

REVIEW

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The role of agricultural education institutions in knowledge transfer on agriculture entrepreneurship.

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Abstract

An economy in transition presumes the process of conversion from a planned economy in a trade economy, thus the diminution of the government's influence in the trade and substitution with trade units. The process of development of enterprises and the training of entrepreneurs are important elements of this process. In this framework the knowledge transfer, so the knowledge gain of this trade units and entrepreneurs, from the academic institutions, is very important. The aim of this paper is to determine the role of knowledge transfer in strengthening entrepreneurs, to identify and define the ways of knowledge transfer, and also to present ways of the knowledge transfer by agricultural education institutions into agricultural entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Counseling Service, Education, Farmers, Statistical Service

1. Introduction

This academic paper presents an overview of knowledge transfer from the relevant institutions on Agricultural education to the agricultural entrepreneurs. Concretely: An overview of education and entrepreneurship has been presented.

The role of the system of high education in the education of entrepreneurs has been stressed out. The shortcomings of the traditional education have been also presented. In this education the gain of information is dominant but not the processing and creation of the output by the students. The core of the alteration occurred to the educational system during the 20th century has been presented. An important part of this alteration is the involvement of enterprise knowledge transfer in education.

Likewise the alteration that occurred to the educational system in Albania during the 90ies has been presented. The process of entrepreneur education is difficult and unknown considering that the education system before 1990 was totally organized in function of the communist ideology that prohibited the private entrepreneurship. In Albania, the process of the alteration of education has started after the ratification of Bologna Declaration. Part of the alteration is also the inclusion of subjects on knowledge transfer for entrepreneurs.

The role of educational institutions of agriculture on agricultural entrepreneurship

The following will be analyzed:

- *The role of Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT):* The education of agricultural entrepreneurs that consists on the organization of surveys, theoretical education of students and the application of scientific research.
- *The education of agricultural entrepreneurship by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection (MAFCP),* the core of this education consist on counseling service comprising both public and private services. The public service which is the most organized and dominant form as well as the most extended all over the country, is part of the structure of MAFCP in central and local level.
- *-Organization of Agricultural Service of Statistics,* as an instrument in the knowledge transfer. Agricultural Service of Statistics is organized in central and regional level. The regional level comprises 12 regional offices.
- **Conclusions and recommendations**

2. An overview of the education and entrepreneurship in Albania*2.a The role of educational institutions in entrepreneurship education*

Very important factors in entrepreneurs foundation are the education institutions. The manners how a student resolves the problems during the scholastic period has its influence on the damage of the entrepreneurship ability, thus inciting to choose the less dangerous occupations that do not require

creativity, but also in directing the entrepreneurship culture toward innovation and creativity [1].

The traditional education comprises four key elements:

- Professors
- Students
- Education instruments
- Country

In the traditional education, the predominant part of information is gained very fast and in the same time it is faded very fast. The explanation is very clear, in the student's brain occurs only an accumulation of information and not the elaboration process, which means *data reception – output production*, [1].

The 20th century was affected by big transformations in all fields. In this process the alteration of universities as the most important units of education, was also included, [1].

This process was mostly influenced by the following factors:

- Drastic development of technology
- Involvement in the studying process of groups with different age, thus creating the long life learning concept.
- The virtual process of learning
- Ever-growing globalized students

The pioneers that initiated the entrepreneurship education are the universities of USA. In the beginning of 1974, the first subject on "*Management of New Enterprises*" has been introduced in MBA studies. The same process followed also in Europe. Courses on entrepreneurship were introduced in PhD studies, the number of relevant conferences raised, research on entrepreneurs network has been completed etc. However in the European universities the entrepreneurship subjects are treated in a lesser extent than other academic disciplines

2.b Role of high education on entrepreneurship education in Albania

In centralized economies, all production means are centralized by the state. The private entrepreneurship is totally prohibited. The educational system in centralised economy was organized in such a way that it reflected in its central nucleus the communist ideology. Although the communist regime insisted on the increase of cultural level of population and on the creation of new educational and professional opportunities, education was also subject of centralization and inflexible planning [6].

