

STUDENT COMPANY REPORT

Junior Achievement - Young Enterprise Italy

Introduction

The Italian law does not permit the establishment of student enterprises. The main limitation is given by the impossibility for people under 18 to be owners or shareholders of companies except with the permission of the Court on the advice of the magistrate. However, the Italian law accept mini-companies as an educational tool with these features: limited commercial activities, a duration of a maximum 1 year, a limited amount of start-up capital (lire 1.000.000, i.e. about euro 500,00).

Selection of school/trainers

Following what asked in this project, Junior Achievement - Young Enterprise Italy (following: JA-YE Italy) decided to try this project with one of its technical partners in a depressed area of the South of Italy: CFP (Vocational School) Unisco based in Bari. Unisco and the chosen teachers has a great experience on entrepreneurship education, having taken part to various Junior Achievement trainings and events in the past years. Unisco is also the licensee for Junior Achievement's educational programmes in the schools in the whole Region (Apulia), with a special focus on the global "Company Programme". What is new for JA-YE Italy and Unisco is the application of the student company format to a drop-out group of students. The teachers chosen are Massimo Avantaggiato, who also coordinate the project in the school, Vincenzo Deruvo, who is also a partner of Unisco and a great experience in coordinating social-educational programmes, and Tiziana Scruci, a teacher of the school. Other trainers, with technical skills, were involved during the project through "web conferences".

Project activities presentation S.C. to the selected school- teachers

With the help of the Unisco CFP teacher, Massimo Avantaggiato, we choose a group of 14 students; they are drop-out students with social or familiar problems, that are now taking part to a vocational course to reach a professional qualification. On October 2010, Massimo Avantaggiato presented them the project, with the help of a group of former students and teachers of the JA "Company Programme" who took part to the past Italian Company of the Year Competition.

Design of Innovation camp & Entrepreneurship camp - smes involvement

The school has adopted the Common model of Innovation Camp (C.I.C.) approved during the 3rd meeting in Norway from all Partners. The model contemplated the involvement of at least two teachers and a duration of at least 8 h. (in 1 day or 2 half days).

As provided in C.I.C. the activities carried out were: introduction to the students to business plan tools, creative exercises, brainstorming activity, idea development and idea competition. As required in C.I.C. we have made available to students a room to work with the equipment and teaching materials they needed. The innovation camp took place in Unisco school and last 2 days.

Training of Trainers in order to implement a Student Company

JA-YE Italy organized a National Training of Trainers with all the Italian teachers taking part to its "Company Programme" (i.e. "Impresa in azione"). Unisco teachers, who had already gained experience on educational processes, were specially trained to facilitate a better understanding of the Italian law. For this reason, JA-YE Italy spent much time to organize meetings with Chamber of Commerce and Start-Up consultants to better understand the Italian law on this topic and to find a useful way to implement a real Student Company; the Skype conferences that JA-YE Italy representatives had with Unisco teachers were e-Learning trainings on this topic and discussions to how apply the Italian law to this kind of students with social and familiar problems.

Dissemination of the S.C. project in the local area

On June 10th 2010 in the Auditorium of Assolombarda in Milan, at the end of its national event "BIZ Factory" - the award the Italian excellence in entrepreneurship education, JA-YE Italy presented this project to its corporate partners, media, Italian students and teachers, institutions.

Locally, on the 1st October 2010, Unisco presented this project during a regional event named "Puglia Giovani: dal Gargano al Salento, formazione al 100%" to more than 1.000 young people, regional and local institutions, other CFP regional schools.

Other 2 occasions at the end of the school year 2010/2011 were the Regional Competition of "Company Programme" in Bari, and "BIZ Factory 2011".

On 27th September 2011, JA-YE Italy organized a convention with all its local partners and Regional teachers and presented the best practice of the "Student Company" projects and all the lessons

learned. This would be of a great importance to inspire the whole network engaged in Entrepreneurship Education in Italy.

