Implementing an Entrepreneurship Centre in a Large and Multidisciplinary University: What Issues to Address?

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Abstract: in the quest for more and better ways of nurturing enterprising people and especially ways of developing entrepreneurs, the role of education and training is considered as a prerequisite. This article offers further insights into the interests in and the challenge of setting up an entrepreneurship education center within a large and multidisciplinary university.
For about ten years, French Higher Education establishments have taken a very much closer interest in entrepreneurship as demonstrated by the inclusion of entrepreneurial training on the curricula and the setting up of entrepreneurial focused mechanisms. Such initiatives have encountered support from both the governing bodies and public and private institutional partners. Indeed, the development and the concrete implementation of these projects have given rise to challenges and raise various questions pertaining both to the pedagogy and the means of implementation, as well as to the analysis, all of which are the focus of this study. This study draws on the experience that the authors had throughout the setting up of an entrepreneurship resource center in a large French university.

1. The initial context in which the project emerged
The project emerged in a favorable setting where the many participants had fostered an initial awareness of the interest in enhancing scientific, technical and human potential in the university environment. In practical terms, this meant the appearance of certain isolated initiatives in the different university departments. However, the path leading to the creation of an entrepreneurship resource facility would have been extremely long had it not been for several internal and external factors combining so that such a project could take shape.

1.1. A favorable national context
In the late 90s, a number of new dispositions made the French context more favorable to incubating initiatives within the university environment.

In 1998, The Ministry of Education, Research and Technology called on the doctorate academies to implement additional training courses with a view to preparing the future doctors for their professional lives. From this point on, it has been the responsibility of these schools to help diffuse information concerning the sectors of economic activity, to raise corporate awareness and to set up facilities which will make their students' professional futures easier.

One year later, the passing of the Innovation Law reiterated the government’s support for entrepreneurship and above all provided a legal setting for enhancing university research through venture creation which would now also included researchers/professors.
During the same period, the launch of the Académie de l’Entrepreneuriat along with the setting up of studies and symposiums (Fayolle and Livian 1995, Fayolle 1996, Léger-Jarniou 1999, Sénicourt & Verstrate 2000, Schieb-Bienfait 2000) provided clarity to the practices and aimed to increase the number of meetings between the various parties involved in the different projects. This could be in the environment of the university or the post graduate schools, and could stimulate exchange as well the cross fertilization of ideas. Along with the creation of an observatory for the pedagogy relating to entrepreneurship oriented practices (OPPE), the observation of the relevant mechanisms became a systemized activity and finally made it possible to contemplate a comparative analysis like those proposed by Karl Vesper (1985, 1993, Vesper & Gartner 1997, 2000).

1.2 The local context: a few isolated initiatives within a composite university

The University of Nantes is a multidisciplinary university which comprises 35,000 alumni and 1500 professors/researchers. It is made up of 5 parts of different sizes: Human Science and Arts hosts around 1,300 students, the Faculty of Science 5,600, the Health unit 4200, the Law/Economics/Management house 6300 alumni and higher institute of technology 3200 alumni. The university therefore comprises 13 departments, 2 higher institutes of technology, and an engineering school. There are 73 official research teams and 58 of them have gained recognition from the relevant bodies overseeing research.

The CRÉACTIV’NANTES project came with the observation that students, teachers and/or researchers were both lacking in access or had unequal access to the entrepreneurial world and its culture. It had been noticed very early on that there was a gap between the training and research units in engineering or the life sciences and the other sciences (social and human sciences, medicine, etc.). As a consequence, it was mainly the doctorate schools in the life science and engineering science disciplines who held awareness raising days. Likewise, the engineering school or the higher institutes of technology introduced programs onto the curricula based on raising awareness about entrepreneurship or entrepreneurship courses.

Within the economics/management domain, the Business Administration Institute set up two Masters degree courses in collaboration with the science-park in order to study the creation of
corporate ventures and the development of new products, as well as specific training directed
towards the creators of innovative firms.

On the other hand, no training or awareness raising sessions were put forward for the Departments
of Law, Sociology, Modern Languages, Arts, History/Geography, Philosophy, etc.

This combination of actions was not coordinated at the University level which left the initiative to
each component. In addition, the actions were part of a diploma conferring logic; there was no
systematic awareness-raising procedure and large parts of the student population were disregarded
(notably the undergraduates).

