

## Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

0155

Same Same, but Different: The Biographical Profile of Entrepreneurship Educators in Higher Education

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**Research Domain:** Technical, Professional and Vocational Higher Education (TPV)

### **Abstract:**

**Introduction.** Entrepreneurship educators are situated at the crossroads of several transformational processes by deciding the time, frequency, contents, and methods of entrepreneurship education based on their personal resources and profile. Yet, little scholarly attention has been paid to their profile and perspective. This paper presents emergent results of the biographical profile of entrepreneurship educators in universities to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of process of implementing entrepreneurship education.

**Methodology.** Survey data (n=189) was analysed using two-way cluster analysis, inferential statistics, and Relative Importance Index.

**Findings.** The survey identified two broad profiles of ent-educators based on six statistically significant biographical factors. Also, results suggest how those factors are important to ent-educators' professional experience over time.

**Value:** This study contributes further nuance to our understanding of the process of implementing entrepreneurship education in Higher Education. Results also add a temporal understanding of biographical experiences to professional competence.

### **Paper:**

#### **Aim**

There is now consensus that entrepreneurial skills can be learned (Pittaway and Cope, 2007; Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011) and that entrepreneurship can be taught (Gary Gorman et al., 1997; Henderson and Robertson, 2000). The foundational claim in the general schooling literature that teachers matter (Johnston et al., 2016) appears to hold especially true in entrepreneurship education, as educators are situated at the crossroads of several transformational processes (Fiet, 2000; Hannon, 2006; Birdthistle et al., 2007) by deciding the time, frequency, contents and methods of entrepreneurship education (Hartshorn & Hannon, 2005; Hannon, 2006; Birdthistle et al., 2007;

Obasi et al., 2013) based on their personal resources and profile. Hence, who entrepreneurship educators (or 'ent-educator') are (Palmer, 1997), influences what and how entrepreneurship is taught in the classroom (Birdthistle et al., 2007; Taatila, 2010; Seikkula-Leino et al., 2010).

Yet, while entrepreneurship education has received increased scholarly attention (Pittaway and Cope, 2007; Nabi et al., 2017), little scholarly attention has been paid to the profile and perspective of ent-educators (Steiner, 2014; Neck & Corbett, 2018; Wraae et al., 2020), evident in the absence of ent-educators as a theme in recent systematic reviews on entrepreneurship education (Wu and Wu, 2017; Henry and Lewis, 2018; van Ewijk, 2018). Noticeable, ent-educators in professional roles or dual professionals remain largely absent in the literature, despite their critical role in delivering entrepreneurship education in many universities and the valuable experiences and expertise they bring to the field (Moore and Morton, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017; Belfield et al., 2018).

This paper presents emergent results of the biographical profile of ent-educators in universities across England. Firstly, empirical results identify two broad profiles of ent-educators based on six statistically significant biographical factors. Secondly, results are extended with findings how these factors influence and impact ent-educators' trajectories in Higher Education. Because what and how entrepreneurship is taught in the classroom is significantly influenced by who ent-educators are, results will expand our current knowledge of what and how entrepreneurship education is taught, i.e., pedagogy and methods, with the educators' experience (who and why), resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the process of implementing entrepreneurship education.

## **Methodology**

Within the context of this study, 'entrepreneurship educator' is defined as: *"Professional personnel and academics employed in Higher Education, engaged in entrepreneurial education including the design and delivery of curricular modules, programs, extra-curricular activities, and university-based business start-up support targeting students and/or graduates"*.

Relevant survey data (n=189) was collected from ent-educators across England in 2019. Notably, anyone who self-identifies as ent-educators, not only academics, was included in the sample. The survey contained 31 closed-end, multiple-choice questions about educators' demographic profile, professional variables, and academic variables, and four open-ended questions, gathering qualitative information about incidents most critical for participants' becoming and being an e-educator. Data was analysed using two-way cluster analysis, inferential statistics, and Relative Importance Index.

## **Findings**

Firstly, the survey identified two broad profiles of ent-educators: the professional and the academic ent-educator based on six statistically significant biographical factors: job responsibility, career stage, educational attainment, past and current entrepreneurial experience, and years worked as an e-educator in Higher Education.

Secondly, not only do professional and academic ent-educators' have different biographical trajectories, but empirical results from the Relative Importance Index suggest how and which of those experiences are important to professional and academic ent-educators' professional experience. This extends not only to the different experiences impacting the two types of ent-educators, but also how those experiences impacted professional and academic ent-educators' professional trajectories differently over time. For example, 'having completed a doctoral degree' is perceived as very important to both professional and academic ent-educators becoming, i.e., choice to become an ent-educator, the pedagogy applied after entering the role, and their perceived professional legitimacy. However, the importance of entrepreneurial experience has different impact on professional and academic ent-educators being, i.e., the performance and identity on-the-job. While it continues to remain a very important factor for professional ent-educators experience, its importance significantly diminishes for academic ent-educators.

### **Value and Implications**

By shedding light on the previously neglected profile of ent-educators, this study contributes to a gap in the entrepreneurship education literature and adds further nuance to our understanding of the process of implementing entrepreneurship education in Higher Education. Empirical results of the Relative Importance Index open further interpretative research opportunities on how and why specifically participating in those opportunities affected ent-educators professional trajectory. Lastly, results extend the current literature on ent-educators profile by adding a temporal understanding of biographical experiences.

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