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Submission ID

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Title (required)

Learning the ABCs of Enterprise Education: A Roadmap Review of Curriculum and Policy for Compulsory Education within Ireland and Scotland

Abstract (required)

Keywords: *Enterprise Education; Education; ABC Themes; Policy; Republic of Ireland; Scotland*

Topic:

Enterprise Education (EE) encompasses various forms and is recognised for its diverse, applicative range from skills development and employability within organisations to formal, structured venture creation. This is prevalent across educational programmes and academic levels (Hytti et al., 2002; Kuratko, 2005; Blenker et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2014; 2017; Fauchald, 2024) influencing approaches and initiatives (Bell and Bell, 2020; Crammond, 2020; Murray and Crammond, 2020; 2023a; Education Scotland, 2023). Notably, EE courses are now commonly integrated into many university degrees (Neck et al., 2014), either as specialised subject areas or as optional additions to core curricula (Tiernan, 2016; Amofah and Saladrigues, 2022). However, EE concepts extend beyond integration within traditional courses and are also demonstrated in less conventional ways such as through role-playing (Rao and Stupans, 2012; Crammond, 2020), serious play (Neck et al., 2014; 2022; Fox et al., 2018), experimental experiences (Gartner and Vesper, 1994; Hägg and Kurczewska, 2021), and pupil-led activities (MacBlain, 2018; Jones et al., 2019; Murray, 2024), embodying the spirit of the ‘playful entrepreneur’.

In the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Scotland, EE is not just an academic subject, but a strategic component aimed at enhancing economic resilience and fostering innovation. At the intersection of EE and policy, progressive steps have been to integrate enterprising forms of education across compulsory (Scotland’s Enterprising Schools, 2023; Scottish Government, 2023), and post-compulsory (Universities Scotland, 2023; Young Enterprise Scotland, 2024) levels of learning (Erkkila, 2000; Hytti et al. 2002; Lackéus, 2015; Seikkula-Leino et al., 2019). This results in wider policy change and renewed institutional strategies (O’Connor, 2013; Crammond, 2023b)

Within the broader context of European policy initiatives, The European Commission’s ‘Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan’ aims to reignite the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe and ensure that the educational system from primary to higher education supports entrepreneurial learning (European Commission, 2013).

Within EE, there exists a spectrum of learning approaches, including replication, simulation, and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Pittaway & Cope, 2007; Penaluna & Penaluna, 2015; Ramsgaard, 2018; Lackéus, 2020; Bell & Bell, 2020; Motta & Galina, 2023), and pupil-led activities (MacBlain, 2018; Jones et al, 2019). Distinctions are made between different modes of learning: (1) learning through play, (2) learning aimed at achieving certifications and expected knowledge and (3) preparing for careers and employability through work-ready, commercial activities. Each of these approaches offer unique benefits and challenges, contributing to a holistic understanding of EE. Acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of enterprise, EE recognises the diverse perspectives surrounding entrepreneurship, including notions of individual autonomy and societal contribution. This recognition goes beyond innate qualities and considers the complexities of navigating socio-economic conditions. Furthermore, with the advancing of EE and its many forms of delivery, its application across education levels increases exposure to enterprise and value opportunities to evidence key entrepreneurial skills early in learning and both personal and interpersonal development (Blenker et al., 2012; Lindstrom, 2013; Jones et al, 2019; Jones et al, 2020; Lackéus, 2020).

Applicability to ISBE Conference Theme:

This paper evaluates EE within both compulsory and non-compulsory education settings, illustrating how EE presents an opportunity for fostering inclusivity and equity. Through EE, individuals from diverse backgrounds, and stages of learning, are empowered to engage in entrepreneurial concepts and practices, thereby contributing to a more equitable distribution of entrepreneurial opportunities. Exposure to ideas and perspectives embedded within EE not only foster entrepreneurial skills (Gibb, 1987; Jones et al, 2020) but also cultivates a range of desired personal and interpersonal qualities (Daniel, 2016; The Eurydice Report, 2016;

Fayolle, 2018; Crammond, 2020; 2023a). These qualities, including autonomy, resilience, independence, creativity, and adaptability are essential not only for entrepreneurial success but also for navigating the complexities of an increasingly changing and dynamic world. By promoting the development of such skills and capabilities, EE equips individuals with the tools needed to actively participate in shaping a more equitable and just society.

Paper Aim:

This paper undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of the pedagogical approaches and policy frameworks governing EE within compulsory education, comparing and contrasting developments within the ROI and Scotland. By critically reviewing the current landscapes of EE in these regions, this paper acknowledges the existing frameworks and assesses the presence (or absence) of clear pathways for EE learning and experiential opportunities. Adopting ABC themes: Attributes, Behaviours and Contexts of EE, as outlined by Crammond (2023b), the paper also examines the effectiveness of current EE pedagogies and policies in fostering entrepreneurial skills and mindsets among students. It will investigate the extent to which EE is integrated into formal curriculum and extracurricular activities, exploring the diversity of approaches used to deliver EE content. Furthermore, the paper comments on the level of inclusivity of EE initiatives, considering how they cater to the needs of diverse student populations and promote equitable access to EE. Drawing on the ABC themes, strengths, and limitations of existing EE practices in ROI and Scotland are identified. By identifying gaps and challenges within the current landscape, recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of EE initiatives are outlined, thereby contributing to the advancement of entrepreneurship research, policy, and practice for a more equitable world.

