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WHO NEEDS TO LEARN AND TO BE CREATIVE? THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

It should be an important aim of every government to endeavour to offer an existence consistent with human dignity to all the citizens of a country. Central to this aspiration is the need for every individual to have the possibility and the means to be gainfully employed i.e. to have a job! Unfortunately, under and unemployment prevail in many emerging and developing countries. This paper looks at the critical role that education can play to contribute to the development of young people who are more marketable, who can add value to a given job, or who can pursue an independent existence. It is argued that the full potential of a person can be enhanced by taking an enterprise approach to education. The paper will go on to look at what is enterprise education, how does it differ and indeed complement mainstream curricula, who needs to be cognisant of its value and importance, which methods can promote personal enterprise and what needs to be done to create an environment for enterprise education. The paper will emphasize that enterprise education is not the same as business planning or a start-up course but a means of developing mindsets with demonstrable enterprising attributes, behaviours and skills, useful in all spheres of life. This infers that such traits can be stimulated or further developed by an appropriate learning environment. The paper therefore urges a move towards personal enterprise development and asks educators to (re)think who really needs to learn and to be creative in this challenge.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education

INTRODUCTION

Late in the last century a Dutch government policy document stated that some 1,400 million people would enter the labour market within a decade, but that there were only 500 million existing jobs. This meant that the world would have to find ways to create 900 million new jobs within the short space of ten years. This pressure to create new and sustainable jobs has not gone away, especially in many developing countries where unemployment and under-employment is rife. It goes without saying that every institution within a society can play a contributing role towards creating employment. However, this paper concentrates on education and the need to introduce entrepreneurship within a curriculum to enable young people to cope with an uncertain and complex world.

A first step in this paper is therefore to review briefly the concept of entrepreneurship, what it is and, importantly, what it is not. This represents the initial part of the paper. It is also important to reflect upon why the notion of entrepreneurship in education is currently important and why it will remain important for the future. This will involve reviewing some of the main characteristics of the 'life world' into which young people will progress and the influences upon this resulting from the impact of changing global circumstances upon the way we are governed, the design of organisations within which young people will work and personal and social circumstances. This is important in terms of understanding what we are preparing young people for and why there will be a need for more entrepreneurial behaviour of individuals, and through their efforts, of organisations. This constitutes the second part of the paper.

The third part of the paper considers the basic challenge of entrepreneurship to education, the design of schools, the organisation of the classroom and the skills of the teacher. The fourth and final part raises questions regarding the place of entrepreneurship in the curriculum, the needs of different groups within the school/college and in the transfer to work. Issues to do with progression through age, and school groups are raised as are points relating to assessment and accreditation.

The paper concludes with a comment on the need for the education system to address the issue of entrepreneurship education in the light of a fast changing, complex and uncertain world.

WHAT IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

Although there is no clear definition of the term Entrepreneurship, there is universal agreement that it is centrally concerned with the way that individuals and organisations create and implement new ideas and ways of doing things, respond proactively to the environment and thus provoke change involving various degrees of uncertainty.

In the educational context it is the behaviours, widely associated with the generic notion of an 'enterprising person', that are important. Behind these behaviours lie certain skills and attributes. There is however, much debate as to whether the attributes can be developed in individuals or are the product of genetics. The weight of opinion is that they can be considerably influenced.

Knowledge, as a basis for developing behaviours in education may be regarded as contextual. Thus it is possible to encourage entrepreneurial behaviour within the context of any standard curriculum subject e.g., mathematics, history, art, science, etc. In a business context the knowledge base will be substantially related to the immediate tasks and learning requirement. Skills in themselves, however, embody a knowledge base in the context of their application.

Accepting the above, entrepreneurship can therefore be defined as:

'Behaviours, attributes and skills applied individually and/or collectively to help individuals and organisations of all kinds, to create, cope with and enjoy change and innovation involving higher levels of uncertainty and complexity as a means of achieving personal fulfilment'.

It is important to note that the definition embraces organisations of all kinds. It is not a function of business activity alone.

