



South-East
Regional Authority
Údaras Reigiúnach
an Oir-Dheiscirt



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“Youth Entrepreneurship Strategies (YES)” Project

Entrepreneurship Education in Ireland — Research Mapping and Analysis

Executive Summary and Recommendations

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Introduction

The South-East Regional Authority (SERA) is a partner in the EU INTERREG IVC part-funded project “*Youth Entrepreneurship Strategies (YES)*” involving eight regions from eight EU member states. The overarching objective of the YES project is to improve policies at national, regional and/or local level regarding the integration of entrepreneurship teaching into the education system.

Each YES partner organisation was tasked with mapping the provision of entrepreneurship education in their respective region/state. The two main objectives of the mapping project were:

- **Objective 1: Map the education system in terms of entrepreneurship**
 - Map the education system on a national, regional and local level;
 - Map the existing entrepreneurship education strategies, policies and legislation;
 - Map the relevant authorities that manage entrepreneurship education.
- **Objective 2: Map the entrepreneurship education activities**
 - Map activities on different education levels from primary school to university
 - Map support activities for entrepreneurship education
 - Map networking and co-operation
 - Map communications.

SERA commissioned Tom Martin & Associates/TMA in association with Dr. Tom Cooney of Dublin Institute of Technology to carry out the Irish entrepreneurship education mapping and analysis project. This document presents TMA’s Executive Summary and Recommendations.

Executive summary and recommendations

Executive summary

In today's ordeal of global economic challenge, particularly acute in Ireland, the subject of entrepreneurship education (EE) brings into sharp focus the debate on the proper role of education. Educators traditionally take a measured perspective on the perennial clash between the vocational and liberal missions; for them, the wise approach has always been to favour the provision of broad underlying generalist skills over transitory specialist competences. But, for embattled enterprise policy-makers on the front line, faced with the twin scourges of unemployment and emigration, the education system would ideally deliver into the world of work students ready to *hit the ground running* as fully formed employees or, better still, employers.

At primary and second level in Ireland, entrepreneurship education has traced a middle way, seeking to fuse the formal curriculum's best practice in new participative pedagogy with an overlay of more enterprise-focused extra-curricular activities. Likewise, at post-secondary level, entrepreneurship education is mediated to a substantial extent through extra-curricular and informal activities. The downside of this arrangement is that the provision of entrepreneurship education tends to be uneven across the schools and colleges and is unsustainably reliant on the goodwill of a cohort of 'champion' educators and industrialists.

Primary education

Key entrepreneurship education mapping data findings

- No dedicated entrepreneurship education subject
- Emphasis on development of 'soft' skills
- Extra-curricular resources including Bí Gnóthach and Junior Achievement Ireland programmes

Most people agree that the heavy hand of commerce should be withheld from primary-level schools so that children can enjoy an education free from the harsher demands of competition and profit. In Ireland the emphasis is on drawing out in pupils the 'soft' skills of entrepreneurship such as confidence and self-reliance, initiative and creativity, critical thinking and reflection, and a sense of adventure and risk-taking tempered by responsibility. Primary education in Ireland aims to be very

much child-centred so good teachers and principals automatically look to inculcate these traits in their pupils when planning their subject courses across the curriculum.

There is scope in the general primary curriculum to provide some early knowledge of the world of business, and some understanding of the role of entrepreneurs in the community. The extent of this provision is very much dependent on the capacity of the individual school in terms of teacher experience and management enthusiasm. Extra-curricular resources such as the *Bí Gnóthach* enterprise programme can prove very useful but success depends on the availability of external assistance from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), Education Centres, and, critically, from City and County Enterprise Boards' sponsorship of EE development officers.

Second level education

Key entrepreneurship education mapping data findings

- Enterprise modules within JC Business Studies and LC Business subjects
- Enterprise Education link modules within the LC Vocational Programme: 35,000 students in 2009–2010 academic year
- LC Applied has Enterprise 1, 2 and 3 modules
- Mini-company programmes in Transition Year (50% school participation rate)
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has developed a Senior Cycle Short course on Enterprise
- Support to teachers provided by PDST and Education Centres
- Range of extra-curricula resources and competitions (active support of City and County Enterprise Boards)

At second level, Irish entrepreneurship education has been lauded in European reports for its Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programmes. This recognition is well merited as these innovations in Irish education have been thoughtfully designed in response to the changing work and business environment so as to serve those pupils for whom the established 'academic' course was too restrictive. But these innovations are optional pathways and the great majority of second level students do not receive the benefit of their particular emphasis on the nature of enterprise and the opportunities for self-employment.

