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LEARNING BY PRACTICE?

ENTREPRENEURIAL DYNAMICS AMONG PORTUGUESE GRADUATES

This chapter discusses examples of learning experiences with respect to entrepreneurship among Portuguese graduates, using evidence taken from recent research conducted at the University of Minho in northern Portugal. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning are discussed in relatively broad terms: as transversal skills, attitudes and behaviours associated with creativity, innovation and risk-taking; attributes that are applicable to various areas of personal and professional life (COM, 2003, 2012). As such, this can be regarded as entrepreneurial learning in its social and cultural manifestation, rather than identifying business opportunities or business creation. Although the importance of entrepreneurship education has long been recognised, this conceptualisation is relatively new and under-developed in many national contexts, including Portugal, in contrast to other countries such as Belgium, Finland and Sweden. In what follows, we argue that entrepreneurship values can be encouraged via formal, informal and non-formal learning experiences, and this can be of importance with respect to enhancing chances in the labour market, particularly at a time of economic crisis.

This discussion is organised into two main sections. The first part deals with the current situation vis a vis Portuguese young people and the challenge for youth work within the context of Europe at a time of economic crisis. Also included is a brief assessment of the impact of the Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) and the recent Europe 2020 development, with a particular focus on entrepreneurial

learning, and an emphasis on the importance of informal and non-formal learning using the paradigm of lifelong learning as advocated by UNESCO (2003). The second part focuses on a case study in entrepreneurial learning involving students, taken from different scientific deliverables from the project 'The Potential of Entrepreneurship at the University of Minho' (2010-2012) and the on-going PhD project 'Entrepreneurship Qualified: Higher Education Policy and (Re)configuration of the Career Paths of Graduates' (2010-2013). The case study is intended to highlight the importance of support networks, mentoring and knowledge transfer as developed by various stakeholders at the University of Minho, all of which can help improve our understanding of the extent to which young people can enjoy support at various stages of an actual entrepreneurship experience. The conclusion presents a summary of the main findings, highlighting the privileged relationship between non-formal and informal entrepreneurial learning and some of the implications of entrepreneurial learning for education, research and public policy.

PORTUGUESE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

The austerity policies enacted by successive Portuguese governments since the onset of economic crisis in 2008 have led to savage cuts in public expenditure. This in turn has contributed not only to reductions in welfare provision but also falling consumer spending and rising unemployment. The impact of austerity on young people has been disproportionately high, particularly in terms of unemployment (see Cairns, 2013; Cairns & Growiec forthcoming; Cairns et al. forthcoming). Official statistics show that the greatest increase in unemployment since the Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and European Commission) bailout in 2011 has been among the 15-24 year old age group, and within this cohort, the greatest increases in unemployment have been among recent graduates: from 23% in the first quarter of 2011 to 45% in the first quarter of 2013 (INE, 2013). That university educated Portuguese young people should be so affected provides strong justification for focusing on the student population in this chapter, as well as bringing to light the somewhat uncomfortable fact that a university education may be becoming a liability rather than an asset in securing labour market entry in contemporary Portugal.

Economic marginalisation, and generational social inequality, is nothing new for young people in recent modern European societies; in fact youth scholars have long typified young people as existing in a near permanent state of crisis (see, for example, Cavalli & Galland, 1995; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Machado Pais, 2003). But the sheer scale of youth unemployment in Portugal today and a potentially huge under-utilisation of educational capital should be of serious political concern. This leads us to ask what alternative means of initiating careers might be open to these young people, with entrepreneurship as one possibility.

Conceptualising Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is an area in which there has been significant recent progress in terms of integration into mainstream political discourse in Portugal, albeit development which is now challenged by a context of changing market dynamics. Parente et al. (2012) contrast the Portuguese situation with the international context, underlining the fragility of the national welfare system and the attendant risk of Portuguese young people failing to fully realise their entrepreneurial potential. These authors also stress that Portugal lacks access to philanthropic sources of capital and other non-profit organisations in contrast to countries such as the United States; this is something that increases the need to develop different means of fostering youth entrepreneurialism, which may include initiatives within a potential 'third sector' (also called social economy) involving the state, religious organisations and other welfare entities: this is referred to by Parente et al. (2012: 119) as 'social entrepreneurship' (see Santos, 1993; Ferreira, 1996; Franco et al., 2005).