The behaviours most commonly associated with the Entrepreneur in the literature are: opportunity seeking; taking initiative; working independently; taking responsibility and ownership; networking, managing interdependencies; seeing things through; and taking calculated risks. In general these behaviours support the notion of the active person, getting things done, thinking strategically and harnessing resources imaginatively.

Supporting these behaviours are a number of attributes which it is argued can be developed, although clearly nature endows some individuals with more, and different mixes, of these than others: achievement orientation; self confidence; perseverance; high internal locus of control; action orientation; learning by doing; hardworking; drive and creativity. These attributes support

the notion of an individual or team wanting to achieve and being capable of driving change through new ideas and innovations rather than waiting and responding to events.

It is possible to assert more positively that the skills commonly associated with entrepreneurship can be developed. These are tightly tied in with attributes and support the pursuit of behaviours as follows: creative problem solving; persuading; negotiating; selling; proposing; holistic task management; strategic thinking; and decision making under uncertainty.

Having briefly explained what the concept of entrepreneurship is, it is just as important to know what it is not. Crucially it is important not to confuse entrepreneurship with being 'business-like' or indeed 'professional' in the administrative management sense. This is a common mistake. It is possible that many of the mechanisms and associated values and beliefs of corporate and administrative management as shown in the left-hand column of Figure 1 can be brought into education under the 'entrepreneurship' label. They can indeed also be introduced into the management of schools on the same pretext. Yet in essence, especially in their extreme form, they can be construed as the antithesis of entrepreneurial organisation, and are likely to constrain entrepreneurial behaviour. In reality the entrepreneurial entity, particularly the small organisation, is likely to be much more akin to the right hand side of Figure 1. Large organisations have been dramatically downsizing and decentralizing over the past decades in the search for the flexibility associated with moving to the right. This is important in an educational context as the young person in the future is more likely to find him/herself in an organisation closer to the right than the left of Figure 1.

In the educational and management context it is critical to understand that entrepreneurship is embodied in sets of values and beliefs relating to:

- ways of doing things
- ways of seeing things
- ways of feeling things
- ways of communicating things
- ways of organizing things
- ways of learning, most importantly for education

It is also important not to think that entrepreneurial behaviours, attributes and skills are synonymous with interpersonal, transferable or core skills. For example, problem solving is very different from creative problem solving. Communication, presentation skills, numeracy, etc, underpin entrepreneurial skills but are not identical with them. It is perfectly possible to utilise these skills in 'bureaucratic' occupations.

Without clearer thinking it is therefore possible to confuse entrepreneurship with:

- business management skills
- economic awareness
- work experience
- project work in industry
- business start-up training
- skills development

As there are advocates for each of the above then confusion may be exacerbated by new 'entrepreneurship' initiatives unless there is a wider consensus as to its meaning. Significantly, this is not to deny that each of the above can be approached in an entrepreneurial way. It must be recognized, however, that it is perfectly possible to have work experience that is not entrepreneurial. One can participate in a start-up programme that is not entrepreneurial. Personal and transferable skills can be practiced and developed without using them entrepreneurially. Projects may be undertaken and business knowledge gained without any notion of being entrepreneurial, and so on.

In conclusion it must be stated that great care needs to be taken to ensure that the concept of entrepreneurship is clarified, embodied in our practice and related clearly to 'needs of the future' before programmes are developed and disseminated widely.

WHY IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP IMPORTANT?

Increasingly entrepreneurial behaviour is being demanded in all areas of society and certainly within education systems; much of this is to do with the need to create jobs but also to manage scarce resources and increased competition.

The argument for a greater emphasis upon entrepreneurial education rests on globalization and a world of much greater uncertainty and complexity. More specifically, the pressure for greater individual and collective entrepreneurial behaviour is evident in the impact of global demands upon society, organizations and individuals.

At the global level, political realignments, reducing trading barriers, the growing significance of information and communication technologies, higher rates of product and technological obsolescence, greater product differentiation, international standards for business, travel and personal transfer, the growth of the English language as an international medium of exchange, growing lifestyle choices and the impact of huge international capital flows combine to bring much great opportunity but also greater uncertainty and complexity to our lives.

