



BOOK REVIEW:

**IMPRENDITORIALITÀ E CREAZIONE DI IMPRESA NEL
CONTESTO UNIVERSITARIO ITALIANO (ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND BUSINESS CREATION IN THE ITALIAN UNIVERSITY
CONTEXT), BY MICHELA LOI, MARIA CHIARA DI GUARDO,
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Abstract

The book provides an overview of the experience of Italian universities in entrepreneurial education, mainly with the aim of encouraging business creation by university students. In particular, the volume focuses on the results achieved, in the period 2017-2020, by a network of Italian universities - Italian C-Lab Network – committed to designing and implementing educational paths in the field of entrepreneurship, in response to the need of highlighting the importance of new businesses for the development of society.

Review

The volume I am recommending to the readers of the *Journal Piccola Impresa/Small Business* was written by Michela Loi and Maria Chiara Di Guardo from University of Cagliari. Authors' research topics deal with entrepreneurship and innovation, with a focus on the relationship between training activities and innovation process. The work is divided into five chapters, each containing an extensive bibliography for further exploration of the topics discussed.

The first chapter highlights that entrepreneurship education is a very recent area of research, that deepens how to develop mindsets and skills useful for business creation. Studies focus on the following main topics: antecedents of the choice to become entrepreneurs; support infrastructures for the development of entrepreneurial skills; entrepreneurial learning processes arising from the management of one's own business; impact of entrepreneurship education activities; recognition of entrepreneurship education as an academic discipline. Authors focus in particular on the contribution by Pittaway and Cope (2007), which represents a relevant theoretical and empirical reference within entrepreneurial education, with respect to experiential learning. Subsequently, Contamination labs (CLabs) are presented, which in the Italian context are defined as places of contamination, both physical and virtual, which promote the culture of entrepreneurship, sustainability, innovation and doing, as well as interdisciplinarity and new learning models, in line with the spirit of new business creation (D.D., November 29, 2016, n. 3158 Guidelines). The CLab Network, established in 2017, is therefore presented, with the aim of systematizing all the CLabs of Italian universities, in order to form a network among them. Moreover, a set of indicators (about organization, dissemination, networking and training) are provided for the monitoring of CLabs activities. Information comes from three sources: CLab organizers, CLab participants and stakeholders. Questionnaires (CLab organizers and participants) and interviews (stakeholders) are used for collecting information.

The second chapter is dedicated to the presentation of universities that adhere to the network (23 universities, from 15 regions) and that have created their CLabs; moreover, the main characteristics of the activated programs are described. Many aspects are investigated, here are some of the main points of interest. 47% of the initiatives come from universities in the South and Islands, 13% from universities in the Center and 40% in the North of Italy. The analysis of the characteristics of the CLabs is based, on the one hand, on the experience gained by each CLab (year of establishment, number of editions completed and organization), and, on the other hand, it takes into consideration the recognition of CLab participation as training credits or internship. To examine the involvement of universities

in the implementation of the CLabs, the professionals involved in the implementation of training and management activities are, therefore, considered. Funding received by the CLabs is also analyzed.

The third chapter is devoted to the analysis of the training results of the CLabs. The focus is on a set of dimensions adopted in literature for the study of the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education programs, which refer to the affective-motivational and behavioral spheres of learning and to the dimensions of career planning and success. The number of business ideas matured within the CLABs, awards, and funding obtained by the participants is also explored. Results are presented with reference to two collection periods and using a control sample. A total of 798 ideas have been developed, with 49% of the projects having a technological vocation and 25% of them a social one. The ideas resulted in 34 established startups. Participants received a total of 171 awards and received 1.170.000 euros in funding.

The fourth chapter deals with the ability of CLabs to create networking with external stakeholders, in particular through collaboration with entrepreneurs, business incubators and accelerators. Results show that there are many collaborations, especially with companies, banks and local institutions. The chapter is in turn divided into four parts: the first one examines the network and the main stakeholders involved by the CLabs; the second one considers the level of involvement in the training or management activities of the CLabs; the third part reveals the opportunities for CLab participants and the fourth explores, finally, the point of view of stakeholders. Most stakeholders claim that the relationship with universities is successful: ease of intermediation and spillovers are two of the main positive effects considered. Authors also assess the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on the investigated phenomena.

The last chapter, finally, traces and consolidates the main topics in the book, also reaffirming the importance of an integrated system for entrepreneurial education to a sustainable economic and social development process. Universities have a critical role in making economic, entrepreneurial and social contexts vital, because they can foster the integration of knowledge among the various stakeholders, promote the acquisition and development of skills relevant to business creation and support students in choosing professional careers that are more suited to their aspirations and skills.

The book offers a very detailed picture of the phenomenon of contamination labs in Italy and it represents a useful guide for the development of entrepreneurship education programs, in order to encourage the creation of new businesses by students.

The book is particularly recommended for students interested in setting up new businesses and universities that want to engage themselves in activities aimed at promoting self-entrepreneurship. It is certainly an interesting read even for academics, as it offers very meticulous analyses on a research topic that is still quite recent.