With regard to the impact of the Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010), and the recent Europe 2020 development initiative, the European Commission has committed itself to promoting entrepreneurship as a major driver of innovation and competitiveness for the European Union. In Portugal entrepreneurship also constitutes a key component of public policy, consistent with current European policy goals. Recognition of this aim has also been imbedded into education systems, particularly at tertiary level, with many universities now making explicit attempts to encourage entrepreneurship, both in curricula and via less formal means, some of which will be discussed in the proceeding sections of this chapter.

Entrepreneurial learning and non-formal transition into the labour market

To fully appreciate the profound and complex changes taking place in the Portuguese labour market, we need to take a holistic approach to education on entrepreneurship. This means looking at new dynamics of globalisation and recognising the importance of entrepreneurial initiative for work and life in general. At higher education level this can entail universities following new collaborative strategies involving a broad range of stakeholders. It is also assumed that the pedagogical practices will encourage the development of the attitudes and behaviour associated with life-skills: flexibility, problem-solving, autonomy, responsibility, proactivity and dealing with uncertainty, which can work as a kind of 'preparation for the future'. This perspective also stresses a new educational paradigm aimed at enhancing learning opportunities, taking into account new uses of knowledge in 'organisations of all types and in all spheres of life' (Gibb, 2005), and focused on the complementarity between formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Learning theory recognises that learning is influenced by socio-cultural and contextual aspects, and connects different areas of an individual's life. It is assumed, therefore, that the knowledge and skills entrepreneurs need are created and transformed by participating in social practices. This is a dynamic process in which education is not a decontextualised practice (Bourdieu, 1997) since participation is at the heart of learning, knowledge and the identity of entrepreneurs (Cope & Down, 2010). Focusing on the academic context, Gibb (2002) also notes that entrepreneurial learning can occur outside an institutional framework via student involvement in 'communities of practice', suggesting that non-formal learning acquired through previous work experience, participation in social networks and mentoring schemes can have positive implications for the development of entrepreneurship among students.

The recognition of the importance of non-formal learning can be related in certain cases of good practices or projects to fostering entrepreneurial initiative among European students, e.g. Education Unlimited! and Youth and Unemployment; projects that have taken place in various countries, organised by the student organisation AEGEE (European Students' Forum). Other corporate-sponsored programmes include the Young Enterprise Project and the Junior Achievement Young Enterprise programme, as implemented in several European universities. These initiatives have contributed towards the visibility and favourable impact of non-formal learning as a strategy in the transition into the labour market for young graduates.

EXAMPLES OF GRADUATE YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A PORTUGUESE CASE STUDY

The remainder of this chapter concentrates on a case study, with a view to illustrating some of the most important aspects of non-formal learning. The specific purpose here is to explain and understand the importance of involvement in entrepreneurial learning as developed by different stakeholders. Specifically, we have sought to: identify the main stakeholders and outline their missions and strategies for fostering entrepreneurial learning; characterise entrepreneurial experiences as undertaken by young people, particularly in terms of the skills mobilised, obstacles and success factors; survey the definitions and examples of entrepreneurship and reflect on its impact.

The present study is based on the results from sixteen semi-structured interviews conducted with young people from different socio-demographic and educational profiles, all of whom were in a phase of professional transition and searching for a job. In terms of methodological approach, the selection of young people for interview was made from two surveys designed to assess the entrepreneurial potential of graduates, and which had been applied to earlier research. While the study can be considered as having a 'youth' focus, a few individuals aged over 29 years old, beyond what might normally be considered 'young', were included due to the richness of their contributions.

In terms of labour market status, the interviewees themselves were nearing completion of their courses, unemployed and seeking employment or, in most cases, had already found a job, with fieldwork conducted in 2010 and 2011³⁵. To ensure theoretical and empirical relevance, we purposely selected individuals from a diverse range of higher education contexts in relation to scientific fields and study cycles (undergraduate, masters and doctoral levels), thus representing a heterogeneous range of entrepreneurial learning pathways in an academic context. In addition to these criteria, we included cases with different profiles in terms of gender, socio-economic or employment status to obtain a systemic view of the problem under consideration (see table 1.). The interviews were all conducted in person, with an average duration of ninety minutes. All the participants were fully informed as to the objectives of the study and gave their consent for the interview to be recorded and for dissemination of the data. Privacy and confidentiality of personal information were also guaranteed.

