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SPECIAL ISSUE

Enterprise education and entrepreneurial learning

Introduction

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We are delighted to introduce this special issue of *Industry and Higher Education* on 'Enterprise education and entrepreneurial learning'. The papers included in the issue have been selected for their quality and focus on entrepreneurship education, particularly in the higher education context, and for their scrutiny of questions associated with how people might learn to be entrepreneurial.

The special issue opens with Refai and Thomson's paper, 'Where do graduates develop their enterprise skills?', which explores enterprise and employability outcomes among pharmacy graduates. Through the reported testimony of pharmacy employers and academics the suggestion is that enterprise and employability are not developed in formal university education but, rather, are left to employers. Broadly, this is considered unsatisfactory and the particular focus at universities on clinical skills to the exclusion of enterprise skills is described as a limiting factor for students, the greater proportion of whom will seek employment in commercial organizations rather than purely clinical ones. The authors consequently argue for a better balance and interaction between academia and industry for the development of enterprise skills for

pharmacy practitioners. More generally, they signal the need for enterprise skills development to be considered in specific contexts.

In the following paper, 'Making sense of learning', Blackwood, Round, Pugalis and Hatt exemplify one way this can be achieved in their analysis of a new experiential approach to entrepreneurship education currently being developed at Northumbria University and based on mentoring and team coaching rather than traditional business school delivery methods. Applied in a three-year programme aimed at developing self-identifying nascent entrepreneurs, the idea is to move away from add-on entrepreneurship training and focus instead on a holistic development of entrepreneurial identity. The initial study of the first cohort of students moving through this innovative programme suggests that while there is a transition period in which students get used to the new style of education, in line with hypotheses throughout the literature, entrepreneurial learning and identity do appear to be developed more effectively.

Another new approach is described in O'Leary's paper, 'Integrating employability into degree programmes using consultancy projects as a form of

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enterprise'. With a focus on students of Luxury Brand Management at Regent's University, London, consultancy skills are developed with a view to contributing to both enterprise and employability. Using a comparative methodology amongst students who produce a traditional dissertation and students who in contrast undertake a consultancy project, the empirical study reported in the paper explores perceptions amongst students and graduates on how effective and valuable these consultancy experiences have been. O'Leary finds substantial indications that employability and enterprise skills are developed and he notes the value of this for both students/graduates and employers. The paper concludes with recommendations based on the experiences of providing this opportunity at Regent's University which could be applied in other institutions and on other programmes that might seek similar outcomes.

In their paper 'Strategies for creating new venture legitimacy', Karlsson and Williams Middleton explore how nascent entrepreneurs establish legitimacy and how it is used to mitigate newness and lack of reputation. Nascent entrepreneurs, in the absence of experience, must learn how to establish their firms and the value propositions therein. Using weekly diary analysis of four cases with three founders each during a 20 week start-up programme, the research shows how these nascent entrepreneurs' understanding and strategies developed over time. The authors find that moral legitimacy is most pertinent amongst these new entrepreneurs as they seek to create their ideal business orientation. The extent to which new firms in different sectors are obliged to conform to business and industry cultures and norms is also revealed to be a neglected topic, deserving of further study and educational engagement.

Following these themes of entrepreneurship existing in context, as process and as culturally and socially embedded, Watson, McGowan and Smith examine the effects of the business plan approach. In their paper, 'Leveraging effectual means through business plan competition participation', they explore the apparently opposing approaches to entrepreneurship education of causation and effectuation. The authors note that

business planning-based educational activity is firmly entrenched in the causation paradigm. However, using business plan competitions as the unit of analysis and presenting data from a study of outcomes post-competition and six months on, they found that amongst their participants effectuation was facilitated and this has significant potential for longer-term entrepreneurship.

The subsequent papers in this special issue address the outcomes of entrepreneurship education. Smith's paper, 'Measuring the impact of enterprise education and entrepreneurship support in higher education', interrogates the assumed link between entrepreneurship education and graduate business start-up. Her study investigated two UK datasets, the Higher Education–Business and Community Interaction survey data and the survey of Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education and found in them both utility and limitations in terms of what they tell us about the impacts of entrepreneurship education. By and large the data seem positive with regard to entrepreneurship having been developed by education, but only self-employment is really discernible as a measure of success.

This question of measuring success is explored further in 'Exploring "successful" outcomes of entrepreneurship education' by Galloway, Kapasi and Whittam. The paper reports results from a qualitative follow-up of a longitudinal study of the effects of entrepreneurship education amongst ten former students eight years after enrolment on an entrepreneurship course. The authors question how we measure – and indeed define – a 'successful' educational output, arguing that for some business creation or self-employment might not constitute success, and that in fact success might be understood as skills development for application in non-start-up contexts. The authors argue that entrepreneurship education practice must take into account the different ways it can contribute to students' skills and employability. They suggest that entrepreneurship teaching and research communities should develop other ways of measuring the success of entrepreneurship education beyond an exclusive focus on and valorization of business start-up.