
Evaluation of Enterprise Education in England

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Background

The core principle of Enterprise Education is to ensure young people are well equipped in facing the challenges of the world of work and entrepreneurship, resulting in a positive outcome for individuals, communities and the economy.

The evaluation was commissioned in order to better the understanding of the range and effectiveness of activities provided within schools, particularly at Key Stage 4 and included: a review of the international literature (with a focus on Europe, USA, Australia and New Zealand); consultation with stakeholders; a survey of 408 enterprise co-ordinators within schools; and case-study visits to 30 schools involving interviews with Senior Management Teams (SMT), teachers and pupils.

The research has highlighted that some schools have a very clear understanding and definition of enterprise and implement an enterprising approach to teaching and learning across the curriculum but not all schools are at this stage. Many schools are not clear about what 'enterprise' really means and are often not aware of the importance of delivering employability skills as well as skills required for self-employment.

Key findings

- The extent to which enterprise education is embedded into a school curriculum varies significantly amongst schools.
- Where successfully embedded within the curriculum, schools see enterprise education as having a positive impact on pupils' employability and enterprise skills, self-awareness and their own enterprise capabilities and their business and economic understanding.
- Teachers also felt that effective Enterprise Education can improve the retention of pupils at risk of disengagement, increase the number of student-led activities and improve behaviour.
- Schools reporting higher levels of Enterprise Education embedded into the curriculum also report higher levels of staff motivation and an improved teacher understanding of Enterprise Education as a teaching and learning style. A more embedded and whole-school approach to Enterprise Education helps to raise teachers' awareness of the value and impact of integrating enterprise within different subjects.
- The evidence suggests that good Enterprise Education starts with focused support and involvement from the SMT. This support then sparks off a series of connected actions, ultimately leading to a culture of enterprise throughout the school.

- Involvement from SMT is key to ensuring good communication of the benefits of enterprise to staff and pupils. Their role in discussing and implementing the school's policy for Enterprise Education can directly impact on how well this is embedded across the curriculum.
- Evidence gathered suggests that engaging employers is also a critical success factor, second only to support from SMT and allocating the appropriate set-up time to enterprise.
- External provision can complement curriculum-based activities by supporting extra-curricular opportunities and collapsed timetable events, incorporating cross-curricular themes.
- Schools that are struggling to deliver enterprise are concerned about the time it takes to develop an approach that is championed by staff and embedded across the curriculum. This tends to stem from a presumption that focused time would need to be spent on this on a regular basis. The findings from this evaluation suggest that although some time is required for meeting with subject leads and building up provision, this is relatively time effective once integrated throughout the school.

Literature Review

The UK is unusual in its approach to Enterprise Education, encompassing a broad range of skills and attributes that make an individual enterprising. Most countries focus on entrepreneurship education, driven by a perceived need for more business start-ups and a more entrepreneurial economy.

Consequently much of the research evidence concentrates on indicators of entrepreneurial intent and capability (a subset of enterprise in the UK context), with the development of broader enterprise skills seen as a collateral benefit rather than an aim in itself.

Within Europe:

- there is growing, but fairly recent, policy interest in almost all countries where policy is generally driven by the need to increase entrepreneurship
- the wider benefits for employability, for employers via enterprising employees, for personal and social development and for life in general, are recognised and have (at least in some countries), influenced what is taught
- in most countries Enterprise Education remains an extra-curricular activity
- a few countries have introduced enterprise into their national curricula and several others are moving in that direction; this is mainly at the secondary level
- a common attitude is that the national curricula is broad and enables schools to introduce Enterprise Education if they so wish
- there have been few policy developments focusing on the primary sector - Scotland's Determined to Succeed is an oft-quoted exception

Perceived Impacts

The primary study involved a survey of 408 schools in England, 30 of which were followed up with case study visits. Enterprise Co-ordinators within schools have reported some key areas where Enterprise Education has impacted on pupils' skills and understanding. The most

significant of these is a perceived increase in employability and enterprise skills; self-awareness of their own enterprise capabilities; and their business and economic understanding. Provision has also contributed to increased confidence levels and pupil motivation. Pupils themselves have also reported how enterprise has helped them to realise their existing talents and strengths and to develop a wider belief that they can succeed. Part of this is the realisation that certain career paths are more possible than they first imagined. Staff have also reported increased retention of those at risk of disengagement and improved attendance. Running businesses and social enterprises in school; enterprise challenges; and industry/workplace visits; and interaction with the community are seen as especially effective in enhancing their knowledge of enterprise.

