

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATIVE APPLICATIONS ¹

Eirini Christianaki ²
Athanasios Glaros³
Eleftherios Bampasis⁴

ACTIVITĂȚI ANTREPRENORIALE ȘI APLICAȚII INOVATOARE

It is generally accepted that Entrepreneurship has a dynamic meaning, which is not confined to economic activity of the profiting economical organisations but extends to each decision which entails the acceptance of the risk of the financial investment towards a certain aim. The investment regards the capital, services, installation, equipment etc. In contemporary societies, if not in each particular instance then in some cases these forms of investments presuppose the contribution of Information Technology. Today, not only the functioning and promotion of a business but also its design is based on the capabilities of Information Technology.

Since 1850 the Church of Greece comprises an independent union of the administrative organisation of the Church of Christ and since 1977, in terms of its legal relations it constitutes the Legal Entity of Public Justice (Law.590/77 article 4, paragraph 1). The Church of Greece has a long history which precedes the formation of the Greek state. It develops its projects and activities within the framework of capabilities offered to her by the technological, civilisational model of each epoch.

It goes without saying that the Church uses the means provided by the science of Information Technology in order to perform her administrative and pastoral work. The human resources which staffs the Church consists mainly

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² Associate Professor at the Social Theology Department of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

³ Assistant Professor at the Social Theology Department of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

⁴ Adjunct Lecturer at the Russian Language and Literature and Slavic Studies Department - Research Associate (PhD, MSc) in the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

of clergy and lay people whose studies were in theology. Even for employment positions of purely administrative character the Church prefers the graduates of Theological Schools. Information Technology subjects are included within the curriculum of studies of the four Theological Schools in Greece. The aim of this is to connect the scholar-theologians with the employment market. The Church of Greece constitutes a significant part of the employment market, with its Metropoles, Parishes, its Inter-Orthodox centre, its Apostolic Diakonia, its Insurance Fund of the Clergy of Greece and other ecclesiastical legal entities belonging to public or private law (such as philanthropic foundations, radio and television stations, museums, libraries, children stations, education centres, schools of byzantine music, schools for parents etc).

The knowledge of Information Technology is required for: a) staffing of administrative services and other foundations of the Church, b) communication of the faithful regarding cultural and religious presentations and activities of parishes, c) networking and easier communication of the faithful in philanthropic activities of the Church, d) research conducted in the field of theology as well as communication among expert scholars, theologians, catechists, pastors and ordinary members of the Church, and e) promotion of religious tourism.

In recent years many students of the Department of Social Theology participated in entrepreneurship contests and won significant awards for their entrepreneurship ideas. One characteristic example of this is a student of the Department who won the third place with her idea 'The Greece Show.'⁵ This specific entrepreneurship plan relates to the promotion of Greek culture at overseas international exhibitions by using innovative applications of Information Technology.

We shall proceed by presenting concisely the results of a survey which was conducted with students in the academic year of 2011-2012 in the framework of the Activity: 'Section of Innovation and Entrepreneurship of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.'

The educational aims of the Section of Innovation and Entrepreneurship of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens⁶ are the extension, enhancement and the qualitative upgrade of interventions towards the *development of innovation and entrepreneurship of students* of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. The Section aims at changing the mentality and at cultivating the entrepreneurship culture among students, by implementation of classes and educational activities which target the enhancement of entrepreneurship. More specifically, the Section:

⁵ See: Supplement press Magazine «K», vol. 484, p. 28, of the Greek Newspaper "Καθημερινή" (Sunday, 9/9/2012).

