators of the next changes in economy. By cooperating with incubators and accelerators university can detect and access these new changes. A different stakeholder perspective is important for university development and raise progression awareness.



Encourage innovations

Cooperation with incubators and accelerators foster staff and students to innovate, universities become more proactive in reaching out to start-ups to engage and raise awareness of new approaches and possibilities for cooperation. Universities with incubators and accelerators can cooperate in variety of events, activities and joint projects. Such cooperation encourages continuous improvement of universities not only to do more but do it smarter



Upraise of university competitive advantage

Cooperation with business sector including incubators and accelerators increases competitive advantage of universities. University quality rankings in the evaluation process take into account quality and quantity of cooperation with business sectors. The synergy created between the universities and business incubators and accelerators gives both a better chance of success. University cooperation and support for incubators and accelerators helps to build a good name in the community.

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Contribution to university curricula sustainability

Joint activities with incubators and accelerators lead to shared knowledge that further drives to more robust study programmes. Close cooperation with incubators and accelerators facilities forecasting future job market needs, gives insights into the specific needs and job forecasts industries have. This allows the directors to tailor course offerings that address the skills and job shortages that businesses have.



Access for information for case study development

Incubators and accelerators are excellent source for different projects and cases that can be further included in curricula.



Academic staff development

Competitive advantage of university is skilled academic staff with expertise in the teaching area. Cooperation with incubators and accelerators gives opportunity for universities to energise human capital with new ideas and develop their skills. Lifelong learning is crucial for teaching staff. Many faculty members across universities are now working with startups either independently or collaboratively with students and co-faculty members. Cooperation with incubators and accelerators allows for practical and creative advice.



Variety for student placements offers

Universities can expand their offer for student placements both for placements included in curricula as well as placements that can be done by students just for own development. Placements in startups can provide a mixture of different tasks for student placements that would not be offered by larger companies.

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Increase of student employability

Work experience during the study period is also an important tool for student employability after the studies. By connecting students with startups they receive opportunities that previously were not exposed to them. Quite often student employability is taken as quality indicator of the university



Boost for student own business creation

Incubator and accelerator entry into the university study process is instilling the confidence in students to turn ideas into reality becoming next start-uppers by themselves. Entrepreneurial mind-set is elevated in meetings with incubators and accelerators, sharing their stories and experiences, challenges and solutions. Such cooperation is fostering the entrepreneurs of tomorrow. In certain way it is added spill over benefit to encourage students to look at potential to set up their own start-up business option. Universities collaborating with startups provide guidance and support to student entrepreneurs, creating nascent ventures and startups.



Student skill rising

Cooperation with incubators and accelerators develop practical skills useful in the workplace. Students receive new business planning skills, understanding business procedures and operations, self-motivation, decision making skills, boost creativity, develop communication skills, boost analytical, logical and critical thinking, and other skills necessary in the business processes.

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Blended training scenarios



1st scenario: training sessions for incubator start-up schools

One way how University-Incubator collaboration could be increased is through hackathons. A hackathon is a session, normally between 1 and 2 days, where people get together to put solutions to a problem. As the word means, the objective is to hack (solution) in a marathon (defined time slot).

Normally the startup could begin by presenting an issue to all the groups composed of students. Then each group would start sketching solutions individually and come up with a solution/prototype by the end of the hackathon.

After presenting all the prototypes, the startup can choose what solution they consider most appropriate or most desirable to apply in their startup. Thus having a winner of the hackathon.



2nd scenario: individual trainings for startups

Another accessible option is having the students help the startup with a case study. Startups often have ideas in mind that they want to research, but they do not have the time to conduct the research. Also, they might lack the skills for this research, especially if the market that they want to research is not their home market.

It could be of great help to the startups if they could propose a case analysis and receive the results. For the students it would be very helpful too, because often in the university we only look at theoretical or made up cases. This time it would be a real case with real numbers, needs and background from a startup.

