

Enterprise in the curriculum is rarely about Entrepreneurship: A case study in setting up Enterprise Education awareness at the University of St Andrews. (0529)

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship curricula are frequently focussed around creation of start-ups / development of small businesses, or on the development of employability skills⁽¹⁾. Within these curricula are elements of enterprise education, describing the activities and approaches an entrepreneurial individual might possess, but which can miss the wider applications of purely enterprise capabilities^(2,3). Despite the increasing proportion of small businesses created over the last few years⁽⁴⁾, it is still likely that the majority of students who study enterprise and entrepreneurship within their curriculum will not actually use these skills and capabilities in the creation of their own start-up company.

There have been a number UK Universities in the last 5 years which have either considered or committed to delivering enterprise and entrepreneurship education to all their students. Strategies linking enterprise and general graduate employability notwithstanding⁽⁵⁾, it has been argued that these forms of entrepreneurial education can run the risk of stifling the very entrepreneurial spirit they were designed to stimulate⁽⁶⁾. Unless careful attention is paid to curricular experiences and their wider relevance⁽⁷⁾, student cognisance of the range of applications for enterprise capabilities limits to a subset of entrepreneurship. It is important to note that whilst enterprise is fundamental to entrepreneurship, the opposite is not true and entrepreneurship perhaps, could be thought of as a subset of enterprise.

The Scottish Government has produced a number of initiatives and reports supporting creation and enhancement of entrepreneurial activity to increase Scottish productivity and global competitiveness^(8,9,10,11). In 2018 the Scottish QAA released a document entitled Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education⁽¹²⁾ which describes elements of enterprise and entrepreneurial training which could be delivered by HEI's, pulling to this end. Additionally this document described enterprise capabilities (Table 1) which applied beyond the confines of entrepreneurship, and which would help students enhance their creativity and confidence in both personal and professional activities.

Table 1. QAA Enterprise Capabilities.

- 1 Creativity and Innovation
- 2 Opportunity recognition, creation and evaluation
- 3 Decision-making supported by critical analysis, synthesis and judgement
- 4 Implementation of ideas through leadership and management
- 5 Action and reflection
- 6 Communication and strategy skills

Context and methods

Like many Universities, the University of St Andrews aspires to provide students with an holistic learning journey, which contains 'real life' credible content within curricula. Enterprise education therefore need not be limited to success in business ventures, but could form an embedded lifestyle approach to personal and professional progression, problem solving and strategy. The strategy therefore, was to imbue students with a sense of empowerment through experiencing the broader

applications of enterprise capabilities, and to encourage students to take opportunities in life they may not previously have taken. With this in mind, methods of provision for enterprise education providing applicability to a wide cohort of students were considered.

A two phase, action research approach was adopted to support further evidence-informed development. First, a simple survey was conducted of taught curricula across the University, to identify areas in which any of the 6 distilled capabilities might be taught. This was administered by an intern who search for key words in the course descriptions of all modules (UG & PG), in each of twenty academic schools spanning the University's four Faculties.

Second, initial data were used to inform focus group discussions in order to evaluate the level of recognition and attitudes to foregrounding enterprise themes in the curriculum. The language of entrepreneurship and enterprise are often used interchangeably and this conflation provides a root cause of resistance to implementation of enterprise education amongst those who are opposed to business concepts being taught within their disciplines. The focus groups were used to position enterprise education as something which need not be inextricably linked to a business model through 'myth busting' participation from leading academics from the Universities of Sheffield and Newcastle, illustrating the difference in meaning and outcome between these two areas of learning.

Outcomes

The survey data strongly suggested that enterprise capability experiences were delivered in almost all Schools and across all Faculties, but were not badged as such, thus remaining invisible to both staff and students. These modules were also not uniformly distributed within Schools or Faculties whereby some Schools taught much more than others. Some staff felt negatively towards foregrounding enterprise, often citing opposition to University 'corporatisation', and not recognising the relevance of enterprise capabilities within their particular subject, even though they might be providing them in real terms.

Following the focus groups, attendees reviewed their teaching for examples of hitherto un-recognised enterprise capability experiences, and to present these examples at two follow-up sessions, one for the Arts and one for the Sciences. Whilst this process encouraged review of existing teaching, and highlighted academic topics where enterprise education existed, it also provided for the identification of motivated staff. To support project longevity, motivated staff and students were formed into two networks of connected individuals. Initially a task to develop an enterprise event was set, after which the interactions between the two networks were left to develop apart from regular committee meetings with the University centre.

Practical implications

To grow engagement, student and staff networks will be made aware of modules that contain enterprise capabilities and how they can affect student outcome and progression. It is probable that the majority of students receiving this educational bonus will not choose an entrepreneurial career but it is hoped that for most, understanding and utilising their enterprise capabilities by adopting them in everyday practice will improve their academic and future personal outcomes⁽³⁾.

Further research

The dappled distribution of enterprise education seen within Schools might only be apparent at this relatively superficial level of investigation. Thus far there has been no attempt at close reading or interpreting module descriptors, or to liaise systematically with staff. It is proposed that the project proceeds along three lines; firstly, further close investigation of the curriculum with a central mechanism for staff to declare enterprise education where present; secondly, staff and student liaison

for co-creation of modules; thirdly, a series of annual staff and student network events showcasing enterprise education.

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