

## TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** *The present paper approaches the trends and perspectives in the evolution of management within the European academic background, at the same time presenting synthetically the Lisbon Processes and the „Europe 2020” Strategy – starting points in setting university strategies for quality improvement with the purpose of developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation. Education is the way towards equality of opportunities, towards productive economy and lasting development.*

*Performance and quality assurance, the current concern of academic institutions, requires measures for the implementation of own management system, for self-assessment and improvement of processes.*

*The EFQM model of excellence represents the most used organizational model in academic institutions in Europe, for the accomplishment of a complete, systematic and permanent examination of the activities of the organizations through the comparison with a self- assessment model. The principles underlying the EFQM model of excellence, the client’s contentment, the staff’s contentment and the integration in the community life are gained through strategies and policies of a professional management.*

*Encouraging the spirit of entrepreneurship in the academic background is all the more necessary as the business background is more interested in specialists possessing new skills at the workplace. Entrepreneurial education involves a strong collaboration between the academic background and the business background through the accomplishment of partnerships in order to continually encourage the educational cultures within companies, with the purpose of building something valuable and lasting.*

*The pillars of these strategies, the EFQM European model of excellence and entrepreneurial education represent tools which lead university education towards excellent operational outcomes.*

**Key words:** education, strategy, quality, excellent performance, entrepreneurial university.

### Introduction

Lifelong learning for all is considered as a fundamental means of personal life enrichment economical growth and maintaining social cohesion. As it shows in most documents, education movements in European Union countries are determined by a deep switching to globalization and to the society based on knowledge ”Knowledge society”.

Education is the path to equality of opportunities, or chances to a productive economy and a sustainable development.

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Educational management represents that growing area, considering the recent reform initiatives on quality assurance in education and decentralization of the education system.

All these initiatives have on the one hand, important consequences for management and administration of education, on the other hand, can not be implemented without managerial training of the educational system. Achieving high performances of an organization and of its employees means achieving or exceeding targets to increase the quality, productivity, customer satisfaction and increase profits and shareholders value. Performance management is that necessary instrument to achieve objectives that contribute to effectiveness of individual and teams management in order to reach high levels on the organization performance. In school there must be felt more and more the innovative presence, which to rethink the presence from the perspective of the future. In the knowledge society must be rediscovered its quality valences of human capital, a concept that requires more and more in the language and activity of our contemporaries and which must become a priority because the welfare of developed countries has been provided based on human capital. Performance is influenced by the organization's strategies and plans contained in the objectives and targets that can be converted into targets and actions.

Organizational performance is maximized when it is based on managing and sharing knowledge in a culture of continuous learning, innovation and improvement. Organizational excellence is measured by its ability to achieve and maintain exceptional results simultaneously.

The EFQM Excellence model, launched in 1981, has a very big pragmatic advantage regarding the achievement of a desired performance of excellence, measured by benchmarking because it directs the organization to customers / consumers, buyers of learning services and to processes.

### **1. The legal framework for establishing academic strategies to improve quality**

Education, especially at the university doesn't make any exception to the need for quality, because, preparing young people to cope with multiple demands of society today depends largely on the quality of offer and educational perform. University education is responsible for preparing the young generations of graduates in different fields of knowledge, of the future state of the nation. The quality of training is therefore an essential process, extremely important for becoming and progress of learners and is all the more for university as in recent decades in the social, political and economic context of the process of globalization and EU enlargement, relevant changes took place in this system.

The main documents produced by the European Council, European Parliament, European Union, OECD, outlines the objectives of European education policy, issues and quality indicators or internal or external evaluation systems of quality.

### **1.1. Lisbon Strategy**

European Council in Lisbon (23-24 March 2000) [1] describes general common issues of our European society, what are challenges to education systems of member countries stressing that "education and training systems in the European Union countries must adapt to the needs of informational society and must satisfy the basic needs of the moment: to facilitate the growth of employment rate of graduates and improve its quality. "

Education and training 2010. The main strategic goal of European Union policy for 2010 is "to become the most competitive and dynamic economic and knowledge society in the world, capable to support economic growth by creating better jobs and a greater and effective social cohesion. The main measures that can ensure quality in education are transforming teaching career in a more attractive one, motivation and quality of teachers education being essential for the success of a reform, the adult transformation into a tangible reality, developing coherent European strategy.