Methodology:

This research employs a triangulated integrative review methodology (Toronto and Remington, 2020; Cronin and George, 2023), drawing upon theoretical, empirical, and industry-based sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of EE within compulsory education settings in ROI and Scotland. The triangulation of sources allows for a comprehensive examination of EE pedagogies, policies, and practices. By synthesising insights from these varied sources, a holistic and evidence-based assessment of the current landscape of EE within compulsory education is offered, informing unique contributions, and aiding in the outlining of both thematic and systematic recommendations.

Contribution:

The paper's contribution is presented in the form of educational phases, cognisant of EE and learner development stages and frameworks (QAA, 2018; Advance HE, 2024). Categorised as Cognitive (pre-school and primary education), Content-Driven (secondary and examination-based), and Creativity and Commercialisation (college and university) result in a unique C³ roadmap model, illustrating distinct phases of the learner journey. Categorising EE methods and approaches according to these phases offer a timely intervention aligned with current educational curricula at each level. Inspired by university-level EE practices, such as Assisted Academic Practice (AAP) (Crammond, 2023b), the paper attempts to bridge EE opportunity gaps between stages of learning, as depicted in the C³ model, and acknowledge current educational practices and national policies within both countries. Through this conceptualisation, gaps in practice and discrepancies in EE provision and policy guidance within each country are realised, paving the way for targeted recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of EE initiatives.

The positive impact of EE includes enhancing students' entrepreneurial intentions and actions, thereby boosting employability and economic contributions (Bae et al., 2014). However, this form of education is not limited to preparing individuals for entrepreneurial roles. Volery et al. (2013) emphasise its pivotal role in fostering societal change, encouraging students through critical and creative thinking. Moreover, EE aids in the development of vital personal attributes, such as resilience, self-confidence, and an effective failure management capacity, which are indispensable for both personal and professional success (Nabi et al., 2017)

Contribution to Policy:

The findings of this study carry significant implications for EE policy in both ROI and Scotland, aligning with the strategic directions outlined in their respective national policies.

In Ireland, the 'Action Plan for Education 2019' set out a vision for fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and skills among students, emphasising the integration of EE across all levels of the education system (Department of Education and Skills, 2019). Furthermore, Ireland's 'National Skills Strategy 2025' recognises EE as a key component in equipping individuals with the skills necessary for success in the modern economy (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2022).

Ireland's National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 emphasises innovation and entrepreneurship across all levels of higher education. This strategy aligns with national economic goals and provides a broad policy framework for integrating EE in Irish educational institutions (Higher Education Authority, 2011).

Similarly, Scotland's ecosystem contributes to the development of EE with notable stakeholders, groups, and institutions promoting enterprise within schools (Education Scotland, 2023; Scotland's Enterprising Schools, 2024), links with industry in creating 'entrepreneurial campuses' (Scottish Government, 2023), and initiatives and opportunities with enterprise educators, facilitators, and business advisers (such as Young Enterprise Scotland, 2024).

The structured approach proposed in this study, which categorises EE methods according to different educational phases and stages, offers policymakers in both countries a practical framework for designing and implementing targeted interventions that cater to the specific developmental needs of students.

Murray (2024) argues that integrating EE into the Irish Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme can equip even the youngest learners with creativity and resilience, aligning with national policies. By aligning EE interventions with existing curricula and educational priorities, policymakers can ensure the integration of entrepreneurship skills and mindsets into the learning experience. Moreover, the comparative analysis of EE implementation in both countries sheds light on areas where policy alignment and collaboration could be strengthened. For instance, while both countries have made strides in promoting EE, there are disparities in EE provision and guidance across different educational phases within each country. This highlights the need for more coherent and consistent policy frameworks to support the effective delivery of EE initiatives. Addressing these disparities will require targeted policy interventions, such as investing in teacher training and professional development programmes to enhance educators' capacity to deliver high-quality EE. Additionally, fostering closer partnerships between educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and government agencies will be essential to ensure the relevance and

effectiveness of EE initiatives in preparing students for the demands of the 21st-century economy. By leveraging the insights provided by this research, policymakers in ROI and Scotland can work towards creating a more integrated and strategic approach to EE policy. This will not only contribute to the development of entrepreneurial skills and mindsets among students but also foster a more inclusive and prosperous society.

Contribution to Practice:

The contribution to practice from this paper encompasses several key areas of impact. Firstly, it offers guidance for curriculum development by categorising EE methods according to different educational phases, facilitating the integration of EE into existing curricula. Secondly, it informs teacher training and professional development programmes by identifying gaps in EE provision and offering insights into how educators can effectively deliver high-quality EE across various educational levels. Thirdly, it emphasises the importance of cross-sector collaboration in promoting EE, providing practitioners with strategies for initiating and strengthening partnerships between educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and government agencies. Additionally, the paper offers student engagement strategies tailored to different developmental stages, encouraging practitioners to incorporate experiential learning opportunities into EE initiatives. Lastly, it informs policy advocacy efforts by comparing EE implementation across different countries, empowering practitioners to advocate for policy reforms and investments that support the integration of EE into formal education systems. Overall, the contribution to practice lies in its ability to provide actionable insights and recommendations that enable practitioners to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of EE initiatives, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and skills among all students from preschool to further education.

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Enterprise Education

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Full Paper

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