The CRÉACTIV'NANTES project got a favorable feedback from University Head Office. It
pointed to a greater opportunity for proposing the setting up of an university center helping both
venture creation and the development of activities. This idea was subsequently chosen by the
University authorities and became part of its development strategy which was formalized by its
master plan of 1999-2003. This endowed the project with greater clarity and helped to inscribe it
within the external political sphere. However, the implementation met with a certain number of
difficulties which were to considerably hamper it.

1.3. The decisive support of the external partners

In no time at all, CRÉACTIV'NANTES became a strategic project for the University because it
was a productive vehicle for the relationship with its socio-economic environment. It got a very
warm reception, particularly from the CCI (Chamber of Commerce and Industry) and the
Regional Council, and this it equally reciprocated. For the former, it was an opportunity to tighten
the links with a key player in the world of Higher Education and it also meant targeting a mixed
public. For the latter, this action was a part of the general economic policy on area development
and on research enhancement. The Regional Council wanted CRÉACTIV'NANTES to be a pilot
scheme that could be diffused to other Universities around the region. Several objects contracts
were negotiated and signed with the CCI and the Regional Council in which the setting up of a
entrepreneurship resource center featured as a scheduled action.

The commitment of these partners provided the project with sterling advantages. On the one hand,
it provided a solution to the problem of mobilizing resources. As a result, the CCI was going to
make a mission supervisor available to the resource center, who was specialized in assisting
venture creators. On the other hand, this commitment made it possible to build up the network of
partners and to move closer to intermediary organizations, firms, entrepreneurs and other players in the economic sector. Getting into already existing networks appeared as key factor in the center’s development. Added to this was the acknowledgement of awareness raising and teaching operations that it proposed to set into motion. Lastly, this commitment made it possible to benefit from the experience of professionals who assisted corporate undertakings. These were part of a committee whose main missions were to define the actions that were undertaken and to pilot the center.

2. Nurturing an entrepreneurial culture at university: missions and realities

In September 2002, CRÉACTIV’NANTES came into being. Its main thrust defining the missions of the center were laid down using three the key principles—awareness raising, training, assisting, the methods of action were appraised in minute detail, given that making a mission statement in a university setting means taking the constraints and its culture into consideration. Consequently, a certain number of questions referred more broadly to the missions and modus operandi of a French university.

2.1. The underlying debates

Before the idea of creating an entrepreneurship center got the green light and above all before it was internally relayed, it appeared necessary for us to take on board each reservation and query in order to define our subject and our missions.

The diversity of the relevant participants and components (university departments, laboratories, institutes) did not lend itself to either any obvious understanding or any unanimous approval of the project. The issue that underpinned the debates was about the interest in teaching entrepreneurship and about the University’ right as a de facto framework for enhancing entrepreneurial behavior. Such an issue fuelled many a debate. For example, certain people felt that these missions do not fall within the scope of the education system, mainly because this system would face certain limitations especially when it promoted the autonomy and creativity that are required with entrepreneurship. They considered that the institutionalization of education means that the spirit of enterprise is impractical in a university setting. In the Departments of
Human and Social Science certain teachers were not forthcoming in their appreciation of a project which bore such a likeness to economic and even business related concerns. A plethora of questions concerned the suitability of the missions that the CRÉACTIV’NANTES center had set itself and the provision of services it proposed. Moreover it questioned the predominance of economic logic in the method, i.e., training students in the shortest time so that they created ventures. The diversity of the missions in the pipeline had to be more explicit so as to be presented and above all understood by our interlocutors.

At this juncture, it became clear that there was a need that to include items in the centre missions such as the students’ orientations and their professional aims (the wage earning path versus the entrepreneurial one), the matter of employability (intrapreneurship) and finally the backing up of projects likely to lead to undertaking ventures (associations, etc...). In addition, it appeared judicious to us that the means of intervention proposed by the centre should not just limited to an economic vocation being linked to venture creation. It should equally endeavour to make a large number of students appreciate the importance of entrepreneurs (Saporta & Verstraete 1999), notably by enhancing the status that entrepreneurial activities enjoy (Gasse 1985, Gasse 1992, Filion 1991a et b). As a matter of fact, to favor an entrepreneurial education is first and foremost to arouse intention then afterward to seek the passing from intention to the entrepreneurial act.

2.2. Orientations and choices made

By extending the objectives pursued, the question was raised about the training provision segmentation. This made it possible to match the diversity of the public to the needs observed within the different components of the University. The main idea that was chosen was to design a program of actions and interventions comprising different levels. This would familiarize the students with this subject and allow them to discover entrepreneurial models in order to boost their will to undertake.