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Local startup problem solving case study methodology for MBA study programs

Aim of the case studies

The main aim of the practical startup case usage in MBA study program courses is to connect students with real business challenges.

Such intense cooperation between students and local startups allows diversify entrepreneurial education at universities, moreover, startups benefit from complementary competences of new talents.

Gains for stakeholders involved

Local startups



Local startups gain the additional support to solve their particular challenges.

Quite often startups do not have enough knowledge or recourses (capital, HR or time) and cannot afford outsourced research. Student research result presentations show different perspective, different approach how to solve business challenges and problems.

Universities



Universities gain possibility to improve MBA study curricula with practical tasks from up-to-date existing companies.

University teaching staff receives possibility to apply research models using particular case throughout the course.

MBA students



MBA students have a possibility to learn the startup processes from inside, discover potential provided in start-up ecosystem. Students receive opportunity to apply theoretical concepts for particular business cases. Students have a chance to help for companies that need their support and assurance that at least part of the results will be used in companies, leading to meaningful and applicable results.

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Gained
knowledge

Business planning skills in the first stages of business development





Entrepreneurial and startup mind-set






Local startup ecosystem




Case study organisation methodology and processes

Before the study course	0 stage Work on dissemination of information 	<p>Contacting local incubators and particular startups asking about the interest to participate in such project.</p> <p>Using local incubators and startup associations as communication channels for wider reach.</p> <p>Gathering list of interested companies and basic information about potential challenge to solve.</p> <p>Selecting the most appropriate start-ups for further meetings by choosing as much as possible B2C products, choosing challenges that students are able to solve based on knowledge and time constrains.</p> <p>With the most appropriate candidates organise direct meetings.</p> <p>Discussion more in details expectations from start-up in order to have final conclusion regarding start-up challenge appropriateness for MBA student involvement.</p> <p>Note - approximately 1 startup challenge is needed for 4-7 student group, not more than 4 startups for one course.</p>
	1 st stage Preparing the students 	<p>Students are informed with the challenge solving aims and briefly about the processes and methodology applied.</p> <p>Students receive basic information about start-ups, so that they have possibility to look through company webpage data and the rest of available secondary information.</p> <p>In case start-up requires, simple disclosure agreement can be signed.</p>
During the study course	2 nd stage Meeting with start-up CEO	<p>During the first meeting with students, start-up CEO is introducing company to students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> business story - how all it started

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business development, main financial data, resources available • current products • current customers • ASK challenge that needs to be solved by students • Specific conditions, requirements for desired result (for example budget constraints) <p>Students have time to think about presented information and only afterwards they can ask different questions to CEO.</p> <p>Important note – the more time and freedom is planned for MBA student questions, the deeper and more specific information can be gathered from the respective start-up.</p>
	<p>3rd stage</p> <p>Forming the student groups</p> 	<p>Students are divided in groups, several approaches can be applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom to choose a start-up challenge • Student group formation based on the introduced CVs • Random student group formation
	<p>4th stage</p> <p>Studying and solving the challenge</p> 	<p>During the challenge solving process different research models are applied</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT analyses • PEST analyses • Ishikawa Fishbone model • 5Ws • TRIZ • Expert interviews • Company/customer interviews and/or surveys • Competitor interviews

		<p>During case solving process students contact company representatives one or twice (depending on complexity of problem), if possible students visit company premises.</p> <p>Important note - -all student groups work together for all cases, still each particular case group decides what will be applied as result.</p>
At the end of the course	<p>5th stage</p> <p>Final result presentation</p> 	<p>Each student group develops the final solution, that is included in written report for start-up as well as presentation.</p> <p>Particular time is appointed for each challenge presentation, so that startups receive solution on their challenge.</p> <p>Final result presentation is limited to 15 min, afterwards start-up CEO can ask the questions.</p> <p>Company CEO gives feedback about the presentation and report.</p> <p>Startup evaluates the whole process.</p>

European startup problem solving case study methodology for MBA study programs

Gains for startup problem solving case study stakeholders involved

European startups



European startups gain the additional support to solve their particular challenges or get insight in the markets of countries students are from. Quite often startups do not have enough knowledge or recourses (capital, HR or time) and cannot afford outsourced research. Student research result presentations show different perspective, different approach how to solve business challenges and problems.