Nº	GENDER	AGE	SCIENTIFIC AREA/COURSE	STUDY CYCLE	EMPLOYMENT SITUATION
1	M	28	Computer Engineering	2 ^o cycle (n.c.)	Businessman
2	F	26	Marketing and Strategic Management	2 ^o cycle (n.c.)	Self-employed
3	F	27	Psychology	3 ^o cycle (n.c.)	PhD Student
4	F	24	Public Administration	1 ^o cycle	Unemployed
5	M	26	Biophysics	2 ^o cycle	Researcher
6	F	25	Biomedical Sciences	2 ^o cycle	Unemployed
7	F	23	Civil Engineering	2 ^o cycle (n.c.)	Intern
8	F	22	Law	2 ^o cycle (n.c.)	Self-employed
9	M	30	Sociology	1 ^o cycle	Fixed-Term Contract Worker
10	F	25	Computer and Planning	1 ^o cycle	Fixed-Term Contract Worker
11	F	29	Sociology	1 ^o cycle	Unemployed
12	F	26	International Relations	1 ^o cycle	Self-employed
13	M	30	Environmental Engineering	2 ^o cycle	Fixed-Term Contract Worker
14	F	23	Education	1 ^o cycle	Fixed-Term Contract Worker
15	M	35	Public Administration	2 ^o cycle	Fixed-Term Contract Worker
16	F	24	Business and Strategic Marketing	1 ^o cycle	Fixed-Term Contract Worker

Key: (n.c.) – degree not completed

Source: Survey on potential of entrepreneurship at University of Minho (2010) National Survey and the potential of entrepreneurship to students of public higher education (2011).

Socio-demographic, educational and professional backgrounds of respondents

Table 1.

With regard to the treatment of information collected, the first reading of the data followed a thematic approach, which involved the identification of common themes emerging from the interviews. It should be noted, however, that the analysis of results placed greater emphasis on the contributions, positions and perspectives of the respondents from two analytical dimensions: meanings and representations about entrepreneurship; activities and entrepreneurship in academia.

Each of these vectors target a different level in our analysis, taking into account the discourses, meanings and representations produced around the theme of entrepreneurship. This also illustrates the various dimensions of subjective experience and social experience in a non-formal learning academic context.

Stakeholders, missions and support strategies

It is now widely recognised that institutions of higher education can provide, in their internal environment, entrepreneurial learning opportunities for students incorporating the involvement of various stakeholders, including students, academics, researchers, technical staff and other scholars. The idea of entrepreneurship education is relatively new in Portugal and only started to be widespread in 2006. Where higher education is concerned, the strategy for strengthening entrepreneurship is strongly related to innovation, technology transfer and business creation. There is however a lack of consensus in the academic community about the integration of entrepreneurship into course curricula. Nevertheless, Portuguese universities have, particularly in recent years, diversified their strategies to promote entrepreneurship, with these issues being addressed in most cases by government or academic units, depending on their respective administrative bodies and internal budget.

In the case of the University of Minho (UM), the promotion of entrepreneurship, for the purpose of carrying-out duties (Article n°2, Statutes of UM) and skills in this area, is entrusted to the Vice-Rector. Direct stimulus of entrepreneurship by UM is embodied in new structures and an academic interface, in close cooperation with other public and private organisations, e.g. the businesses sector, local small firms and entrepreneurs and their associations, local communities and associated non-government organisations, which support entrepreneurship education via their own agendas. In practice, this has meant increased extracurricular activities and support that, through a non-formal approach, seeks to engage students via a series of outreach initiatives, e.g. events and ideas competitions, and training courses and programmes in the area of entrepreneurship, as well as support for the creation of businesses (mentoring, counselling, etc.). This diverse range of activities has made visible the growing importance of various stakeholders in the expansion of entrepreneurial learning opportunities within academia, especially the role of the Office of Liftoff-Entrepreneur, TecMinho and Spinpark/AvePark³⁶.

Following a brief note regarding our sample of graduates and entrepreneurship activities developed at UM, we will present empirical evidence from the interviews on the impact of the participation in non-formal or extracurricular activities. Given space limitations, we focus on highlighting recurrent experiences within the respondents' discourse, as well as other potentials, obstacles and critical factors in entrepreneurial education at tertiary level.