At the societal level, the withdrawal of state boundaries, public spending pressures, privatization, de-regulation, the creation of 'markets' in public services, outsourcing of services, business involvement in more partnerships with governments, the rise of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the growing use of business methods in all walks of life, standards setting and bench marking, the growing impact of pressure groups, concerns over the environment and the increasing propensity to challenge issues in courts of law, all confront the individual with greater uncertainty and complexity.

At the organisational level, downsizing, delayering, decentralization, re-engineering, subcontracting, purchasing partnerships and strategic alliances, capital mobility, international sourcing, spin outs and spin offs, the impact of software on virtual reality management, mergers/alliances and global company rationalizations, the demands for flexibility in the workforce and mobility of personnel and the growth of small and professional white collar small businesses linked substantially with the increasing dominance of the human knowledge base of the company over that of physical assets, all contribute to a climate of growing uncertainty and complexity.

Finally, reflecting the above, the individual is faced in the work environment with greater career, occupational, rewards and job uncertainty, with a greater probability of part-time and contract employment, with greater pressure for geographical mobility, with the greater prospects of having periods of self employment, more likely to end up with a portfolio of jobs, with greater pressure at work, wider responsibility and more stress. At home a person is increasingly likely to be independent, to have reduced public social security, to be faced with making own pension arrangements, to have responsibility for owning things and managing credit, and as a consumer to be faced with a wide choice of products about which there is growing information and with greater responsibility for, and demands upon individual choices in learning.

If these scenarios are projected into the future then it is evident that there will be a greater need for the kinds of entrepreneurial behaviours, attributes and skills as outlined earlier. Furthermore, if there is to be an educational response of value then it must embody an analysis of the needs to be met by probing more deeply into the factors identified above and the pressures this will place on the individual and the organization.

In conclusion it is clear that the objective of entrepreneurship education must be to help individuals cope with, and indeed enjoy, a changing way of life as outlined below:

- To have greater freedom and control over what goes on
- To have greater responsibility and autonomy to make things happen
- To have a wider range of tasks
- To have rewards linked more closely to personal effort

- To operate with greater uncertainty and vulnerability to the environment
- To manage a wide range of interdependencies
- To focus more on 'knowing who' than 'knowing what'
- To work longer and more variable hours
- To have social, family and work life more highly integrated
- To learn more by doing and taking responsibility for learning

It can be argued that the above produces a basic evaluation framework for any broad attempt to develop entrepreneurship in individual citizens.

THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION CHALLENGE

This section addresses the broader context issues of the 'school' as an entrepreneurial organisation, the 'classroom' as an entrepreneurial place and the 'teacher' as an entrepreneurial/enterprising person.

It is argued that the capacity to really take up the challenge of entrepreneurship in the school/college is a function of the organization and culture of the institution itself, the organization of the classroom and the ability of the instructor.

Educational institutions as entrepreneurial organisations

From what has been stated so far it should be clear that the entrepreneurial educational organisation is not necessarily the one that operates within the normal business paradigms. The real challenge of channeling entrepreneurial behaviour to maximize organisational effectiveness involves high degrees of decentralization and empowerment. It is indeed the antithesis of command and control. Therefore it may be difficult for a teacher to 'teach' entrepreneurship if the organisation of which s/he is a part restricts the scope for individual experiment and innovation.