### **1.2. "Europe 2020" Strategy**

"Europe 2020" strategy, in the continuity of the one of Lisbon, is based on three priority areas (European Commission, 2010) [2], which are intertwined and they stimulate each other, namely: smart growth (promoting knowledge, innovation, education and digital society), a sustainable growth (production more competitive with more efficient utilization of resources) and an economic growth favourable to inclusion (a greater labor market participation, obtaining skills and fight against poverty).

In the chapter "smart growth" what is supposed to, in fact, developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation, the strategy provides a series of pilot initiatives in order to be implemented both at European and national level:

- Creation of a "Union of Innovation" - strengthening the European Research Area, the enlargement of joint programs between member countries, creating a unique European patent, launching "the Innovation European Partnership" and boost integration of the three aspects of the knowledge triangle (research, innovation, education) by EIT (European Institute of Innovation and Technology).

- A second initiative - "Youth on the Move", aims to promote the entrepreneurship, integration and enhancing of mobility programs (Erasmus,

Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and Marie Curie), modernization of higher education, promoting non-formal and formal education, supporting youth employment and their mobility.

- A third key initiative - "The Digital Agenda for Europe" is addressed specifically in creating a Unique Digital Market and the measures of infrastructure so as to ensure the ultra-fast internet for all.

This requires improving the quality of education systems, enhancing performance in research, promoting innovation and knowledge transfer in the EU, using information and communication technologies, thus creating quality jobs that contribute to addressing the challenges facing European society and world society. But in order to succeed, all these should be correlated with entrepreneurship, finances and a focus on user needs and market opportunities.

## **2. The need to improve the quality of higher education**

Education becomes more and more a public service, provider of quality which is valued / selfvalued as an institution and whose management ensures customer satisfaction.

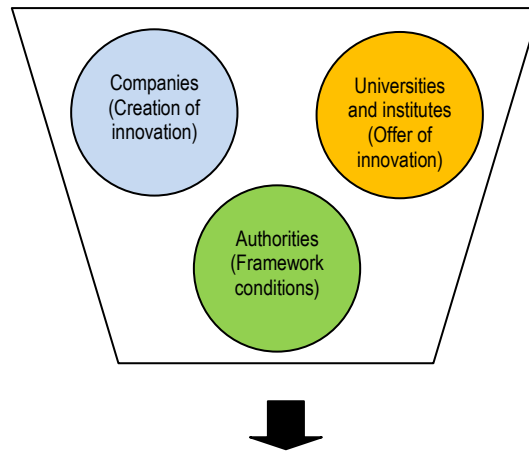
The main costumer for education is society, and students are both internal customers (as participants in the educational process) and external customers as beneficiaries of educational services.

University as a main actor in the knowledge society, aims to generate and transfer knowledge to social-economic environment through education, research and innovation in order to contribute to the welfare of the individual and society.

The relationship between universities and economic environment is a key element in future mission of all higher education institutions, through a reciprocal link policy formulation in innovative centers of economic development regions.

Formation of consortias and clusters in specific areas of research between universities and other partners is absolutely necessary (Fig. 1).

Higher education institutions must become active elements in the flow of technology transfer and of investment in human capital. The progressive achievement of the objectives of the knowledge society requires a significant change of view to determine the revolution in education and granting absolute priority to education. The logic of progress can be mastered only through performance, human resources being the key element in this competition.



**Fig.1. Cluster of universities-business environment partnership**

A management system of performance is a strategy that links all the activities of the organization in the context of human resource policies, organizational cultures, communication styles and systems.

In higher education institutions, performance management aims to increase individual and organizational effectiveness is an evolutionary process in which personal skills and organizational parameters are improved over a period of time.

Organizational performance should be analyzed also from the perspective of sustainable development. The approach of sustainable development is made by the result of an involvement and responsibilities based on taking into consideration, in an overall and balanced way of economic performance, social issues and environmental protection in order to promote a balanced sharing of the benefits and results of activities and also preservation of the future and interests of the next generations.

Education as a provider of services that includes learning, evaluation and orientation of students must satisfy the public trust and to assert itself as a good public through quality. Regardless of the field activity, size or maturity, an organization must define itself a management framework in order to to survive and succeed.