The general schemes were declined in such a way as to fit the specific backgrounds and professional orientations, i.e., researcher/ entrepreneur, law student or psychology student, the self employed, the pharmacy student / pharmacist, etc. Parallel to this, it seemed really advisable to our minds to conceive the means likely to foster the development of the students’ entrepreneurial capacities.
Entrepreneurial teaching generally follows two main objectives: acting on intention and acting on action (Boissin, 2003). As regards this type of teaching, the CRÉACTIV’NANTES project is not so much framed by a logic of action but more by a logic of fertilization. On the one hand, this bears in mind the youthful age of the mainly student public, of whom only a small number will supposedly launch into a venture at the end of their university studies. On the other hand, considering the cultural gap that exists between the world of university and that surrounding a venture undertaking, the objectives focus more on entrepreneurial culture than on the implementation of an entrepreneurial project. This leaves the task of assisting the relevant projects up to the specialized organizations. The objective therefore is not the creation of entrepreneurs nor the inception of new ventures but the development of the students’ willingness to become entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs within any type of organizations, public, private or association (Saporta & Verstraete 1999).

2.3. A resource center at the service of all the participants.

Given that the route towards entrepreneurship is often a privileged one due to an access to an entrepreneurial culture via family agencies\(^1\) or friends, or by previous personal ventures, CRÉACTIV’NANTES operates by pursuing its prime objective of incorporating entrepreneurship into both the culture and outlook of students and teachers/researchers. This objective is divided into sub-objectives as in Diagram n°1.

Diagram n°1 : The lines of development of the entrepreneurial culture

\(^1\) Bygrave (1997) states that in Babson College (USA), more than half the entrepreneurship students come from families who run their own businesses
The multi disciplinarity of the university was a definite asset right from the moment the CRÉACTIV’NANTES project was conceived. In fact, it made it necessary to consider the cultural diversity, the diversity of the ideas and common conceptions and it enhanced the need for adaptation. CRÉACTIV’NANTES must be a service that is common to the whole university but must be tailored to the multiplicity of the teaching, the research, the culture and the backgrounds. This means being constantly receptive to the expectancies of teachers, researchers and students when designing such a program.

3. CREACTIV’NANTES PROGRAM

CRÉACTIV’NANTES strives to make its activities available to all members of the university, identical for each and everyone but suited to all. These activities are all developed in association with the CCI which provides a logistic and educational back up as well as bringing in its knowledge of the entrepreneurial environment.

3.1. Round table discussions

CRÉACTIV’NANTES holds round table sessions between university people (students, teachers and researchers) and entrepreneurs with a view to creating a type of osmosis between both worlds. Our aim in this is to acculturate students in respect to entrepreneurial culture (Carrier & Jacob 1999). These encounters take place with the agreement and more often at the request of teachers who teach a small number of students in a particular year of study. Another objective is to get in speakers who are legitimate participants in the students’ view. In addition, every effort is made to invite entrepreneurs who have had university training and possibly in the same subject as those students and teachers that are attending.

Such meetings equally develop the students’ self awareness, i.e. the way in which he perceives himself and his awareness of relating to the models to which he has identified himself (Filion 1994, 1990). In this way, the entrepreneur models from which students can draw their inspirations probably play a paramount role and the sooner the face to face encounter takes place
in the course, the more time the student can lend thought to what he wants to do and to therefore envisage his future.

Lastly, such meetings can make the students aware and even change their conceptions of the relationship between the firm and themselves (Hernandez 2000, Rochefort 1997)\(^2\). When the students discover that being an entrepreneur can forge their professional paths and is accessible to them, they may contemplate this alternative to being a wage earner. In his appraisal of this development, Bob Aubrey (1994) talks of « self enterprise » and Alain Ehrenberg (1997) of « entrepreneurs for our own lives ».

### 3.2. The CRÉACTIV'NANTES Workshops

A second king pin in the CRÉACTIV'NANTES project are the workshops, i.e., 12 hour sessions (suggestion boxes) or 21 hour sessions (tool boxes), during which the students and researchers assess their entrepreneurial capabilities, their professional paths and the place such a project has in them. In the tool box sessions, they learn about the fundamental elements that carry through both the venture creating project and the drafting of a business plan.