To nurture enterprising behaviour, attributes and skills, the entrepreneurial educational organisation itself needs to be 'designed' to:

- Create and reinforce a strong sense of individual ownership of activities
- Reinforce associated feelings of personal control to make things happen
- Require individuals to take responsibility for a wide and integrated range of tasks
- Reinforce the notion of responsibility to see things through
- Strongly focus the organisation on defining its excellence through the needs of the various stakeholders e.g. the learners, parents, staff, governors, feeder schools, colleges and universities, the local community, the employers, business associations, local/national government, etc.
- Encourage staff to develop their own stakeholder networks in line with goals
- Link rewards to satisfying stakeholder needs and thus institutional excellence
- Allow mistake making and dealing with ambiguity as a basis for learning
- Encourage strategic thinking rather than formal planning
- Emphasize the importance of personal trust and 'know-who' as a basis for management rather than formalised relationships
- Avoid strict demarcations and encourage informal overlap (cross-curriculum) between departments and groups as a basis for developing a common culture
- Maximize the opportunity, through staff development, for building upon ways of learning in the context of the job

Ultimately, if the school/college 'lives' entrepreneurship then it is easier to teach it!

The classroom as an entrepreneurial environment

Much of the challenge in this respect is to organise the class around the 'structural' characteristics identified above, to allow learners to experience and 'feel' the concept rather than

just learn it in the conventional sense. The emphasis must therefore be upon pedagogies that encourage learning: by doing/experience; by exchange; by copying; by experiment; by risk taking and 'positive' mistake making; by creative problem solving; by feedback through social interaction; by dramatising and simulation; by exploring role models; and in particular by interacting with the outside/adult world.

The entrepreneurial/enterprising teacher

Generally, government education dictats impede teachers from fully engaging in the above methods. They are seen to be 'progressive' and 'trendy'. However, good teachers will always be able to use progressive methods of teaching to combine excellent exam results with the development of personal entrepreneurial skills for learners; s/he will mix progressive with more traditional methods as appropriate. Good teachers will take easily to the entrepreneurial concept, and once it is disengaged from too narrow a view of it being only about business, will see it as central to educational objectives.

Overall, any polarisation of views on pedagogies can be easily resolved if it is recognised that some things are best taught in certain ways and others in different ways; that learners themselves have preferences in the ways they like to learn; and that helping individuals learn to learn in different ways is an educational goal in itself. This is critical to the issue of preparing young persons for a future of life-long learning.

In conclusion to this section it can be argued that the entrepreneurial teacher will be one who is good at: knowing how much ownership and control of learning to give to students; achieving maximum social learning; encouraging student networking and be good at it him/herself; developing motivation and commitment of students to achieve goals; encouraging calculated risk taking; seeing/taking opportunities, especially to promote learning; involving students in taking/accepting own responsibility for development of their personal skills and attitudes.

KEY ISSUES TO INTRODUCE ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

This section will address a range of issues that are significant for introducing entrepreneurship into the schools and college curriculum. These issues include: clarifying the desired objectives and outcomes; the needs of different learner groups; the gateways into the curriculum; and assessment and accreditation.

The objectives and outcomes of entrepreneurship education

This is an obvious starting point - what do we want to achieve from entrepreneurship education? Figure 2 sets out some of the choices available. In practice there is considerable overlap between the available choices. In terms of Outcomes for example, young persons entering the world of work are likely to be part of the increasingly flexible labour market. They will have to manage their lives in the world described earlier; many, but not all, will work in a small organisation, but only a minority will become self employed and/or start a new venture of some kind. The diagram is of importance however, in that it indicates different possible outcomes and therefore enables us to appraise objectives of particular initiatives against these. Importantly, it is worth noting that the outcomes are not necessarily business outcomes.

To achieve the outcomes there are a number of Objectives around which inputs can be designed. These again may be overlapping but nevertheless it is important to consider in any particular initiative which range of objectives will be targeted. Decisions in this respect will then dictate Process issues of location and curriculum place of entry. For example, entrepreneurial programmes with the objective of creating a 'real' venture to be pursued by an individual or team may be targeted particularly upon the vocational education system. On the other hand it can be argued that, given the fact that all students will work in the flexible labour market, and that the probability of finding themselves in a position where they are 'pulled' or 'pushed' into starting a venture of their own is high, then they should be prepared as part of their basic education to manage their own lives around their own venture. These examples raise many issues for discussion and debate.

