

Section II

Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Latin America

Testimony

Encouraging Interdisciplinary Entrepreneurship in Higher Education: What Drives and Challenges Us? Lessons From IDEAR Lab in Brazil

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As educators, an incredibly rewarding feeling is noticing social impact projects emerging from our students – the ones that go beyond campus and make a difference in society. This is only possible through entrepreneurial mindset development, which is not exclusively connected to new business creation.

The understanding that entrepreneurship goes beyond businesses creation has gotten increasing attention over the years. However, especially in Higher Education, embracing this concept is not easy. Many universities have business incubators or tech parks, but the idea behind them is mostly connected to the ambition of owning a business. How about those who would like to be intrapreneurs, or haven't imagined themselves as owning a company, but are willing to make an impact? In the current higher education context, entrepreneurship is a differential. It means being able to connect individual, group, and organizational competencies to societal needs. And our society needs this so much!

That was the motivation behind the creation of IDEAR, an Interdisciplinary Lab for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS) that we both helped to found. More than a project, it has been an incredible journey, that is truly connected to what motivates us in being educators.

What does it mean? IDEAR develops citizens to work in groups (soft skills). These efforts are intended to promote new solutions to local, national, or international problems (entrepreneurial competencies), regardless of their majors (interdisciplinarity). They also bring together research and teaching, public administration, civil society, and businesses in a quadruple helix model. So, it is an opportunity to foster more and more projects to change a needing society.

IDEAR was founded in 2016, tied directly to PUCRS' Dean's office. It has assisted more than __ thousands of students, coming from 50 different majors. Based on this experience, we had many learnings, such as:

- Entrepreneurship has a different meaning for each student and its collective imagery in each major. For some, entrepreneurship is related to career consolidation. Other students are entrepreneurial without even knowing it.
- Interdisciplinarity still has a long way to go. Disciplinary higher education structure is still hard and solid. Working with entrepreneurial competencies in a transversal manner can be an alternative to generate synergy between different knowledge areas.
- Education gains much by involving the community in pedagogical proposals development. It promotes collaboration outside campus and motivates higher education students.
- Creating a project can be exclusively linked to personal satisfaction. It can also be a way of proposing new professional practices or helping others, without financial ambition. There is a wide diversity of "entrepreneurship" and that makes the landscape even more beautiful.

As IDEAR leaders, we hope all students and professors can fulfill their purpose through social impact and entrepreneurship and ensure that everyone can be agents of their destiny. We do that while following our greater "why": making a social impact through education.