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<td><strong>Suggestion box :</strong> 4 discovery modules</td>
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<td>• My entrepreneurial capabilities : knowing myself better to start a business more efficiently</td>
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<td>• To approach idea research idea techniques</td>
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<td>• the project method</td>
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<td><strong>Tool box :</strong> 7 operational modules</td>
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<td>• Methodologies and project implementation tools</td>
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<td>• Knowing one’s economic environment and the market</td>
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<td>• Choosing one’s status and the administrative procedures</td>
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\(^2\) These authors see 2000 as the advent of the model of the individual autonomous and responsible entrepreneur, as well as from the wage earning perspective. To Hernandez’s mind, it is necessary to move from a job seeker’s attitude to one of a provider of services. In the minds of these authors, it is not a matter of prompting each and everyone to creating their own company, but of approaching one’s problems in life and present and future job as an entrepreneur would This means observing one’s environment, being sensitive to one’s unfulfilled needs, analysing one’s skills and improving one’s training. It also means knowing how to work in a team, contributing to project groups, creating networks by being willing to invest oneself and by questioning oneself.
Keeping to the logic of fertilization, the choice was made at first to enhance the multidisciplinarity of the University:

- The groups comprise 15 people, students and researchers from different backgrounds. As a result, an engineering student liaises with a management student and a sociology lecturer;
- All kinds of project are considered ranging from the creation of a small private venture to a student service association.

Naturally, attendance at these workshops is voluntary although a training attendance certificate is delivered at the end of the session, and at the students’ request.

Initially, these workshops were reserved only for students or teachers with an idea for a project. This did not mean studying the project with them but assisting them upstream in their appraisals. Having come to an agreement with the project partners in, particularly the CCI and science-park, each bearer of a defined project would be directed towards an ad hoc help structure. In fact, it was more a question of pre-incubating the project than actually providing help to achieve it.

Since 2004, suggestion box meetings have been held to bring in people who do not have a project but who are asking themselves questions, «fairly tempted by this adventure» without “really knowing why”.

### 3.3. A personalized reception

CRÉACTIV’NANTES is situated in the middle of the main university campus. The consular project leader is on duty there on a part-time basis and can meet students who present their projects to him, and inform him of their doubts, while benefiting from his advice. This leader had never seen any students in the CCI before this and that he has an office on site allows students to get over any reservations, i.e., the students feel less intimidated and they do not feel they are compelled to come up with a result nor even have to implement the project in order to benefit from this advice. Geographical proximity thus creates social proximity. The project leader learns about the university world as he goes out to meet teachers/researchers, organizes workshops for students who see him on campus, and sees his name on the programs. In fact, he closely contributes to a process of mutual provision which will gradually break down barriers and draw in an increasing number of students seeking advice.
4. Questioning about implementation

CRÉACTIV'NANTES is a relevant example of an entrepreneurial project being developed within a large public body. It was necessary to think out the structuring of this ground-breaking project, and to prepare the conditions for implementing. In addition there was every need to clearly define its missions and objectives and above all to share them out. Such steps are time consuming as the project falls within an area of tension linked to the relatively antagonistic nature of administrative university logic and the entrepreneurial logic. As a matter of fact, this CRÉACTIV'NANTES project requires a certain degree of autonomy, a propensity to innovate, to seek out new directions, and a feel for action. In addition, it includes a logic for exploration, i.e., an experimental approach, whereas the University always naturally acts according to a logic of cultivation (March 1991). As a result, there is a marked confrontation of attributable conditions (allotting existing resources, arbitration between projects, between components and the choice of functioning) and creative conditions (project development, new behaviors, the search for new resources).

What is more, as the project uses existing training facilities and operating procedures, it perturbs the current budgetary and administrative rulings and thus calls for new regulations (Reynaud, 1989).

Lastly CRÉACTIV'NANTES is part of the dynamics surrounding a network of players. It was initiated by a group of teachers who had already tested out pedagogical projects related to entrepreneurship and who therefore maintain a relationship with the network such as corporate undertaking assistance structures. It is part of a University action program and as such is discussed and negotiated with the institutional partners of the University. CRÉACTIV'NANTES will therefore be discussed, negotiated and designed among the University and its partners at different levels, i.e., between the various departments at University Head Office in the same way as the more or less decentralized units and departments. The innovative, experimental and reticular nature of the project has subjected it to tensions which have surfaced in the operational aspects surrounding the implementation and the questioning of the educational issues.

3 Science park, foundations, venture networking, confederations of industries, young entrepreneurs associations……
4.1. A reticular negotiation

As happens with the numerous innovations that are undertaken within a large organization, there have been many areas of negotiation for the project from the outset and these functions according to their own rules.