The EFQM Excellence Model was introduced in the early 1990s to serve as a framework for evaluation of the organizations for the European Quality Award [3]. It is now the most used organizational model in Europe and it is the basis for the vast of majority of national and regional Quality Awards, including the Prize of Romanian Quality JM Juran. The European Excellence Model is a practical tool which can be used in a variety of ways:

- as a tool for self-evaluation;
- as a modality of benchmarking with other organizations;

- to identify areas of continuous improvement and to coordinate various initiatives in this area;
- as a basis for a common vocabulary and as a way of thinking;
- as structure for organization's management system.

EFQM Excellence model is non-prescriptive framework based on nine criteria (Fig. 2.) (EFQM Transition Guide, 2010) [4]. Five of these criteria refer to the "determining factors" and four to "results".

Criteria on "determining factors" assesses the activities undertaken to achieve "results". "Results" are caused by "determining factors" and "determinants" are continually improved based on feedback from "Results". The model allow various approaches to obtain excellent results in all aspects and it is based on the following premise: organization's leadership establish policy and strategy, and these are implemented through people, partnerships, resources and processes, in order to obtain excellent results, both in key performance areas, as well as on customers, staff and the impact on society.

At the basic of the Excellence model are the **Fundamental Concepts of Excellence**:

**Results-oriented.** Excellence means obtaining results that delight all interested sides of the organization.

**Customer orientation.** Excellence is creating of sustainable value for customers.

**Leadership and perseverance.** Excellence is visionary leadership, a charismatic and tenaciously one.

**Management based on Processes and Data.** Excellence is managing the organization through a set of interdependent and related systems, processes and data.

**Involvement and Development of the Personnel.** Excellence means maximizing the contribution of employees through their involvement and development.

**Learning, Innovation and continuous Improvement.** Excellence is put into question the current situation and implementation of change through learning, innovation and maximize the opportunities for improvement.

**Developing Partnerships.** Excellence is developing and maintaining partnerships that bring added value.

**Social Responsibility.** Excellence means going beyond the minimum legal requirements of operating the company and the effort to understand and meet the expectations of interested sides in society.

Self-assessment EFQM model of higher education institutions consists of 5 factors-criteria and 4 results-criteria, which gives them the opportunity to discover their strengths and improved points for accessing to excellence. This form of evaluation, based on facts and not on individual perception, is an

objective assessment on the basis of criterion widely accepted in Europe, one way to achieve to a consistent orientation and a consensus on actions taken by each member of the institution, from the same vision of excellence. These practices inspired by Total Quality Management (TQM) open the special perspectives of the universities, much better than the simple implementation of quality systems according to ISO 9000. The principles which the EFQM model is based on, customer satisfaction, staff satisfaction and integration into community life, are obtained by the position of leadership, policy and strategy, personnel management, resources and processes. All these leads to excellent operating results (Popa, Virgil, 2008) [5].

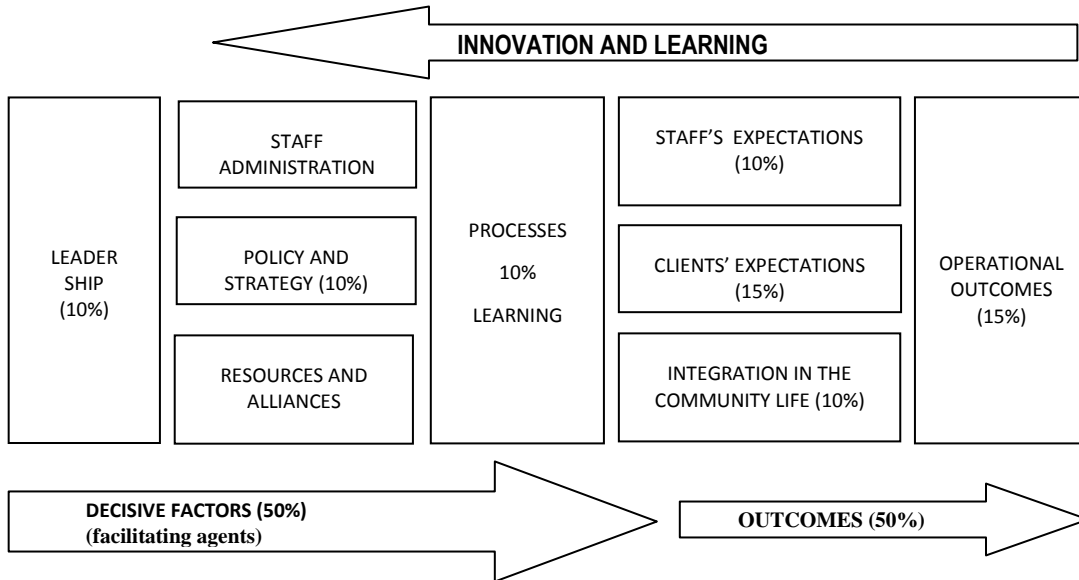
Evaluation of each criterion, which refers to the results, it will be made depending on the degree of excellence and extension of presented results. The mark for the degree of excellence of the results will be given by:

- the existence of positive trends and / or good performances (for a certain period of time);
- the comparison to its own objectives;
- comparison with other institutions, which are the best in that category;
- the existence of some evidences according to which the specified results come actually from the proper approaches.