For the mainstream second level students, the exposure to entrepreneurship is principally provided by the Junior Certificate 'Business Studies' subject and the Leaving Certificate 'Business'. For both subjects Enterprise forms only one element in an extensive syllabus and the education would certainly be categorised as 'about' rather than 'for' enterprise.

The promising story for second level entrepreneurship education is the work on proposed changes to the Junior and Senior curricula now nearing completion by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) following an extensive consultation process with stakeholders. Reflecting similar conclusions by EU and OECD working groups, the NCCA recommend that the teaching and learning experience for all subjects at both levels in Irish secondary education should, in the future, be informed by a '*framework of key skills*' including Communicating, Creativity,

Team Working, Information Processing and Critical Thinking. There is no doubt that integrating these 'key skills' into the curricula at the Junior and Senior levels will underpin entrepreneurship potential and capacity.

Prompted by the reports of a number of Irish enterprise policy strategy groups, a further exciting element in the proposed NCCA changes is the re-configuration of the senior level curriculum to provide a greater range of components and allow for greater flexibility. The new offering will comprise 'Subjects', 'Short Courses' and 'Transition Units' of 180 hours, 90 hours and 45 hours duration respectively.

The shortened courses means students can select (as well as select from) a wider range of subjects. The Minister for Education and Skills has already commissioned a 'Short' subject on Enterprise which has been based on the LCVP Enterprise link module.

Opportunities for a more intimate practical exposure to business are afforded by an established programme of national and local student enterprise competitions 'embedded' into the formal second level time-table. The flagship competition is the Student Enterprise Awards sponsored by the County and City Enterprise Boards and its county and national finals are gala events in the school calendar. Transition Year students also have the opportunity to run a 'Get up and Go' mini company in a protected pedagogic environment to simulate the operations of real firms. These competitions are enthusiastically supported by the PDST and the network of Education Centres.

Tertiary level

Key entrepreneurship education mapping data findings

- A survey of 26 higher education institutions (mainly universities and institutes of technology) show that they provide 44 courses leading to a full award or qualification in enterprise or entrepreneurship
- The survey also shows that they offer 416 courses with credit-bearing or embedded enterprise/entrepreneurship modules

Cooney and Murray carried out a comprehensive survey of EE in the Irish HE sector in 2007 and found that, while it was still very much in its infancy, EE provision was increasingly available in all third-level institutions in the form of business modules and structured academic programmes. This survey was updated for our project and revealed that the respondents now offer 44 full entrepreneurship education awards and 416 courses with credit-bearing entrepreneurship modules. The upward trend in full awards is testimony to the increasing recognition of EE as a substantial subject in higher education.

A parallel NCGE/YES survey of EE in the HE sector undertaken for this project revealed an Irish Student Engagement Rate (SER) of 12% — SER is the percentage of total students enrolled in the sector that engages in EE through either curricular or extra-curricular activities. The comparable SER figures for the UK and EU were

16% and 24%, confirming the Cooney (2008) conclusion that, while much had been achieved, most institutions remain a long way from the cutting-edge of entrepreneurship education in global terms.

NCGE-YES survey of 22 higher education institutions (2011)	Student Numbers
Full Awards	1,084
Full Modules	6,020
Embedded Modules	5,488
Extra-Curricula Activities	6,540
Total Engagement Number	19,132
Total Enrolment Number	157,369
Student Engagement Rate	12.2%

Another important HE survey, carried out by the Accelerating Campus Entrepreneurship (ACE) consortium of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in 2008, found that the absence of an explicit institutional EE strategy in HEIs was leading to poor communication of existing entrepreneurship supports with the result that graduates who had identified commercialisation opportunities for their research results were missing out on the encouragement to progress their ideas.

Policy level

Key entrepreneurship education policy findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Relative lack of high-level policy commitment to both entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship itself ■ Lack of a national framework or an articulated institutional strategy for entrepreneurship education that would support education and practice among staff and students at all levels and across all disciplines ■ Relatively little evidence of organisational and institutional commitment, particularly in the Higher Education sector, to encouraging or developing entrepreneurship teaching or learning practice

In October 2007, Forfás (in consultation with the Small Business Forum) published *'Towards Developing an Entrepreneurship Policy for Ireland.'* This Report provided background information for a National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement and set out a blueprint to drive entrepreneurship in Ireland. A Draft Policy Statement was submitted to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Department then prepared a final Policy Statement for submission to the Minister and expected a Policy Statement to be published in early 2008. However, no Entrepreneurship and/or EE Policy Statement or Strategy has yet emerged.