Forms and contexts of entrepreneurial learning

An initial analysis of our interviews enabled us to identify various forms of entrepreneurial learning as undertaken by respondents. This was mostly through work experience or internships, participation in student mobility programmes, volunteering and associational activity. This analysis revealed what these graduates had learnt in practice; the skills and competencies relevant to their personal and professional development: 'confidence', 'autonomy', 'responsibility', 'decision-making', 'interpersonal skills' and 'the ability to react to professional adversities', among others. In most cases, the acquisition of these skills was closely connected to stronger links to the labour market and, in essence, the opportunity to 'learn to work', 'make contacts' or 'to build a CV'. The following testimonies illustrate some of these learning experiences in the workplace and internships.

'I worked in a restaurant and in several shops [...] did quality audits [...] working in several areas led me to gain self-confidence, and when I finish the course I know now how difficult the world of work will be. I also gained maturity, both in terms of money and responsibility.' (Joana, 22, Public Administration, Unemploye)

'[...] I had several vacation jobs and did part-time jobs and an internship [...] these experiences were important because it was through them that I got other opportunities, on a recommendation, directly or indirectly [...] I was able to find people who taught me how things were done in practice.' (Maria, 36, Marketing, Self-Employed)

'[...] I was at a consulting firm to do a market study. That helped me a lot to get in touch with people [...] I learned a lot during that placement. I basically learned how to work and see how organisations work.' (Teresa, 23, Social Economy, Unemployed)

We can observe here an emphasis on non-formal and extracurricular activities, as well as experiences that lead to professional development via the acquisition of soft skills; this is something that is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Marques, 2007; Marques Moreira, 2011a and 2011b).

Looking at other areas, there were also graduates who talked about their participation in mobility programmes and volunteering.

'[Erasmus] was the best experience of my life [...] I had to deal with a totally different culture. Undoubtedly, I grew-up a lot during this period. I had to make decisions and I became much more responsible [...] I looked at this exchange as a very good opportunity, as Rio de Janeiro is in need of engineers.'
(Sara, 23, Civil Engineering, Intern)

'[...] the volunteer work I did [with the elderly] helped me to overcome the problem of relationships with adults and also allowed me to get a part-time job at a clinic and find clients.' (Paulo, 27, Economics, Self-employed)

In the above quotations, it is possible to observe the complexity of the process of learning and development in terms of knowledge and skills, indicating a transformation of dispositions and attitudes among these young people, towards life and work in particular. This is visible in certain ideas, such as 'growing up', 'gaining maturity' and acquiring an 'ability to solve problems'.

Critical factors in the educational processes

Fostering entrepreneurship at UM has gained new momentum thanks to the role of TecMinho and Liftoff (Office of the Entrepreneur). Here are some of the testimonies that shed light on the performance of these two entities.

'[The university] plays an active role, through having created the office of entrepreneurship. Since then, entrepreneurship has begun to attract more attention [...] Some of the students have gained more courage to develop the ideas they had but would have otherwise been afraid to present [...] students have felt more supported.' (Joana, 22, Public Administration, Unemployed)

'The university has some very good programmes [...] I applied for a project in entrepreneurship, a business idea in TecMinho. It was very useful and important because we had information sessions and they taught us how to do a SWOT analysis. I am civil engineering and knew nothing about that.' (Sara, 23, Civil Engineering, Intern)

In addition to these two organisations, some departments and schools have their own educational provision in the area of entrepreneurship and organise activities in this area, with the goal of creating an environment conducive to the development of entrepreneurship among students. In this regard, the testimony of João shows how activities undertaken by the department he studied in had a positive impact on learning.

'[...] we had contact with companies, there were organised sessions with entrepreneurs [...] an excellent opportunity to create contacts. We were in a fertile environment for entrepreneurship because in addition, students have many ideas and can be proactive, and many of our teachers also have businesses.' (João, 28, Computer Engineering, Businessman)

In other cases, however, it is clear that some courses do not present the same opportunities for training in entrepreneurship as others. In most of these situations, respondents criticised their courses as being too theoretical and lacking an aspect of entrepreneurship, recognising that this aspect is localised within a restricted core of courses. Miguel and Catarina confirm this with regard to their economics and management courses.

