

Advantage NOTE 7 – Notes from the 12th Annual International Entrepreneurship Forum ,Vilnius, Lithuania, 2013

Introduction

I attended and presented at the 12th IEF , though I did not make notes, I am sharing some of the highlights. The theme of this year’s conference was “Social Sustainability and Economic Security: The Agenda for Entrepreneurship in the 21st Century” . It was a small but intimate conference, with a high degree of discussion and debate amongst the attendees (Circa 50). Attendees came from all over the globe bringing together a diverse set of ideas, information and research with the underpinning goal of improving both our understanding, policy and practice to accelerate economic stability and security through more and more successful business start up’s. The participation and hosting by the Military Academy of Lithuania , where future officers in the Lithuanian Military complete their military training in parallel with a 3rd level university degree , highlighted the important relationship between economic security and stability and political stability and peace. The attendees also included a rich mix of eminent academics, researchers and business people. The summary below does not cover all the parallel sessions as it was impossible to attend all, it is intended to give a flavour of the conference.

12th IEF Conference Highlights (Day 1)

Having been welcomed by Col. Eugenijus Vosylius, head of the Military Academy and Professor Jay Mitra Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship research for the University of Essex, and co-sponsor of the event, the conference was opened by Chancellor of the government Alminas Maciulis who outlined the *many* priorities for the Lithuanian government who currently hold the EU presidency. We then moved into the meat of the conference with Sergio Arzeni director of OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship and eminent economist, who gave a thought provoking talk on Public Policy and sustainable entrepreneurship.

Panel Session 1: discussed the role of women/gender in social sustainability chaired by Ralph Schonenbach who in parallel with setting up his own consulting firm also set up a charitable Trestle Group Foundation , which works with women entrepreneurs in developing countries supported and funded by their Multinational clients as part of their CSR programs. The panel consisted of 4 women “thought leaders” in the arena of entrepreneurship. There was a useful discussion around understanding the roles of the men, women, family and culture when it comes to the propensity and possibilities for women entrepreneurs and how both policy and support systems need to recognise the specific context and cultures for each region.

Panel Session 2: Led by Professor Michael Fritsch led a panel discussion around the topic of New Firm formation and its impact of sustainable economic development.

Panel Session 3: was a discussion on Education and Training led by Christian Friedrich, this discussion considered the life cycle of learning from Primary to Post grad education on entrepreneurship and again the need for cultural and contextual consideration when building enhancements so that we can release more entrepreneurial talent and create new enterprises in the economy.

Parallel Session 1:-

I attended and contributed to the sub theme “Strategic Approaches to Managing Sustainable Futures”, the session was chaired by Professor Catherine Leger – Jarniou. There was a lively discussion on all three papers the paper by Professor Mako Csaba and Brian Mitchell looked at cross country firm dynamic capabilities and the role of innovation in the labour process with discussion on a range of scenarios from collaboration to cultural influences and the differences for southern European & Post Socialist country groups. We also looked at the research paper from Dr Saeed Algarny on the role of Start-up business support centres play in the acceleration of Entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia in particular those that target specific groups such as women, unemployed, youth, poor etc. Finally a discussion on my own paper which seeks to change the current focus of entrepreneurs on a static business plan to a more Agile approach focused on data and information phases and the provision of a framework and focus on advantage to provide a better roadmap which should increase success rates.

12th IEF Conference Highlights (Day 2)

Panel Session 4: Day 2 opened with a discussion on Emerging Economy perspectives on entrepreneurship chaired by Professor Bibek Banerjee followed by a though provoking paper from Professor Zoltan Acs which considered a perhaps more sustainable economic model on entrepreneurship where the cycles are funded and supported through Philanthropy as in the USA model.

Parallel Session 2:-

I attended the session themed “ Creativity, Culture and Social Entrepreneurship” chaired by Professor Murtala Sagagi. We considered the paper by Professor Fangqi Xu outlining how Japan will overcome economic stagnation by focusing on the creative industries moving away from its traditional strengths of design, manufacturing and promotion of high tech and automotive products, acknowledging the radical change in the global economy, relevant competitiveness and the value of Brand Japan in such areas as food, catering and Restaurants as an example. We then discussed a well-researched paper by Elina Zubova looking at new venture formation in Latvia as it relates to the Arts and though Artists have a high tolerance of risk they lack the skills and infrastructural support around the business, and we considered how they can acquire these skills while still personally focusing on the creative production task. We then considered the research by Professor Rasa Smaliukiene where early retired army officers often struggle to find the right career and in particular set up of new business ventures, with a lively discussion on their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to their past experience being applied to a business start-up. There was also a paper on design management and entrepreneurship but to be honest I missed the point of this one.

Panel Session 5:- Chaired by Georges Kalousis was a lively and entertaining debate on Social Media and entrepreneurship , which helped create a greater understanding of what social media is, its breadth and its technologies, the many business applications for entrepreneurs to consider and the risks associated with use and misuse of social media for business start ups

There were several themes for parallel sessions I have not documented, but conference proceedings/paper should be available for those that are interested.

- “Sustainable spaces for Entrepreneurship” which had papers on SME behaviours in the Air Cargo Supply Chain, Lithuanian Manufacturing Development and Energy Efficiency, Blue Bridge case study
- “Knowledge, Learning & Education” with papers on Knowledge Management in Environmental Strategy, ICT Techno-Stress, Entrepreneurship Education in South Africa.
- “Connected & Networked People, Organisations and Institutions” with papers on Evidence for female entrepreneurship, The role of trust in personal entrepreneurial networks, does entrepreneurial self-efficacy predict discontinuation of venture idea development, Business sector R & D collaboration.
- “Social cohesion, Productive and Destructive Entrepreneurship”, with papers on Business challenges to Policy actions, Culture Competition, Quantifying the dynamic capabilities of Entrepreneurship.
- “Public Policy & Economic Security” with papers on the Importance of Infrastructure investment on entrepreneurial activity in India, Coaching in Lithuanian organisations, and control as a factor in Lithuanian entrepreneurial policy.
- “Cohorts of Responsible Entrepreneurship” with papers comparing financing of SME’s in the USA with Canada, How women entrepreneurs manage growth, and immigrant entrepreneurship

Summary

This is purely my own personal summary. Firstly there is widespread agreement on the importance of entrepreneurship and successful new venture start-ups for virtually every economy and there is much Global research completed, underway and possible. The Environmental context (Social, Political, Cultural, technology etc.) even though we understand some of the best practices and policies, they have to be adapted for each country/Region to move that region forward in creating sustainable economic impact of entrepreneurship. This mean that the guides and frameworks must provide options, and alternative approaches, depending on the context, from strategic policy to “on the ground” interventions. In my own area of interest promoting new agile models for the entrepreneurs that reduce failure rates and enhance performance , though based on practical experience in the field, it might be strengthened by the application for a more academic rigor in data and information based research. It is also apparent that the background of entrepreneurs differ as regards education, social class, experience, opportunity, gender and many other variations and depending on the context the policies and supports need to be different to level the playing field. Finally there is a strong relationship between economic security and success and military security and peace and enlightened policy makers enable the key roles in society to be developed , engaged and aligned.

Conference Gala Dinner Vila Gloria, Belmontas, Vilnius.