Recommendations

TMA present their recommendations on entrepreneurship education under three broad headings: A. an overarching recommendation; B. recommendations arising from the mapping analysis; C. policy recommendations.

A. Overarching recommendation

A1. Immediate publication of an Entrepreneurship Policy Statement, which should include a coherent programme for entrepreneurship education at primary, secondary and post-secondary levels

It is now essential that the South-East Regional Authority (SERA) send out an urgent call for the long-delayed publication of such a Statement, which is timely in the context of the recent changes in government and in our general economic circumstances. With regard to Entrepreneurship Education in particular, it is essential that the Statement come from both the Department of Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation and the Department of Education and Skills.

B. Entrepreneurship education — Mapping

B1. Resources should be allocated for the deployment of EE Development Officers in all CEB jurisdictions to improve the uptake of the Bí Gnóthach EE programme

It has been proven in particular CEB areas that the deployment of an EE Development Officer (EDO) can make a substantial difference to the uptake and performance of EE programmes such as Bí Gnóthach in primary schools. The teachers have a heavy workload and the external assistance can make the difference between a successful programme and no EE at all. The sense of solidarity together with the input of fresh ideas energise the teachers.

B2. Stock of Resources for Primary Level should be boosted

Our discussions with knowledgeable informants suggests to us that the stock of teaching material available as a resource for primary level EE could usefully be refreshed to keep pace with the ever-accelerating march of ICT and its impact on children's attitudes. Clever initiatives such as SERA's Generation Next project show how this task can be combined with mobilising EE thinking across the education system from primary to HE.

B3. The proposed NCCA revisions to the Junior and Senior Cycle should be accepted and appropriate resources should be allocated to ensure their expeditious implementation

The exciting NCCA curriculum changes at Junior and Senior cycles in terms of 'key skills' and 'flexible learning profiles' (Subjects, Short courses and TY units) should be signed off by the Department of Education and Skills and resources allocated to speed their implementation. These have the potential to significantly increase the number of second level students who gain a real experience of the practical aspects of entrepreneurship.

B4. Make the LCVP Link Modules open to all senior cycle students

The LCVP link modules have tremendous attributes in terms of content, skills,

methodologies and assessment, and they afford students a real enterprise experience through visits and placements. Instead of the present arrangement whereby the Link Modules are merely components of the optional LCVP subject they should be augmented and elevated to the status of a full subject in their own right and open to all students with no conditions attached.

B5. Mount an EE Portal

There are several web sites offering very useful information and resources to students and educators. Examples include those of the PDST, the Education Centres and the CEBs. We feel that the impact of all these excellent but dispersed channels could be immeasurably enhanced by migrating them to a dedicated EE one-stop-portal. It would serve as a dynamic forum for exchange of views from all EE players.

B6. Teacher education at primary and second level should include an EE module

Irrespective of the final resolution of the debate about whether or not to institute specific EE modules in primary and secondary education we believe that student teachers should be provided with a module so that they can bring a credible EE presence to the classroom.

B7. Commission a research study to determine the extent and quality of EE in the Further Education (FE) sector

We understand that all Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses include a work experience module as a mandatory requirement for FETAC certification. Some of these courses contain the FETAC ‘Start Your Own Business (SYOB)’ module. It is difficult to get an accurate measure of the number of youths involved in these courses — in its presentation of student numbers for its different courses the annual FETAC Awards Report does not differentiate between adult and youths. It would also be necessary to carry out a few selective case studies to evaluate the calibre of the EE involved in the SYOB modules.

B8. The ACE initiative and its Train the Trainers programme should be rolled out to encompass all HEIs

The ACE initiative has made a significant contribution to the ‘framework conditions’ supporting EE delivery in the partner institutions. The key achievement has been ACE’s success in instigating a very visible commitment from the top management of each institution to the EE mission in their institution. The enhanced interdisciplinary co-operation mobilised by ACE was a second vital achievement in facilitating the embedding of EE in non-business disciplines. The ACE Train the Trainers programme is exactly the sort of programme required in other HEIs to upgrade their pedagogical skills.

B9. A quantum of Department of Education and Skills funding should be ringfenced for EE

Our findings have confirmed that the absence of a secure and dedicated line of funding threatens the fledgling EE project at all levels of the education system where it continues to be overly reliant on the supererogatory efforts of ‘champions’.