The first area of negotiation occurred between the teachers masterminding the project and University Head Office. The teachers sought to extend and institutionalize their initiatives. While Head Office recognized the interest in having an entrepreneurship center, it felt that the initiating teachers lacked the legitimacy required to run what should be a real common service in relation to their colleagues from other university departments. Despite an acknowledgement of the aptitudes of the project initiators as regards entrepreneurship, the University feared that they were illegitimately turning what it considered to be a common project into an establishment project status. This area of negotiation belongs to internal politics. All the renegotiating that takes place within it revolves around the power-sharing associated with an innovation and to the spheres of uncertainty that it creates. This was according to the analysis made in organizational sociology (Crozier, Friedberg, 1977; Friedberg, 1995).

A second area of negotiation opened up between University Head Office and its institutional partners (CCI and the Regional Council): the University is very keen to be part of a strong dynamics of collaboration with these partners. In fact, it suffers from being seen as a little out of step due to the thousand years in which it has traditionally created and spread culture and knowledge as opposed to the modern need for professionalizing its students. It also lives in a world of budget squeezing and encounters difficulties in initiating original programs by itself (Musselin 2001). In addition, the University was then involved in an establishment project process which it was finding hard both to develop and implement. For the institutional partners, each one had its own line of thought. The Regional Council and the CCI saw venture creation as a non-negligible tool for local economic development, the utility of which was proportionate to the rate of unemployment. The Regional Council already pursues actions in favor of Phd students and is eager that new professional horizon will be opened for these students. In addition, it endeavors to enhance all initiatives in favor of technological development. The CCI sees the University as an area of cultivation for future venture creators that they will consult. This area of negotiation therefore comprises external politics.
A third area of negotiation is already open: this concerns the teachers in charge of up and running entrepreneurship programs as well as the institutional partners with whom they were working. In this way, the area of negotiation may be described as one containing the original network of the CRÉACTIV'NANTES project. This area of negotiation is also that of the intrapreneurs, i.e., all the teachers/researchers that it mobilizes have masterminded entrepreneurial programs. Within this area, the participants know each other well and there is an atmosphere of trust. Certain teachers wish for the institutionalization of a sometimes already longstanding cooperation and are eager to play a key role in the process. Others do not wish to commit themselves and consider that the decentralized programs that they have already developed are enough in themselves. All of them are well aware that everything will be worked out “at the higher levels” and this probably explains the qualms that certain people express about investing themselves in the general program. The relations between participants in this third area of negotiation and their hierarchies bear little resemblance. The employees of the institutional partners display a greater coherence while those of the University advance in a dispersed order.

In a three dimensional negotiating process, there is an obvious risk of the project being bogged down if the three networks remain impenetrable. The multiplicity of the participants, the levels and the logic behind the actions requires both a mobilization of the three networks around a single project and that each and everyone’s aspirations converge. The project leader here fulfils a real intrapreneurship function as described by Breton and Wintrobe (1982), which means network mobilization and confidence boosting that will facilitate transactions. This leader plays a role of arbitrator (Pettigrew, 1987) and this implies a firm implantation in the university in general and the network of the concerned participants in particular.

**4.2. The tensions imparted to the project**

The CRÉACTIV'NANTES project construction process bears all the characteristics of political decision-making, i.e., « a process of convergence and mutual adjustments among industrial players who possess different sets of values on the one hand, and possess a relative autonomy and their own power » (Monnier, 1987). In the same way, CRÉACTIV'NANTES is more the result than the prior condition for the implementation process, a compromise between the different types
of action logic, interests and sets of value whose stability and development depend on its regulation.

CRÉACTIV'NANTES tries to strike a balance between the various tensions that are outlined in Diagram n° 2, i.e., tensions inside the action logic (economic v educational), the conceptions of the entrepreneur, political manoeuvring, bankrolling, the debates surrounding the University’s missions and the respective know how from the different parties involved.

Such a balance is intrinsically unstable and requires that those piloting the project furnish a substantial investment in an almost never ending process of adaptation and optimization. The joint regulation, symbolized by a piloting committee pooling the three main project partners aims to be the selected method of adaptation and compromise.