Note for the degree of results enlargement will be given by:

- the extent to which the presented results "cover" all relevant fields of activity in the institution;
- the extent that there are and were shown the full ranges of results for each considered undercriterion;
- the extent to which it has been understood and presented the relative importance of each undercriterion.

Evaluators will evaluate separately the degree of excellence and the extension, as a percentage.



**Fig.2. 2010 EFQM excellence model of European higher education institutions**

EFQM excellence model shows that customer satisfaction and staff, the responsible approach of society's demands can not be assured only through proper leadership, to mobilize all resources for this purpose and primarily the human ones, all processes of the organization according to policies and strategies defined by integrating the basic principles of TQM (Olaru, Marieta, 1999) [6].

### **3. Promoting the entrepreneurship in higher education**

Entrepreneurship is one of the pressing current issues in education and practice, it is recognized as such by European Union institutes and considered one of the components of the economic competitiveness components of European block in global competition.

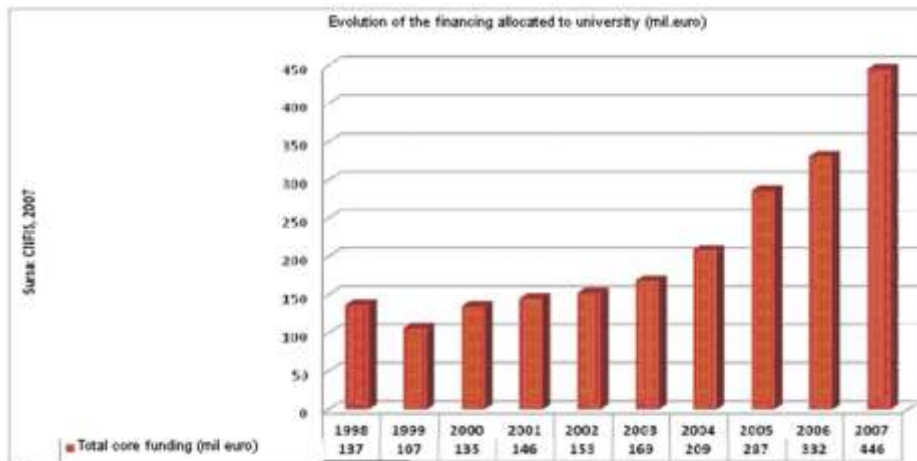
Constant changes that happen in the economic and social environment are necessary to ensure optimum, development and professional training for those who want to complete and deepen the knowledge purchased during licence degree studies and also in professional practice. The need for entrepreneurship and managerial skills is more urgent today, when a new generation of business people are invited to provide the reaction of Romanian and European economy response face to face to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Entrepreneurial University comes to strengthen bending of university management and staff to the issues of national and international entrepreneurship. It is the organization in which academic and administrative staff form a united