Given the manifest workload of teachers one suggestion is that a portion of this ringfenced money could be channelled through the CEBs to augment their supports that have been proven to enhance the EE provision. Such inter-departmental co-operation initiatives would signal the serious intent of government to promote Irish entrepreneurship to world-class standard alongside its world-class research. This would serve the government's stated objective to strike a better policy balance between investment in knowledge exploration and knowledge application.

B10. Launch a grand EE Awards event

It is clearly evident that in the area of EE there are tremendous efforts being put forth by students, educators, schools and external supporters from the public and private sectors. The corollary is that people can become demotivated and frustrated if they do not get the recognition their unstinting efforts deserve. We believe that a grand awards event, celebrating together these exponents of EE excellence, would be a very effective motivating tool and would also generate welcome public interest in EE.

B11. EE Initiatives should include thoroughgoing impact assessment methodology

International experience has shown that policy support and resource allocation tend to follow on from the establishment of a robust evidence base. There is a dearth of Irish evaluation data on EE impact. We believe that research projects on longitudinal studies should be commissioned by a joint Department of Education and Department of Enterprise EE evaluation committee. The imminent introduction of the NCCA curriculum revisions in senior cycle provides an excellent opportunity to mount a longitudinal EE impact study similar to that being undertaken by ESRI.

C. Entrepreneurship Education — Policy level

C1. Need for EE strategy statements from primary, secondary and tertiary sectors

It is now timely for the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors to make appropriate statements regarding their approach to EE at both the overall and individual sector levels. The two lead government departments (and the DES in particular) must play a key leadership role at all three levels but this will be particularly important at primary and secondary levels, where individual schools have relatively little discretion and resources.

C2. Support collaborative approaches to EE development and provision

Regarding both HE and FE institutions, a number of potential models have emerged e.g. the UCD Strategic Plan to 2014 which includes '*a focus on stimulating creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and active citizenship in all our students*'. The UCD-TCD Innovation Alliance also shows the way with its commitment to '*creating an infrastructural and cultural environment where innovation and entrepreneurship thrive*'. The ACE Initiative brings together the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, Cork Institute of Technology,

Institute of Technology Sligo and National University of Ireland Galway and is being led by Dundalk Institute of Technology. The ACE project aims, through a collaborative approach, to create entrepreneurial graduates. This requires embedding entrepreneurship education into existing non-business programmes and effecting organisational change within and between the institutions to reflect entrepreneurial processes involving collaboration between the academic Schools and Departments, incubation and technology transfer offices. The ACE Initiative is supported by the Strategic Innovation Fund of the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

C3. Adequate funding is essential for implementation of EE policies and strategies

All such policy/strategy statements must be accompanied by clear and adequately financed action/implementation plans that can be subject to ongoing evaluation and assessment in terms of inputs, outputs, impacts (based on longitudinal studies) and overall performance.

C4. Establish Inter-departmental structures to assist roll-out of EE strategy

As part of this overarching implementation process and in the context of impending public service reform, adequate and appropriate Inter-departmental mechanisms must be established to oversee the rolling-out of a 'national system of entrepreneurship education' on the basis of the National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement. It is essential that there are clear lines of responsibility and day-to-day management at the national, regional and local levels.

Clear roles and responsibilities should also be defined at school and college management levels, with appropriate representation at management committee/board level and designated 'EE Champions'. Rather than being a bar to status and promotion, as now appears to be the case, interest and involvement in enterprise education should be consciously promoted in the context of the emphasis placed by government and society in general in encouraging and developing entrepreneurial capabilities and initiative.

C5. Promote formal EE networks

Formal EE Networks (at 1st, 2nd and 3rd level) should be promoted and facilitated, involving appropriate groupings of educational institutions and organisations such as IBEC, SFA, ISME, Chambers of Commerce, etc., who are organised locally, regionally and nationally. This is required if enterprise education is to be recognised as a clear priority for both the education system and the overall enterprise sector. These networks should be complemented by schemes such as Entrepreneur in Residence initiatives.

C6. Review EE prizes and award schemes

Forfás and/or private consultants should be commissioned to undertake a review of the great variety of prizes and award schemes aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship in general and enterprise education in particular. Some of these play a key strategic role (e.g. Bí Gnóthach at the primary level) while others have been inadequately specified and judged. While it might be impossible to

'ban' inappropriate and poorly administered competitions, clear and agreed criteria for such awards could be set out as a result of such an exercise.