⁶ URL: <http://www.moke.uoa.gr/innovation-and-entrepreneurship-unit-national-and-kapodistrian-university-athens>

Provides students with knowledge of the development of entrepreneurship skills

Introduces classes of entrepreneurship to individual departments

Implements activities of development of entrepreneurship initiatives

Provides the development of counseling support of students

Creates specialised educational material

Provides the electronic portal and platform for implementation of 'open' seminars of special thematology

The Section of Innovation and Entrepreneurship of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens comprises the *application of completed interventions* towards the development of innovation and entrepreneurship as well as of the understanding of the contemporary entrepreneurship environment. For the Department of Social Theology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the following qualitative and quantitative figures are drawn:

For the academic year of 2011-2012, 50% of students of the Department of Social Theology deems the Software of Virtual Business and the implementation of the Business Plan as satisfactory, 20% finds it entirely satisfactory, while 25% of students finds it moderately satisfactory. Also, 5% of students are not at all satisfied with the usage of the software.

For the academic year of 2011-2012, 35% of students of the Department of Social Theology state that the sufficiency of workshop spaces and electronic computers which were available to them at the Department was entirely satisfactory, 10% state that their access to these was quite satisfactory, while 20% is of the opinion that the access to electronic computers was moderately satisfactory in terms of using the Software. Fifteen percent (15%) of students were mildly satisfied with their access to the computers of the Department, while 20 % of students were dissatisfied with the same.

For the academic year of 2011-2012, 59% of students of the Department of Social Theology state that they have internet connection at a very satisfactory extent and speed, which allows them to be able to use the Software from their home, 8% are quite satisfied with the same, while 13% are moderately satisfied. The percentage of students that encountered serious problems with the access to Software from their homes amounts to 20%.

For the academic year of 2011-2012, 47% of students of the Department of Social Theology state that the software which was available to them for the purpose of training for their business plans was quite satisfactory, 20% state that the usage of the software was entirely satisfactory, while 23% of students were only moderately satisfied with the usage of the software. Five percent (5%) of students were mildly satisfied while another 5% were dissatisfied with

the usage of the software. Within this last percentage students who do not use software are also counted.

For the academic year of 2011-2012, 60% of students of the Department of Social Theology state that the instructions were very satisfactory in terms of the detailed approach of instructions for usage of software, 28% state that these instructions were quite satisfactory, while 23% state that they were moderately satisfactory.

In conclusion, as seen in the above diagram, through the evaluation of the survey it is observed that 90% of students deem that the overall quality of the class (the main teaching book, case studies and knowledge acquired during the lectures) is either quite good or entirely satisfactory. Ninety eight percent of students (98%) state that through the way the class was organised by the teacher (in collaboration with the head of the department) topics related to 'contemporary business' were approached and addressed to an extent which was either quite satisfactory or very good. Eighty three percent (83%) of students state that the counseling support received from a specific supervisor was either very good or entirely satisfactory. Eighty eight (88%) percent of students evaluated the Software of Virtual Businesses – Business Plan as either quite easy to use or very easy to use.

Simultaneously with the above presentation of the usage of Information Technology applications by students, our reference to the individual Case Studies is equally important. We have selected certain characteristic kinds of the written and digital word which engage with the topic of Information Technology in relation to various fields and applications of ecclesiastical interest.

The first *case study* comprises a concise presentation of the second author of this text. This presentation took place at the first Theological Conference of Postgraduate Students of the Department of Social Theology, which was held at Messolonghi and Agrinio (4th, 5th of May 2007).⁷ The aim of this presentation was the promotion of possibilities which are offered by the application of acquired knowledge of Information Technology in the field of biblical studies. This promotion was important in order that an equivalent development occurs in the field of patristic studies.

The attractive market context of the applications of Information Technology is unquestionable, as these applications are of great interest for the business-minded, because they constitute a new field for activity and development. The usefulness of the final outcome is also unquestionable. The product will be useful in academic research. More particularly, it will be useful in the fields of history and philology of the medieval-byzantine epoch, in linguistic research

⁷ Α. ΓΛΑΡΟΣ, «Η πληροφορική στην ύπηρεσία τῶν Πατερικῶν σπουδῶν», *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος ΠΒ* (2011) 87-98 (= Α. Glaros, "The Information Technology in the service of Patrological Studies", *Ekklesiastikos Faros* 82 (2011) 87-98).

of the Greek and Latin languages, in theology of all Christian denominations, religious studies, in law history and in other sciences. The financial planning and the need for human resources presuppose a high cost and long-term investment in terms of time and staff who possess high scientific knowledge in both Information Technology and theological and philological training.