'It is something completely unknown in a course at my level [...] there are many things organised by the university, but more for courses like economics and management [...]. To speak of entrepreneurship is for economics and management.'
(Miguel, 27, Biophysics, Research Fellow)

'[...] I never felt that [the course] was organised for entrepreneurs, so we could create our own projects and create our own jobs [...] psychology is more closely associated with working for others, while entrepreneurship is oriented towards courses in the areas of economics or management.'
(Catarina, 27, Psychology, PhD student)

In some cases, it appears that the educational provision for entrepreneurship courses/departments is restricted to too narrow a view of entrepreneurship-oriented start-ups, intended primarily for students in scientific fields such as economics, management and some engineering courses. However, it should be noted that the activities undertaken by Liftoff and TecMinho have introduced a new approach into the entrepreneurial learning process, focused more on practical activities that contribute to the development of attitudes and behaviour associated with innovation, creativity and communication which, in theory, could be applied to various fields of professional life.

Definitions and examples of entrepreneurship

In this section, we focus on how our respondents' described entrepreneurship and projects and motivations relating to the exercise of independent professional activity. These definitions allow us to capture the various meanings and examples of what it is to be an entrepreneur, as well as providing a wealth of descriptive information about what young people actually mean when they talk about entrepreneurship.

Definitions of entrepreneurship

It is apparent that what is meant by entrepreneurship among graduates is not always shared. This ambiguity in relation to the concept of entrepreneurship means that a large number of the respondents have difficulty in assigning meaning to the concept: for some it is a term that is 'fashionable' in political discourse, while for others it signifies being pro-active and creative at a more individual level. But for most interviewees, it clearly entails the project of setting-up a business. These three testimonies illustrate this confusion.

'Unfortunately it is used to connote entrepreneurship as a fad.' (Maria, 36, Marketing, Self-employed)

'[...] I dunno, its entrepreneurship, I relate it a lot with being pro-active and that everyone has to have it. [...] I believe that an entrepreneur has to have ideas and be creative.' (Paulo, 27, Economics, Self-employed)

'[Entrepreneurship] is not for everyone [...]. Not all courses relate to the development of products. For example, a Law School will not develop a product, will it?' (John, 28, Computer Engineering, Businessman)

Given the evident plurality of meaning, it is clear that there is a need for conceptual clarification between entrepreneurial initiative and entrepreneurship and, likewise, between entrepreneurial education (learning) and entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurs' projects

In the current context, in Portugal as in many other countries, self-employment and business creation are seen as viable career options, particularly for people with a university education. Through analysing the testimonies of our respondents about their professional projects, there emerges a more flexible attitude towards work. This is expressed in the accounts of these young people: their desire for professional autonomy, to 'experience' knowledge and new situations, practice mobility between national and international companies and be challenged by 'innovative projects' (Marques, 2012). Expressions such as 'opportunity', 'challenge', 'freedom', 'personal fulfilment', 'live day-to-day', 'new experiences' and 'continuous learning' frequently arise in explaining

professional motivations. It is important to point out that some of these expressions could be signalling a natural incorporation of language and meanings promoted by educational and employment policies.

'[...] It was not for lack of a opportunities [...] I know that almost 100% of people in my course already have jobs [...] one of my friends worked at a company and an opportunity arose and he invited me in; I accepted the challenge.' (João, 28, Computer Engineering, Businessman)

'[...] I do not want to finish my course and then have to confine myself to the options that course gives me; I have other options. Please [...] I have something in mind, where the money I'm getting is mine and I am not counting on others.' (Joana, 22, Public Administration, Unemployed)

'[...] I want to work in various areas, and want to be free to work on something that I have done. I'm not much of a planning person. I prefer the going-out stage, and I enjoyed that because I always had an intention to work two or three years out.' (Joana, 23, Civil Engineering, Intern)

'[...] I do not want to be accommodated, I always want to have new challenges, new experiences, to learn a lot [...] learn more, or know that it is necessary to take risks.' (Paulo, 30 years, Sociology, Fixed-term contract worker)

Regardless of the employment situation, these quotes show that the attitudes and dispositions of these young graduates are moving towards greater autonomy in work, where versatility and flexibility of knowledge and skills are seen as the strategies to achieve and maintain a profile of employability that is innovative and appropriate to the demands of the current job market. Bringing such strategies to light may be based on a relatively small number of analysed cases, but we can still see that the acquisition and development of entrepreneurial skills can have a positive impact on employability, acquired through participation in a range of activities at formal, non-formal and extracurricular levels.