Universities



Universities gain possibility to improve MBA study curricula with practical international tasks from up-to-date existing companies. University teaching staff receives possibility to apply research models using particular foreign company case throughout the course.

MBA students







MBA students have a possibility to learn the European startup processes from inside, discover potential provided in European startup ecosystem. Students receive opportunity to apply theoretical concepts for particular international business cases. Students have a chance to help for companies that need their support and assurance that at least part of the results will be used in companies, leading to meaningful and applicable results.



Gained knowledge

International business planning skills in the first stages of business development
 International entrepreneurial and startup mind-set
 European startup ecosystem

International case study organisation methodology and processes

Before the study course	<p>0 stage</p> <p>Work on dissemination of information</p> 	<p>Contacting international incubators asking about the interest to participate in such project. Using chain incubators and startup associations as communication channels for wider reach.</p> <p>Gathering list of interested European startups and basic information about potential challenge to solve.</p> <p>Selecting the most appropriate startups for further online meetings by choosing as much as possible B2C products, choosing challenges that students are able to solve based on knowledge and time constrains, as well as communication for possibility to meet one or two times students directly.</p> <p>With the most appropriate candidates organise online meetings with foreign startup CEOs.</p> <p>Discussion more in details expectations from startup in order to have final conclusion regarding start-up challenge appropriateness for MBA student involvement.</p> <p>Note - approximately 1 startup challenge is needed for 4-7 student group, and not more than 4 start-ups for one course.</p>
During the study course	<p>1st stage</p> <p>Preparing the students</p> 	<p>Students are informed about the challenge solving aims/objectives and briefly about the processes and methodology applied.</p> <p>Students receive basic information about start-ups, so that they have possibility to look through the webpage data and any other useful secondary information.</p> <p>In case startup requires, simple disclosure agreement can be signed.</p>

	<p>2nd stage</p> <p>Meeting with start-up CEO</p> 	<p>During the first meeting with students, startup CEO is introducing company to students either via online (MS teams, Zoom, Skype) or direct meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business story - how it started • business development, main financial data, resources available • current products • current customers • ASK challenge that needs to be solved by students • Specific conditions, requirements for desired result (for example budget constraints) <p>Students have time to think about presented information and only afterwards they can ask different questions to CEO.</p> <p>Important note – the more time and freedom is planned for MBA student questions, the deeper and more specific information can be gathered from startup.</p>
	<p>3rd stage</p> <p>Forming the student groups</p> 	<p>Students are divided into the groups, several approaches can be applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom to choose startup challenge • Student group formation based on the introduced CVs • Student group formation taking into account country of origin of students in order to have variety in each group • Student group formation taking into account researched country in order to include native students in particular cases • Random student group formation
	<p>4th stage</p>	<p>During the challenge solving process different research models are applied:</p>

	Studying and solving the challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT analyses • PEST analyses • Ishikawa Fishbone model • 5Ws • TRIZ • Expert interviews • Company/customer interviews and/or surveys • Competitor interviews • Trello, Slack or other platforms are used for task management. <p>During case solving process students may contact company representatives</p> <p>Important note - all student groups work together for all cases, still each particular case group decides what will be applied as the result.</p>
At the end of the course	5 th stage Final result presentation 	<p>Each student group develops the final solution, that is included in written report for start-up as well as in the presentation.</p> <p>Particular time is appointed for each challenge presentation, so that start-ups receive solution on their challenge either in online or direct meeting with the company CEO.</p> <p>Final result presentation is limited to 15 min, afterwards start-up CEO can ask the questions.</p> <p>Company CEO gives feedback about the presentation and report.</p> <p>Startup evaluates the whole process.</p>

Case study organisation methodology and processes for challenging startup product development

Aim of the case studies

BBA study program students gain possibility to work with cases of real products (goods or services) and cooperation between students and startups allows diversifying entrepreneurial education at universities.

