



TESEUS Case study:

Practice Enterprises (“Cvičné firmy” ŠIOV)

Slovakia

Provided by

Comenius University in Bratislava

Category: Education (on school), building skills and mindset

Provider: State Institute for Vocational Education, Slovakia

Established in: 1998

Target group(s):

- Students at vocational secondary schools (school-based IVET) in Slovakia, both business & non-business

Main goals/focus:

- Introduce students into the world of business enterprise from legal and economic perspective
- Equip students with comprehensive skills, abilities and knowledge related to setting up and managing a real business

Brief description:

The Practice Enterprise concept is implemented as a compulsory or elective course for (mainly vocational) high schools both with business and non-business specializations. The course is taken through one academic year (in case of non-business schools) or two academic years (in case of business-oriented schools). Usually, one class forms 2 practice enterprises (approximately 10 to 15 students). Within this concept, students simulate setting up and managing a business enterprise. Students start with choosing a field of business, establishing an enterprise and making its organizational structure, and drafting its business plan. In some cases, they can also “inherit” an enterprise from their predecessors. Then, they select “employees” for different positions in the enterprise from among the team members. After the enterprise has been established and roles have been allocated, students start performing their duties (according to functional distribution of tasks). In this concept, both product and money are fictitious. However, students simulate offering the product and they make transactions with other practice enterprises – they use e-commerce and traditional tools to approach them, attend contractual days and regional fairs, or even approach their peers abroad via an international network. During all steps of establishing and running their enterprises and making transactions, they communicate with the Slovak Centre for Training Firms, which simulates roles of authorities and banking services. All simulated interactions are based on real legislation and regulations, so students get trained for real-life practice. Moreover, practice enterprises are frequently twinned with real businesses who provide mentoring, study visits, guest lectures or internships, and sometimes even support their mentee student enterprises financially.

Key activities and forms of support to IVET students / schools / other target groups:

The key activities related to developing IVET students’ entrepreneurship-relevant knowledge, skills and abilities are:

- Simulated business idea generation and business planning
- Simulation of establishing a business entity from legal, administrative and organizational perspectives
- Simulation of hiring and staffing process
- Simulation of activities in different functional areas and overall management of a business company, including interactions with regulatory and administrative authorities
- Simulation of sales process, contracting with other practice enterprises
- Presenting the practice enterprise on fairs, events and within an international network

The key activities related to administration and operation of the programme, implemented by The Slovak Centre for Training Firms, are as follows:

- Methodological materials and support for schools implementing the programme and teachers of the Practice Enterprises subject - providing toolkit with curricula, didactical methods, instructions and materials, tracking legislation changes and informing about updates, organizing seminars and informal training for teachers, networking with partners (from business, practice enterprise from other countries via EUROOPEN-PEN international network)
- Administration of practice enterprises administrative agenda – maintaining registers and acting as authorities (trading license, company register, social and health insurance, tax authority, banking services) in the simulation
- Organization of contractual fairs, regional fairs, international practice enterprise fairs and competitions. Facilitating participation in such events abroad.

Funding source:

Practice Enterprises are operated by the State Institute for Vocational Education, which is an organization established and managed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic. For this reason, participation in the programme is free of charge for the schools involved. The Slovak Centre for Training Firms, a part of the institute that operates the programme, has three full-time employees and is financed from the institute’s budget.

Outputs and outcomes:

- Number of participating schools (as of 04/2019): 153, out of that 54 non-business vocational schools, 10 schools with study programs on tourism and hospitality, 85 business/trade-oriented vocational schools, and 3 private academic secondary schools (1 missing info)
- Number of participating practice enterprises (as of 04/2019): 1 054
- Outcomes at individual level are not monitored and student graduates from the programme are not systematically tracked

Key success factors in implementing this initiative:

- Support from school management, esp. the headmaster
- Awareness and recognition of practice enterprises’ importance among all teachers (not only those directly involved) and school as whole
- Finding a real company as a partner/tutor/mentor
- Sufficient resources to cover related costs (office supplies, PCs/tablets, travels to fairs etc.)

Key failure factors in implementing this initiative:

- Maintaining continuity after personnel changes on teacher and mainly headmaster positions
- Lack of support from policy makers – poor embeddedness and emphasis on entrepreneurship education and development of entrepreneurial competences in educational policies (from producing employees for industry to producing creative, enterprising and flexible individuals)
- Lack of related financial as well as moral support,
- Related burnout of involved individuals due to “tilting at windmills”

List of references

- <http://siov.sk/cvicne-firmy/>
- <http://www.sccf.sk/>
- Interviews with representatives of The Slovak Centre for Training Firms, incl. internal data

Interesting links and further reading

- <http://www.sccf.sk/> (English website available)
- <https://www.penworldwide.org/>