Critical Success Factors

Schools approach planning and delivering Enterprise Education in different ways. This evaluation has highlighted a number of 'critical success factors' that appear to be facilitating good enterprise provision. This appears to be founded on support and involvement from the Senior Management Team (SMT). Once this is in place, a series of actions are generated that further develop provision. These events comprise:

- Support of the SMT
- Enterprise Co-ordinator with dedicated time (usually accompanied by a strategy/policy for Enterprise Education)
- Time in the timetable
- High priority in the curriculum
- Time and resources for employer engagement
- Combination of external provision & embedded in curriculum
- Enterprising way of teaching (learning by doing)
- Relevant Continual Professional Development (CPD) for teaching staff
- Measurement of the impact of activity
- Reviewing sustainability

Involvement from SMT is key in ensuring good communication of the benefits of enterprise to staff and pupils. Their role in discussing and implementing the school's policy for Enterprise Education can directly impact on how well this is embedded across the curriculum. Governors and parents can also provide significant benefits, utilising their own business contacts and participating in school activities.

Embedding Enterprise

Schools that are struggling to deliver enterprise are concerned about the time it takes to develop an approach that is championed by staff and embedded across the curriculum. This tends to stem from a presumption that focused time would need to be spent on this on a regular basis. Although the daily demands on staff time are already significant, this only requires some initial start-up time. The findings from this evaluation suggest that although some time is required for meeting with subject leads and building up provision, this is relatively time effective once integrated throughout the school. During visits to schools, many of the Enterprise Co-ordinators and teaching staff commented that provision becomes more embedded over time, once they are able to see how well this can link with their curriculum plans - and can even add value to the content and the extent to which pupils are able to learn.

Embedding appears to have worked well where Co-ordinators have spent one-on-one time with individual subject leads to discuss the activities and teaching approaches already used and how these may already match with guidance on instilling: enterprise capability; financial capability; and business and economic understanding.

Activities

Schools provide a wide range of enterprise activities, combining enterprise challenges with a number of different means of interacting with businesses. Those that demonstrate examples of good practice in enterprise also tend to provide activities involving the whole school and deliver more transition activities with feeder primaries and colleges and universities. Mentoring can work very well, especially if this is a peer-to-peer approach. A few that have focused on pupil-led projects, including involving them in submitting bids and raising funds for new activities, report an increased confidence amongst pupils to approach teachers on a day-to-day basis to voice their opinions rather than requesting a separate outlet for this eg: via a student council.

Employer Engagement

Evidence gathered suggests that engaging employers is one of the most critical success factors, second only to support from SMT and allocating the appropriate set-up time to enterprise. All schools find it difficult to build relationships with businesses and feel they could improve their skills in this area. Allocating time to focus on developing this does appear to impact on the schools' effectiveness in establishing relationships. However, this does not have to be a significant time commitment, as demonstrated by some schools that have worked with smaller Small Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and business-start ups in the local area. Past students can also provide significant added value in demonstrating to young people that they too can achieve similar results.

Combining Internal and External Provision

External provision can complement curriculum-based activities by supporting extra-curricular opportunities and collapsed timetable events, incorporating cross-curricular themes. Schools that demonstrate good practice in enterprise feel it is important to use provision from external organisations to help keep this fresh and exciting for pupils. However, they are also more informed consumers and are more aware of whether they are being offered real value for money as opposed to a simple chunk of provision they could deliver themselves in-house for free and with greater effect.

Partnership and Networking

Schools would like to work with other schools to share knowledge of what works well. Those that are more enterprising are already creating links with others including primary and tertiary providers but some schools need assistance with this. Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) have offered useful support in some instances, creating networks and working groups at local level. Many schools are unaware of the role of the Enterprise Learning Partnerships (ELPs) or have not responded to these initial contacts. They understand that these are about sharing good practice, but they are not sure of what value they are adding.

Funding

The survey of schools undertaken for this evaluation involved Enterprise Co-ordinators who in most cases are not part of the SMT. Most of these are unaware of the School Development Grant, how much they receive through this and what other funds may be coming into the school. Feedback from some of the follow-up visits to schools suggests that some senior staff are also unsure as to the amount of money available to spend on Enterprise Education, mainly where local authorities are not clearly highlighting the amount under a specific heading for enterprise on their funding letter. Co-ordinators may not be aware of how Head teachers allocate the fund, including how this is used to support the salaries of these staff.

Additional Information

This research report was written before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.