Student Company Idea Selection

As foreseen, during the Innovation Camp students brainstormed some possible entrepreneurial ideas, under the guidance of their teachers. Their discussions focused on those semi-skilled “old” jobs, taking their roots from the traditions and that are now part of the “talent mismatch” and “female entrepreneurship” discussions about the actual job market. As known, the “made in Italy” market is losing its skilled artistry or, more precisely, its embroidery talent that long supported fashion and traditional dresses and linens. Under these premises, students decided to develop some original tools and presents from cross-stitch art. Girls and boys equally appreciated this idea and together they hard worked to prepare for sales.

“Innovation & entrepreneurship camp” implementation: entrepreneurship case studies Innovation camp report (workshop/case studies)

Following the 2010 Regional recognition of a new fashion district in Apulia, whose growth will be supported by governments, universities, and fashion/design/textile associations, teachers guided students to develop some creative ideas in order to support this job-market trend. This policy has also been supported from the results of some national and international researches that show the importance and future growth of those manual and skilled occupations such those from arts and crafts.

It was also important that students had knowledge of their skills and capabilities, to start-up a student company really in line with them.

The Innovation Camp began with some “self-knowledge” and creativity exercises, that allowed to create a cooperative and funny environment.

After that session, teachers presented the above regional job-market scenario, in order to create students’ attention.

Then, all together students had a free brainstorming, trying to develop possible ideas in the field of fashion and tradition. That’s the embroidery sector final decision with the majority of students.

Student company description: business plan, setting up student company, producing and management, closing of company

For their student company, students choose the name “Remember JA”. Its legal form is a “mini-company” registered through JA-YE Italy with the IDnumber: 2010-0054. Students wrote and signed:

- A Charter
- A Statute

After many searches and meetings with legal and start-up experts, JA-YE Italy and Unisco agreed to maintain the legal status of “Remember JA” as a “mini-company” and not a real company as the main aims of the project. This was mainly due to the characteristics of the participating students and the difficulties to involve families (with serious problems).

Anyway, each student acted as a real manager of the student company. They were both board members and shareholders. They organized as follows (each position/department is covered by 1 or 2 students):

- CEO
- Marketing dep.
- Financial dep.
- Human Resources dep.
- Sales dep.
- Production dep.
- Communication & IT dep.
- Secretary

Following the Italian law on “mini-companies” as an educational tool, they signed the agreement to keep their commercial capabilities low and liquidate “Remember JA” within June 2011; on May 27th 2011, the group participated in the regional final event and was then selected for the national final event held in Lecce from the 15th to the 17th of June. Their business activities were completed on June 2011.

Students produced and sold for a total amount of € 400,00. Their main channel was B-to-C, taking orders from their customers. The other channel, B-to-B, allowed them to create partnerships with the main haberdashery of the city.

They produced bibs, calendars, greeting cards. As the market asked, they created special lines of products for Easter, baby births, marriages.

Closing of company

As reported in the liquidation report of the company, sales activities were completed on the 8th of June 2011. During the liquidation students have paid all expenditures, wages and share certificates.

Unsold merchandise is donated to a charity association of Bari.

After June 8th, the company took part as finalist in the national final event of ‘BIZ Factory’ (Lecce, 15-17 June 2011).

Conclusion

This experience has given us many satisfactions as it taught us that the “student company” format is a great educational tool also to prevent drop-out and involve “street children” in hands-on activities to approach the world of work.

We tested it in a very particular environment. These guys have been recovered from the street through the social services of the municipality of Bari. They are kids with severe social problems, bullying, prison, and/or lack of their native families.

We tried to address them a special challenge: to find a creative idea, easy to produce and sell, but that could offer them a concrete road to work. As Italy, but mainly, Apulia region is following a job strategy for “arts and crafts” to pursue and guarantee - in the next years - the excellence of the “made in Italy”.

We think we had success in this aim. “Remember JA” has been chosen as the best “student company” in Apulia region to participate to the next “National Competition, BIZ Factory”. Guys showed enthusiasm, a good knowledge of their market, and great selling results in so less time.

However, because of the problems inherent in this type of guys, it was not possible, according to Italian law, to start a real business. The case of minors, the law would require to involve families or courts to start his own business or just an association. Families are absent, or parents have a very low level of education to be able to understand the necessity and effectiveness of this project.

This obliged us to keep the model of “mini-companies” according to the standard of Junior Achievement. However, innovation has been proven right to go this specific audience.