Diagram n°2 : The tensions imparted to the CRÉACTIV'NANTES project
4.3. Constructing legitimacy

Constructing the legitimacy of CRÉACTIV’NANTES calls various aspects into question:

What are the results that one can hope to attain? What priorities must the center give itself? As a result, it appears necessary to set out the priorities, to avail oneself of a clear and shared strategy with precise objectives that are fixed annually (the master plan) in order to have an accurate knowledge of the actions undertaken and their effectiveness. Such a question refers to that of activity pointers (students having being contacted or firms set up). These prove extremely painstaking, as they imply a long term vision from the partners that may exceed their own work cycles.

This question of results directly impacts the educational questions. According to the set targets, the pedagogics that will be developed are more or less directed to the awareness raising
and the enhancement of responsibility and initiative behaviors. On the other hand, the pedagogics will be oriented toward the technical feature involved in setting up a company. This will then make it possible to target the means toward the really motivated students and researchers bearing projects that deserve due consideration.

What role does the center play in a system assisting venture creation? Is it situated far upstream in order to attract this university component of some 1.6 m French people who say that they dream about starting a business one day? Is it more downstream and focused on students and researchers who have projects, with the risk of having to painstakingly share skills with partners originally assisting in the venture creation?

What role does the center have in the University? As an experimental process, CRÉACTIV’NANTES went a whole year without any legal or accountable status. As the project had been accepted, the University decided to place it within an «economics-management» section of the University. This confers it with many advantages but it could nevertheless deprive it of its legitimacy as a common service. It compels the center to boost its efforts to go towards the teachers with their aforementioned strategic role in the diffusion of an entrepreneurial culture.

What motivations have the project bearers got? Does the University legitimate this choice of activity? It is common knowledge that the civil service is a huge machine which discourages intrapreneurship (Clergeau, 1994). Given the administrative cumbersomeness, the complete lack of professional acknowledgement of the commitments, the paucity of means, piloting such projects means a heavy internal mobilization and an overflowing energy from the operational team. Apart from the pioneering spirit or vocation, the timelessness of such projects means that mechanisms are put into place so that the team sees its commitment being recognized and legitimated compared with the career prospects proposed by the university system.

Conclusion

Apart from sharing the experiences, this study pursued the objective of analyzing the logic and tensions underlying the definition and then the operation of an entrepreneurship centre within a large university. The growth in the number of facilities of this type in France and the encouragement that they get from the government (with the setting up of a House of Entrepreneurship) will rapidly prompt questions pertaining to assessment. Indeed, to our minds,
understanding the logic of the participants and the underlying tensions which accompanied the implementation is already a necessary step towards assessment.

This paper owes more to action research than to case studies because the authors were also involved in the project. And here lie the interest and the drawbacks in this. Given that they were full participants in the CRÉACTIV’NANTES project, the authors pinpointed the tensions from its earliest stages and were compelled to negotiate in a framework with different systems of logic. Nevertheless, such action taken within a studied reality makes any generalization of the analyses difficult.

In July 2004, CRÉACTIV’NANTES was designated the title of «House of Entrepreneurship » by the Ministry in charge of research. Such acknowledgement by the government is the final step in the legitimation process that has been in progress for several months. The success of educational initiatives, albeit scattered, had highlighted the opportunity for such a project. Above all, it allowed CRÉACTIV’NANTES to be firmly anchored into an institutional network which was also an efficient participant. A significant advantage was created by the University governing board becoming aware of the need to develop an entrepreneurial culture and the inclusion of CRÉACTIV’NANTES into the establishment project process. This therefore could be used to implement the internal process of legitimation.

University culture is hardly open to this type of project which breaks with the overriding interpretation of missions conducted at the University. Considering the strategic position of teachers in the innovation diffusion process in education and training and of the diversity of the possible explicative paradigms,⁴ (Cros, 2002), their associating themselves with the project is a sine qua non condition for its success. For this reason, the commitment by the university in a pre requisite for launching a transversal project of entrepreneurship awareness raising.

However, university supervision also brings administrative cumbersomeness which does not fit in with the organization of the project team at the center. This is the final tension at CRÉACTIV’NANTES , i.e., speaking about entrepreneurship, raising awareness about assuming responsibility and running an innovative project within a centralized and bureaucratic structure. Such a project requires flexibility and autonomy to meet the constraints of project management in

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⁴ Epidemiological model, social interactionism model, institutionalisation model and action research model.
an open network. For this reason the setting up of a House of Entrepreneurship has made it possible to overturn certain routines and hesitations and is seemingly, to our minds, a significant vehicle for the development of university structures.


Musselin C. (2001), La longue marche des universités françaises, Paris, PUF.