Despite the presence of these definitions and representations, it is crucial to realise that this perception of opportunity/options for professional autonomy relates to a context of economic and financial crisis, characterised by intensified risk and heightened precarious working conditions, not to mention constrained professional mobility. In turn, the fact that it is difficult to follow the entire 'life cycle' of the interviewees means that knowledge about the long-term impact of these practices is lacking. For example, we do not know if: 'biographical choices' are intentionally seeded by structures of market opportunities (e.g. support programs, support policies, risk financing and specialised training); they result from constraints related to the need to enter the labour market as an alternative to unemployment; if they work as intermittent moratoriums between employment and unemployment, and inactivity and training. This means that

it is necessary to include in this analysis recognition of the constraining factors inherent in a context of crisis in terms of employment regulation, an exponential increase in unemployment and the limits/shortcomings of public policies.

CONCLUSION

This empirical evidence provides examples of how entrepreneurial learning is perceived by young graduates in Portugal. Despite the relative novelty of entrepreneurial learning in this context, we have seen how the young people interviewed illustrate what can be acquired from formal, non-formal and informal learning processes, as well as illustrating some shortcomings, such as limited scope in terms of the field of study. Taken together, this Portuguese case study also shows the importance of interface institutions that use a university as a platform of support, particularly in the promotion of non-formal learning initiatives through extra-curricular activities. While we do need to bear in mind the limitations of our evidence, as case studies which are not intended to be representative but rather illustrative of the present state of play in this area, we can at least confirm that various forms of learning matter in respect to entrepreneurship. However, these apparent 'successes' need to be tempered by the realisation that the deteriorating economic situation in Portugal brings with it the risk that much of this work will be undermined by a lack of opportunities and declining working conditions.

The challenge for youth work in Portugal as regards managing youth unemployment better, particularly the potential unemployment of a large number of highly qualified young people, is considerable, given both the imperilled state of transitions to the labour market and the relative lack of youth work infrastructure from which to launch effective interventions. A further consequence of the austerity measures has been cuts in public service infrastructure, including support to young people; one notable example has been the incorporation of the Portuguese Youth Institute into the Institute of Sport, as well as numerous cuts in welfare and education.

Given that the youth work sector in Portugal has been traditionally underdeveloped in contrast to other European Union member states, this makes responding to the needs of Portuguese young people all the more difficult. However, the incipient success of entrepreneurial learning can be a fundamental pillar for concrete structural actions (programmes, incentives, training, etc.) that may help realise the objectives of encouraging entrepreneurship through measures that help highly qualified young people, as well as those with precarious access to the labour market.

NOTES

³⁵
The 2010 project was focused on the theme of entrepreneurial potential, developed at CICS/UM under the scientific coordination of Ana Paula Marques (CICS/UM), and financed by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) (ref. SFRH/BD/60807/2009) as part of the POP H-QREN - Typology 4.1 - Advanced training, in conjunction with the European Social Fund and National Funds of MEC. The 2011 project is an ongoing PhD project, funded by FCT (SFRH/BD/60807/2009), on entrepreneurship education in higher education, developed by Rita Moreira (CICS/UM).

³⁶
LIFTOFF - Office of the Entrepreneur is a project carried out by students via the UM Students' Union, focused on training and awareness in entrepreneurship. This includes training courses and workshops on entrepreneurship, business creation and employment. Liftoff also promotes awareness sessions with entrepreneurs, seminars and conferences, and is responsible for the organisation's annual Entrepreneurship Week. TecMinho, while an interface of UM, is also responsible for implementing activities to promote entrepreneurial culture in academia, establish relationships with the exterior and support custom-made technological and knowledge-intensive entrepreneurial projects. This includes awareness-raising and training courses in entrepreneurship, services and infrastructure to support business projects; to date it has supported the creation of 37 spin-offs. UM also helps academic business projects through other entities such

as Spinpark, a technology incubator that supports companies throughout their evolutionary development, and AvePark, Park of Science and Technology, that helps more mature companies in terms of access to networks of contacts, training and support for internationalisation.
www.liftoff.aaum.pt
www.tecminho.uminho.pt
www.spinpark.pt
www.avepark.pt

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