team, whose purpose is to develop the institution, ensure the resources for normal and quality functioning. In an entrepreneurial university, scientific research is strongly oriented towards applicable frame of research results and technology transfer. The pulse of higher education market research is monitored continuously and leads to changes of education plans. This sensitivity can provide a dynamic type for university, placing it on a top position in the preferences of potential students, those having compatible skills with the structure of labor market, which is also in a continuous movement. In this context, we'll note that in a traditional university, academics put in the second plan the financial issues. Reduction of the higher education funding from the state budget is true of all European countries. As a current trend, Marshall (2007) shows that higher education institutions are trying to redefine the balance of income obtained from public funding with those from private sources. The European Union Council, in a draft joint report of the Council and the Commission for 2008, specifies that the public expenditure for tertiary education institutions in the EU, including education and research, represented 1.1% of GDP in EU in 2004. However, total of spending remains far below the level in the United States. This is largely due to the fact that the level of private funding in the United States is seven times higher. Expenditure per student in tertiary education in the U.S.A. was more than double than EU average. European Union must double the investment in higher education (an increase of about 10,000 per year per student) to reach the level of United States of America. Public investments on education and professional training have increased from the time of adoption of the Lisbon Strategy and are comparable to the U.S. ones (larger than in Japan). The problem is represented by private investments, which are modest in most Member States. According to the OECD in 2008, Denmark, Netherlands, Slovakia and Sweden are the most significant increases in expenditures for education in public spending. The lowest rates of these expenses are found in Greece, Italy, Germany and Czech Republic (under 10%). In Romania has been recorded a sharp increase in public expenditure in higher education from about 0.4% of GDP to over 0.8% of GDP in 2007 and 2008. This increase has determined an infusion of additional resources which there were much need in this sector, but additional increases were largely used for investments in infrastructure and equipment. Few are investments in modernization of the system. Current expenditure remained almost unchanged as a share of GDP. It is not clear whether the recent increase in the volume of expenditure will be maintained in the medium term. Although another study of the OECD in 2006 shows that, by comparison, EU countries invest on average 1.2% of GDP in higher education, while The United States invest 2.6%. If we refer only to the public education system, the situation is not different fundamentally in the U.S. than in Europe. Even more, the research in traditional university is focused on gaining new knowledge, which then it is transmitted to the scientific and

student community and for educating of valuable citizens for society. This change in perception, from traditional to entrepreneurial, is due primarily to the decline in public funding of education. Therefore, entrepreneurial actions are for this financial decline (Fig. 3).



**Fig.3. Basic funding situation for higher education institutions in Romania**

In order to step on the entrepreneurial way, the model university must build an entrepreneurial culture that has imprints of innovation and technology transfer, to create an favourable environment for entrepreneurial initiatives. Model University should encourage the establishment of satellite companies, technology parks, as genuine forms of academic entrepreneurship. Setting the educational market - the labor market begins to function so and so, due especially to direct relationship of big economic companies with the university environment. That's because in recent years it has begun to occur to us, not just specific types of scholarships, but also training programs sustained in universities directly by companies.

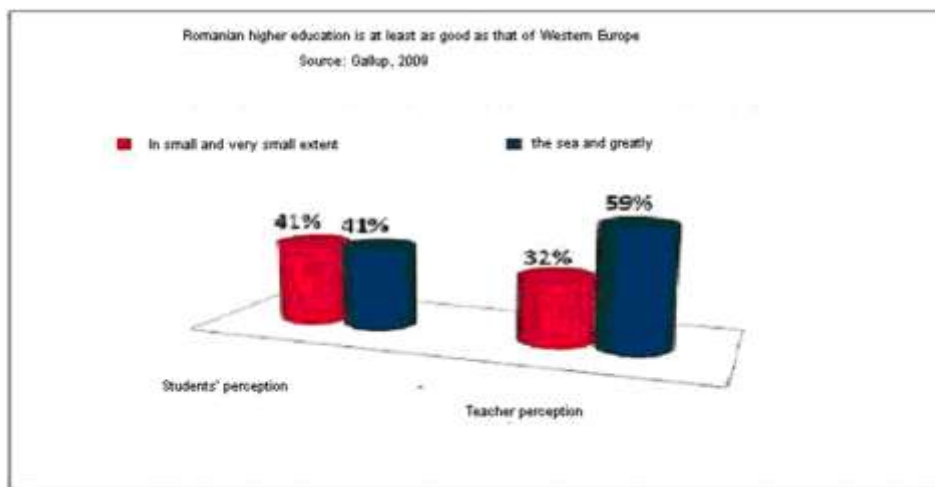
Marketing orientation of higher education institutions is made by research education market conducted and adapting to market requirements, or by identifying of some market niches from which to start to direction of influencing market direction for change. It represents one of today's trends of educational environment.

Entrepreneurial University is the university what adopts a management based on the following principles:

- it is able to apply new knowledge made in the social-economic environment and to exploit the junctures in its favour,
- it is market-oriented as university is a place where students become "customers" and they are treated as such;
- academic and administrative staff should resemble more and more regarding in degree of training, competence and prestige;

▪ it is constantly trying to change the competitive balance in its favour and to adopt quality standards and procedures for evaluating the quality of educational processes in order to ensure achievement of this objective.

Quality is the decisive factor for the European educational area. Recognition and development of the quality appears as one of the logical consequence of diversification and as a necessity to ensure quality by European compatible standards (fig.4.).