The needs of different learner groups

Within any education system different learner groups will have different needs that might be served by entrepreneurship education. Within secondary schools, for example, there are: school leavers seeking employment; low academic achievers; high academic flyers; the potentially unemployed; those in transition to further and or higher education; those who because of their personal background are more likely to engage in family business activity; the disabled or special educational needs group; and gender and ethnic groups. Naturally there will also be different needs at primary, secondary and further education levels. Thus, primary school objectives are possibly more likely to concentrate upon personal development, cross curricula activity and socialization, whereas further education efforts may focus more upon 'hard' business practices and competences. Meeting the needs of the different learner groups would inevitably require sound co-ordination, which it turn would raise the issue of creating some form of progression through the various educational levels i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary.

Gateways into the curriculum

Entrepreneurship as defined earlier can find its way into all areas of curriculum. Indeed, it can be argued that it can be introduced anywhere as part of the teaching process. In this respect, however, much depends on the decisions taken regarding desired outcomes and inputs, the needs of different groups and priorities, the dictates of the existing curriculum, any notion of progression entered into and, most importantly, the degree to which it is regarded as an extra-curricula activity as opposed to being an intrinsic part of the school/college curriculum. Figure 3 delineates the potential areas of a curriculum where entrepreneurship can be introduced and thus the major decisions that need to be made in this respect.

Assessment and accreditation

If the objective of assessment is to support the entrepreneurial behaviours, attributes and skills, as set out earlier, then this is a formidable task. While there is some evidence that teachers can recognise entrepreneurial behaviours there is no common code for recognition, and no satisfactory current measurement system that allows them to code comparatively, and thus weigh behaviours and note development progress over time.

Nevertheless, there are proxies in terms of measuring and evaluating outcomes from entrepreneurial processes, such as progress in project development and completion. Another would be the production of a business plan. However, whilst a business plan can be produced in an entrepreneurial manner, it can also be the result of a very formal and uninspiring process. Setting up and running a venture would perhaps provide the best measure, but assessment of the degree of entrepreneurship involved in the process and the personal development thereof via the process is very subjective.

The competency based approach offers a way forward but when it comes to generic soft skills measurement there are many difficulties involved. Most of these are linked with the difficulty in assessing such skills in a range of different contexts each of which might demand a different combination for effective performance.

It follows, from the above, that without a robust method of assessment, any accreditation of entrepreneurship education would also not be possible.

It is evident from the key issues presented in this section that the introduction of entrepreneurship into the curriculum presents a formidable challenge. There are many stakeholders and several entrepreneurship education development models. In respect of both what is important is to establish the objectives and desired outcomes; to meet the needs of different learners; to find different ways in which to introduce the entrepreneurship philosophy within a curriculum; and to focus on the process rather than test entrepreneurship education.

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to outline the importance and need for entrepreneurship in the schools and college curriculum. It has defined entrepreneurship in the context of education. It has pointed out the importance of not confusing entrepreneurship wholly with being 'business like' and not confusing core and personal skills with entrepreneurial skills and attributes. It has examined briefly the pressures on society, the organisation and individuals for more entrepreneurial behaviour. It has considered what entrepreneurship might mean for schools/college management, for classroom and curriculum organisation and teacher competence. It has then set out briefly a number of challenges for the future in terms of the need to think out carefully: objectives and desired outcomes; the needs of different student groups; the gateways into the curriculum; the progression over time between and within the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education; and the key issues involved in assessment and accreditation.

All of these issues have been dealt with in a summary fashion. The main objective, however, has been to raise awareness, debate and discussion with respect to the need and the best ways in which to prepare young people for a complex and uncertain world. To achieve this goal some major challenges have been identified. The first is to be quite clear as to the concept of entrepreneurship education. The second is to be equally clear about the objectives of intervention and desired outcomes. The third is to reflect on how entrepreneurship relates to the culture of the school or college, the organisation of classroom activity (perhaps redefining the 'classroom' in the process) and the competencies and development needs of the teacher. The fourth is to consider how we can build upon what already exists and achieve a more coordinated approach taking the best of different appropriate practices. The fifth is to reflect on issues of assessment and accreditation particularly within the notion of competency frameworks.