The second *case study* comprises the mere listing of publishing organisations and philanthropic foundations of the Metropolises of the Church as they occur on the official website of the Church⁸. This case study is part of the research of the first author of this text which presents today's internet landscape of the Church of Greece at the level of mass communication and social ministry. This research casts a picture of the dynamic character of the Church in the domain of social activity and it also indicates towards plenty of room for further entrepreneurship development. The difference here is that in this kind of entrepreneurship activity the aim is not the profit but the expansion of domains which cater for the spiritual and material hypostasis of the human being. These domains employ capable human resources and businesses and, in this sense, they constitute a positive factor for the Greek economy.

At the same time, the philanthropic foundations relieve the state from a significant portion of the financial burden related to social care, which is also coupled with tax cuts for Greek citizens and businesses, viability of social benefits funds and the enhancement of Greek economy's competitiveness in the wider international arena.

The next *case study* is related to the presentation of characteristic segments of the doctoral dissertation entitled: *Programming and function of utility applications for research and processing of theological data.*⁹ This doctoral dissertation, supervised by Professor Vasileios Gioultsis, was written by Hippocrates Godis and was submitted to the Department of Theology of the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki.¹⁰ The dissertation was submitted in 2002 and received the result 'excellent.' It presents the possibilities of utilising Information Technology in theological and ecclesiastical applications. Although besides other aspects this doctoral dissertation introduces a complete proposal of theological applications (Theological Analogue), until now there has not been an expression of entrepreneurship interest for its market utilisation.

The subject of the last *case study* is the presentation and evaluation of the work of Andreas Karivalis, a secondary education teacher who teaches at the private school in Argolida and who is also a postgraduate student of the Department of Social Theology. His case shows that when an educator and a

⁸ URL: <http://www.ecclesia.gr>

⁹ This is essentially a Theological Analogue.

¹⁰ Ι. Γώδη, Προγραμματισμός και λειτουργία χρηστικών εφαρμογών έρευνας και επεξεργασίας θεολογικών δεδομένων, Θεσσαλονίκη 2005 (= Hippocrates Godis, Programming and function of practical research applications and of theological data procession, Thessaloniki, 2005).

catechist theologian is in the favorable and positive school environment, they can search for and find original ways of passing on the theological knowledge to children.

The means which were used are of entrepreneurship interest. Catechist resource material is circulating in printed form, which is being evaluated through a special research along with a survey that took place in four Parishes in Greece. The results of the research are being provided and positive conclusions are drawn regarding the effectiveness of the resources in passing of the theological knowledge on to the pupils.

Also, two table games have been constructed that have an educational aim. The teacher has organised groups of pupils in order to make the educational digital disc whose topic are the churches of Argolida. We have accomplished a testing research of this educational digital disc. Within the framework of the scripture class, the disc was played to pupils of the third grade of high school who live in the urban Athens area.

The most important aspect of the research was the responsiveness of the pupils to this kind of initiative and the creation of motivation for similar projects. Even though the aim was mainly educational it also offered to pupils a vivid idea of the professional life of the author, an idea about the cinema, the photographer, the necessary technical support and lighting, the work of the archeologist, the work of the educator, the work of the journalist, the work of the theologian and the work of the priest. This activity is deemed as unique in Greece and it can become an example for other theologians-educators in the public or the private education system.

The subject of the fifth *case study* relates to the internet promotion of information-material that falls into the category of religious tourism. The findings from the Greek Tourism Organisation and the Church of Greece are deemed as poor. What we suggest is the creation of short documentaries which will be available on the internet and which will have an informative and educational character. Within this framework we created a digital disc whose topic are the churches of the island of Corfu, which are of special tourist interest. The making of this disc represents an experimental proposal for internet utilisation of material which enhances the religious tourism in Greece.