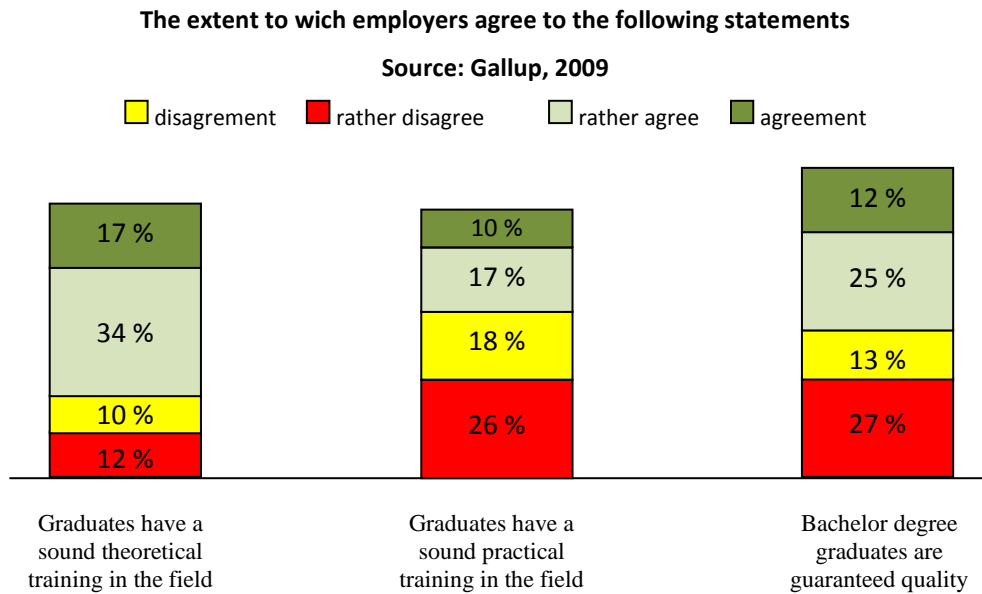
**Fig.4. Perception of teachers and students regarding the quality of the educational process**

Quality Assurance (Quality Assurance - QA) [7] has a crucial dimension in European Qualifications Framework and the engagement to a set of common principles is a precondition for cooperation between partners at different decisional levels. This section is based on experiences in education and training as well as those in higher education, and it proposes a limited number of principles for quality assurance. Quality assurance systems are established at national level to ensure the improvement and responsibility of education and training. They aim to increase efficiency and transparency of offer at all levels thus promoting mutual trust, recognition and mobility within and outside the country. Quality assurance targetes the content of study programs and also learning results. It must underline idea that quality assurance does not guarantee quality improvement. It remains the responsibility of education and training providers. However, quality assurance can provide substantial support to these suppliers.

Academic institutions are centered in shaping of young people's attitudes, skills and behaviors. However the actors outside the education system play an increasingly critical role in working with formal and informal educational programs. This thing requires collaboration and partnerships multistakeholders.

First, entrepreneurship education requires close collaboration between academic and business environment. Past barriers in academic institution collaboration with the business environment should be broken down by awareness, encouragement and support.

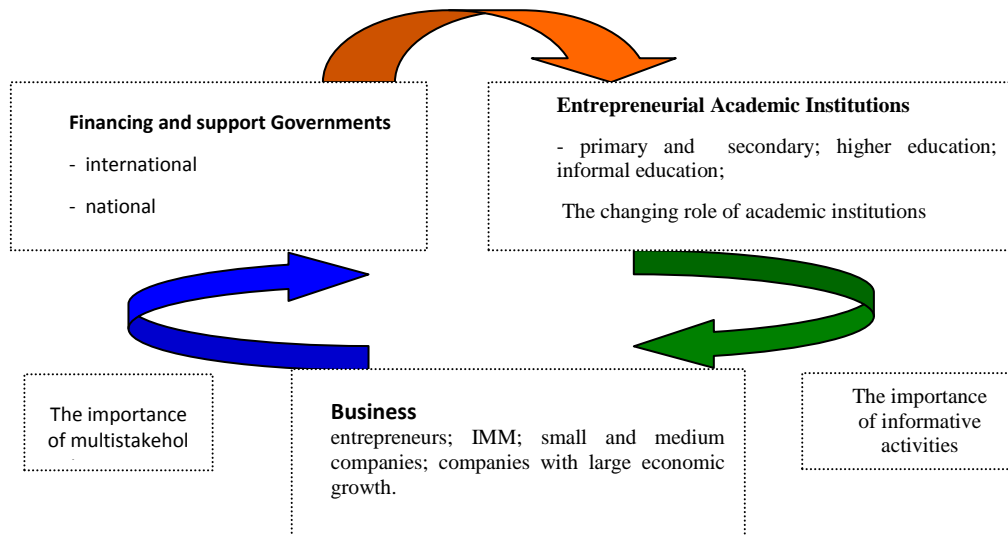
As it was demonstrated by case studies, companies and entrepreneurs play a key role in promoting efforts to provide knowledge (Fig. 5).