During the 5-year Plans of the State, the focus on education changed according to the transformations in

the economic sphere. Increased industrial investments modified the state's demand for educated people, orientating their capacities toward non agricultural means of production.

To conclude, the communist regime made real efforts to increase of school attendance. At the end of the communist period in 1990, about 45 percent of the population between 35 and 45 years had completed secondary education

But there are years now that this *massivity* is no more a matter of fact. Close down, downsize, privatization, are the words in these last 20 years. This of course, was accompanied by a surplus in the labor offer for some key specialties and professions [3].

The social transformation of 1992 marks the beginning of economic decentralization. The role of new entrepreneurs that have experiment the trade economy in Albania was very important. Education of these new entrepreneurs was extremely necessary. The process of entrepreneurship education was difficult and not known, considering that the educational system before 1992 was totally organized in function on communist ideology that prohibited the private entrepreneurship [6].

After 1990, the Albanian system of vocational education was abandoned in favor of general secondary schools. The ratio of students undergoing vocational training versus the total in secondary education was much lower in 2003-2004 than in 1990 indicating a dramatic change in the educational system. Before 1990, vocational schools provided agricultural and industrial training, and 70 percent of the students attended those schools. After 1990, the unemployed and unwanted labor power educated in these professions, changed occupation, or emigrated. Most of schools were subsequently closed, and today vocational education does not play an important role in the context of secondary education [3]

The transition to democracy led to radical alterations in the educational system. Albania has signed the Bologna Declaration during the Berlin conference on 2003. During 2003 – 2005, several legal acts on the implementation of Bologna Declaration have been approved by the Albanian Parliament and the Minister of Education and Science. These legal acts deal with the cycles of studies, standards of subjects in high education, educational load, financial autonomy and the procedures for the acceptance in the university [4]. There are also substantial alterations of curricula, where for the first time subjects on social sciences, law, business and humanitarian sciences have been included.

The Government of Albania has now understood that there is an imperative need to strengthen the High Education that educates professionals.

Vocational Education follows right after the 9-year basic education track and has as its main goal to enable students to develop vocational skills and practical knowledge. This type of education yields craftsmen with the necessary skills for a specific job, but also allows pupils to carry on with higher education

During the academic year 2009-2010, a new Vocational Education structure (41 vocational schools in total) is introduced. But in spite of the measures taken, there is still not the expected massivity in this kind of education, and potential high quality students prefer the general Education, instead

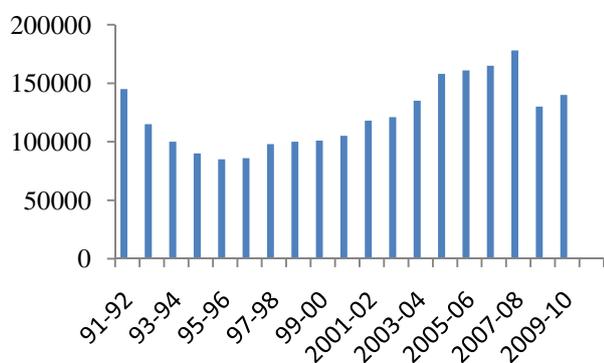


Figure 1: Pupils enrolled in secondary education.

Source: Developed by the author over the data from the Ministry of Education.

3. Role of agricultural education institutions on the agricultural entrepreneurship

3.1 Education of agricultural entrepreneurship from the AUT

The education of agricultural entrepreneurship aimed the incitement of students' motivation to undertake specific actions of agricultural entrepreneurship.

This has been realized through:

- **Organization of meetings** between students and successful farmers. In these meetings students have shared information with the farmers. When the students experience the achievements of a successful farmer, an entrepreneurship sensation is induced in them.
- **Theoretical education of students.** The curricula have undergone a radical alteration comprising

subjects that create and form knowledge which induce the agricultural entrepreneurship initiative.

- **Application of scientific research** on specific fields of agricultural entrepreneurship in Master and PhD studies.

3.2 Education of agricultural entrepreneurship by the MAFCP

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection with the aim to realize the transfer of knowledge to the farmers, have organized the counseling service. This counseling service is made up by the public and private service providers.