Gains for start-up product solving case study stakeholders involved

Startups	Startups gain the additional support to solve their particular product challenges.
Universities	Universities gain possibility to improve BBA study curricula with practical tasks from up-to-date existing companies.
Students	BBA students have a possibility to learn the start-up processes from inside, discover potential provided in startup ecosystem. Students receive opportunity to apply theoretical concepts for particular product development.

Case study organisation methodology and processes

Before the study course (mid January):

Contacting international incubators and particular startups for the interest to participate in such project.

Organise online meetings with startup CEOs.

Assessment of startup product appropriateness for BBA student involvement, B2C market products are best for such tasks.

During the course (February-March):

Students are informed about the product.

During the first online meeting with students, start-up CEO is introducing company to students – business history, product, current customers.

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Restrictions/conditions for product development (for example budget constraints).

Students can ask different questions to CEO.

Different models are applied for challenging product development, like Value proposition Canvas, etc.

During case solving process students contact company representatives one or twice (depending on complexity of product).

At the end of the course (end of March):

Students present their solution that is included also in written report for company.

Startup CEO is invited to the online presentation Company CEO gives feedback about presentation and report.

Startup CEO evaluates whole process.

Startup problem solving case study methodology for MBA study program implementation

As the testing model startup problem solving case study methodology for MBA study program was implemented at University of Latvia in 2020 for an international group of master level students. Feedback for the startup problem solving case study methodology for MBA study program implementation was gathered using University of Latvia study platform.

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Student feedback and takeaways from European startup problem solving case studies 2020

Paula Lauma Jakobija (Latvia), MBA student: “New for me was the concept where we were asked to think about all three companies and their problems at the same time all of us. It was difficult and interesting at the same time. I would say it was useful to share our achievements and progress to other groups as we did learn from each other. This was very successful method to stimulate all teams for better results. Challenges of small companies were: Dependents of customers; Financial issues; Competition; Lack of experience; Networking (associations etc.); Collaborative strategies; Experienced employees; Export/import partners; Government burdens; Name/ brand popularity; Environmental regulations.”

Karīna Kulberga (Latvia), MBA student: “It was very interesting for me as I really enjoyed the area the startup had chosen - could dig into new industry and understand how it works. Also it was a great impulse to look at the way they have been set up, why and what works, etc. Also it was very, very cool that the selected start-ups were actual young companies and the whole experience of them coming over/being over skype and explaining was very good. I also liked that we were pushed to use Trello and such, since it is a modern language of business communication and if we were not pushed a bit, then we would not have tried it.”

Vlada Konovko (Latvia), MBA student: “Each of the analysed start-ups face a lot of big challenges on their way, such as: - competitiveness with other companies (and even if company is quite competitive it is hard to hold it and be best than others competitors), - entering the foreign market (to know, which one is the right one, as well it is very hard to find a correct and right information for entering particular country as usually information needed is in local language), - an access to finance is although quite a big challenge.

Davronbek Urinov (Uzbekistan), MBA student “Usually, Small companies need to go through lots of process in order to get a loan from bank or support from the government. When it comes to analysed case of start-up “All opportunities”, the company has limited finance and customers in terms of partner companies. In local market it is challenging to compete well known cv.lv. Therefore company needs to find firstly finance then customers will come step by step.

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Inese Hlibova (Latvia), MBA student: “For a small company is very important to use their inner resources- their own knowledge, workforce capacity. Optimize all positions of workers. Maximize effect for shorter period.”

Farsna Faiz, MBA student: Analysed cases “are confronted with numerous issues: knowing who their clients are, understanding what their needs are, recognizing the most fitting courses to advertise, deciding their upper hand and building up the monetary assets required to effectively enter remote markets.”

Kevin David Jardim (Germany, Tobago), MBA student: “Working with existing companies was also new for me and also working in such a large group.”

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