In addition, companies that promotes an entrepreneurial culture contributes directly to education process and by providing employees with the opportunity to cultivate new skills at work. The decisional factors at international, national, regional and local level have an important role in determining the appropriate legal and fiscal framework to encourage entrepreneurship. Higher education institutions have a crucial role as intellectual centers in the entrepreneurial ecosystem serving as the incubator for research and innovation for teachers, students, companies and entrepreneurs.

As it is highlighted by the World Economic Forum in Global initiative in Education, the need for a multistakeholder partnership is critical to education and more for entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship spirit prospers in the ecosystems in which many stakeholders play key roles.

There is a need for consolidation of capacities within the entrepreneurial ecosystem (fig. 6) and this thing is best achieved through partnerships and a "portfolio approach", not "initiative".



**Fig. 6. Entrepreneurial ecosystem**

Education is the clearest way of individual and social opportunity of growth and, especially, entrepreneurship education is vital to a more vigorous global economy. Entrepreneurs bring new ideas of life through innovation, creativity and desire to build something valuable and lasting.

Therefore, educational cultures must continuously encourage us in our companies, governments and communities for the entrepreneurial support of future generations.

Partnerships between universities regard as main domains:

- collaboration in designing programs in the similar or close licence and master domains which are organized in those institutions;
- initiating and organizing in common of some License domains and also of some Master programs from each university structure in combination with another university schooling, depending on the size and efficiency of the study groups;
- pertenership development for distance education, both for existing similar domains and specializations in the universities, and through the joint organization of some fields and specializations within the structure of one of the universities;
- collaboration between teachers through the exchange of experience in educational technology domain as well as leading some courses, projects and license works / dissertation
- development and improvement of practical training of students work through the shared use of laboratories and practical bases and also of the

relationships that each university has with the students and companies to which students organize their practice;

- initiating projects to facilitate students mobility.

The relations between academic institutions and economic and business environment take place:

- mutual support of strategy of entrepreneurial university by human resources and materials facilities of the research units, the universities and departments that can be carried out based on contracts, research activities, training and services for companies;

- development and improvement of practical training activities of students through joint exploitation of laboratories and practical bases and also the relationships that each university has with institutions and companies to which students organize their practice;

- achievement through cooperation of some programmes of continuous training.

## **Conclusions**

- The approach of quality management strategy by Total Quality Management (TQM) brings enormous advantages in universities. Self-evaluation process applied provides them the opportunity to discover their strengths and improved points to be able to access to excellence.

- In order to have the results of high excellence in the process of globalization, measured by outputs (output: customers, employees) it is compulsory to have inputs of high Excellence (entries curriculum - programs, education plans, textbooks, partnerships, consortiums with other organizations) and a visionary, charismatic, and perseverance leadership.

- Higher education institutions should focus on customers - students and customers' clients, that means to achieve a balanced proportion responding to the organizations requirements, an objective evaluation based on a set of criterions widely accepted in Europe, an evaluation based on facts and not on individual perception what leads to a consistent orientation and consensus on actions to be taken.

- To achieve results of High excellence organizations must have the capability to manage their processes established as analysis of key issues of organization development, personal development and performance improvement. Performance development

and improvement is possible not only according to understanding of what has been done but also how the performance has been achieved.

- In order to have an entrepreneurial university of high excellence, born in a climate of continuing globalization of the educational process, it is absolutely necessary to change not only inside the organization but also inside the business environment - our customers' customers - to make essential connections in promoting efforts to provide knowledge with the ability to cultivate new skills at work.

- The need for partnerships between academic institutions and business environment should take priority in European society, and managerial processes to establish as objectives to train specialists with high skills demanded by labor market.

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