Given the complexities and uncertainties created by a fast changing world, the education system is urged to respond to the challenges; and for educators to (re)think who really needs to learn and to be creative in meeting these challenges.

Figure 1

The Bureaucratic/Corporate V. Entrepreneurial Divide

Government/Corporate <i>(looking for)</i>	Entrepreneurial small business <i>(as being)</i>
Order	Untidy
Formality	Informal
Accountability	Trusting
Information	Observing
Clear demarcation	Overlapping
Planning	Intuitive
Corporate strategy	Tactically strategic
Control measures	Free/open
Formal standards	Personally observed
Transparency	Ambiguous
Functional expertise	Holistic
Systems	Intuitive
Positional authority	Owner manage
Formal performance appraisal	Customer/stakeholder exposed

Figure 2

The Education Challenge
Clarifying Objectives & Outcomes

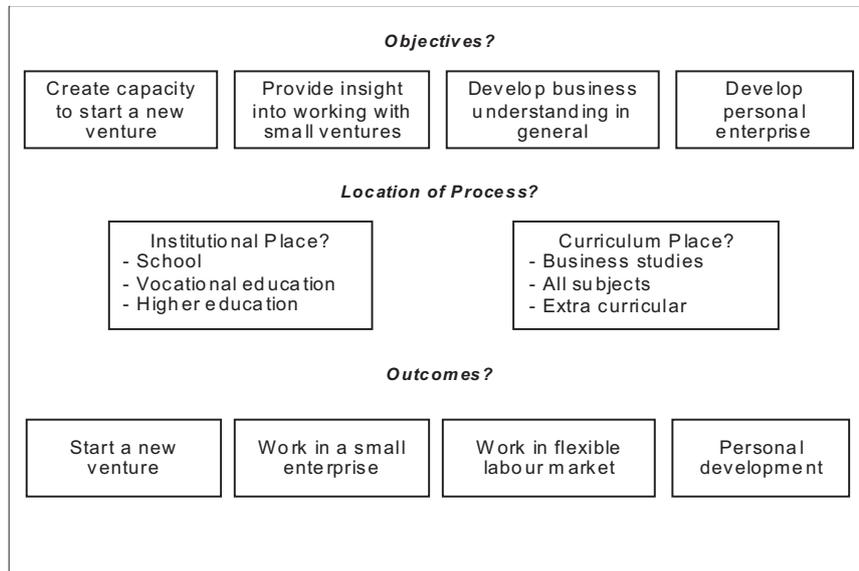
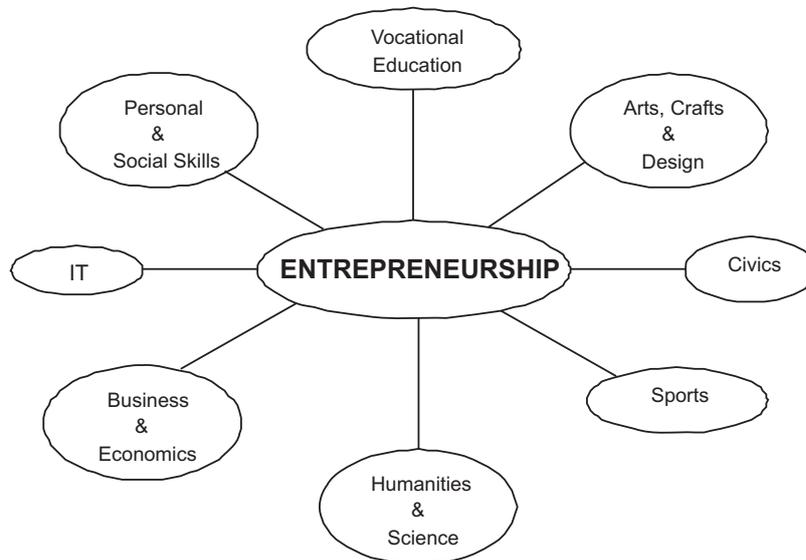


Figure 3

Gateways into the Curriculum



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