The public service which is the most organized and dominant form as well as the most extended all over the country, is part of the structure of MAFCP in central and local level. It is organized by an information centers network and an approximate number of 245 agriculture experts are employed in national level.

This technique of assistance service offers knowledge and information for all farmers and other persons interested on agricultural activity. The staff of the service has the necessary knowledge and a concept well defined on service methodology.

There are continuous contacts with the farmers, through a planned program of activities based on groups and on individuals. Contacts with the farmers are realized through agricultural information centers, which have been extended in all important agricultural areas of the country.

The forms of assistance:

- **Preparation of relevant brochures.** Every year, in collaboration with scientific research institutions, 7-8 brochures are prepared and distributed for the farmers every year. Furthermore a considerable number of leaflets and other informative materials are prepared.
- **Organization of training programs.** Employees of public service implement a training program which mostly covers issues of plant cultivation and animal breeding technologies, elements of farm budget, problems of financial management, problems of marketing, of farms organization etc.
- **Organization of planned research.** The staff of public service, in collaboration with the researchers and farmers, pursues and implements scientific research applied in farm level.
- This process facilitates the creation of relationships between researchers and farmers.
- **Organization of activities with farmers.** This service also performs a number of activities with

farmers such as demonstrations, visits, fairs and other group activities planned in the annual work program.

Until mid 2006, existed 9 (nine) research institutions subordinated by MAFCP. According to the Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) no. 515 of 19/07/2006 “*On the restructuring of the research institutions subordinated to MAFCP*”, 5 (five) Centers of Transfer of Agricultural Technology, have been created. After the restructuring, two of the existing institutions (Institute of Research and Zoo technique and Institute of Vegetables and Potatoes), have been replaced by the Centers of Agricultural Technology mainly transferred in Fushë Krujë and Lushnjë. This restructuring has been also accompanied by the modification of objectives, by placing the emphasis on the technology transfer, in compliance with the needs, conditions and regional priorities [5].

The following are some of the important problems that the counseling service is facing.

- The limited number of experts of the counseling service (as an average, there is one expert for 2000 farmers) and their engagement in different tasks outside their job description.
- Insufficient financial means to support investments in centers of agricultural information and to cover the operational expenses for the realization of activities of counseling services.
- The average high age of experts of the counseling service and their limited computer and information technology skills.

3.3 Organization of Agricultural Service of Statistics, as an instrument of knowledge transfer.

Agricultural Service of Statistics is organized in central and regional level. At regional level, it has 12 regional offices. Every two years agricultural surveys are conducted in a sample of 2,800 active farmers that represent approximately 375,000 farmers.

Concretely, it has been realized:

- A study on the activity of the production in greenhouses, where there have been surveyed approximately 600 farmers out of a total of 5000 farmers.
- A study on the activity of the production in large greenhouses
- Four annual monitoring surveys have been conducted, in order to evaluate the agribusiness progress.

- Agricultural indicators have been standardized according to EUROSTAT.
- The following are some of the most important problems that statistical service is facing [5]:
- Adoption of the national statistical system with that of the EU member states, in order to assure the statistics of indicators, necessary to monitor the agriculture and rural progress.
- The small size of the surveyed models which have negatively influenced the accuracy and fidelity of the collected data and of the indicators in regional level.
- Lack of financial means to accomplish surveys on activities such as, vineyards, olives, potatoes etc.
- Inadequate service as a consequence of lack of internet services in all the districts.
- Improvement of reporting system in order to combine the information from different sources that deal with the same indicators.
- Lack of financial means to acquire new computer programs and to realize a “survey” in order to improve the information.
- Small number of experts of agricultural statistics in central level.

4. Conclusions and recommendations.

- Education institutions play an important role in the foundation of private entrepreneurship. The 20th century marks immense transformations in this regard.
- Regardless the difficulties and the total lack of knowledge, the private entrepreneurship played a very important role in the process of economic transition in Albania.
- The education of agricultural entrepreneurship is realized by the AUT and MAFCP.
- The government should pay a special attention to the process of education of agricultural entrepreneurship, in the framework of the economic remodeling of our country, where agriculture gains a special importance.
- The sharpest problem of the process of education of agricultural entrepreneurship is the lack of financial means in this regard.

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