



*Theorising competitive enterprise education*

BRENTNALL, Catherine

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# **Theorising Competitive Enterprise Education**

Catherine F Brentnall

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of

Sheffield Hallam University

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2022

# Candidate Declaration

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Name	Catherine F Brentnall
Award	PhD
Date of Submission	December, 2022
Faculty	Sheffield Business School, College of Business, Technology and Engineering
Director of Studies	Dr Nicola Palmer

# Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my research supervisors and the support from Sheffield Business School for a faculty scholarship which enabled this research. Sincere thanks to Dr Fariba Darabi, Dr Christine O’Leary and Professor Kevin Kerrigan who got me started on this journey and Emeritus Professor John McAuley, Dr Katie Shearn and Director of Studies Dr Nicola Palmer who got me finished. Nicola, thank you for believing in this project when we first met at the scholarship interview, and your encouragement and support to complete this study. Thanks too for the wonderful and supportive community that was/is the Unit 5/Level 5 PhD group, in particular, Deepali Brahmabhatt for being an amazing student rep, Fides Martinez for organising online drop-ins and research colloquia during and after the pandemic and Dr Marc Duffy for philosophies of management discussions and viva tips.

I am very grateful to various collaborators, co-authors and colleagues – friends - in the field of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education. A PhD is a long journey and influenced by many people. In particular, thank you to Ivan Diego-Rodriguez, a fellow practitioner and co-author, with whom discussing concerns about competitions planted the seed for this work. And to Professor Nigel Culkin, project collaborator and co-author, whose encouragement influenced the pursuit of this study. And also to Dr David Higgins, who introduced me to problematisation and other inspiring methods, and has influenced my interest in how research is practiced. Thanks to co-authors and collaborators who kept me motivated through this process: Dr Martin Lackéus, Professor Per Blenker, Jen Huntsley, Dr Phil Clegg, Dr Leigh Morland and Jen Wall - your collaboration and encouragement is much appreciated. Thanks to colleagues and friends in the Enterprise Education tracks at IEEC, ISBE and 3e. Every question and interaction has been appreciated and helped develop my thinking.

Huge thanks to my wonderful family. To my parents, Kryssy and Chris, for your cheerleading and practical support throughout, and to my dad Bill, for encouraging me to get this done. To my kids, Daniel and Joe, whose different reactions to primary school enterprise competitions made me more convinced that realistic evaluations of EE competitions were needed. And to my partner Matthew, whose encouragement to pursue - and unwavering support to complete - this PhD has meant so much.

And last, but not least, sincere thanks to the participants of this study, the programme practitioners whose generous time, insights, experiences and ideas made this thesis - and the thinking developed within - possible.

# Abstract

Enterprise Education (EE) is a global phenomenon which is demanded at every stage of education and often called for on the basis that it will develop the skills, confidence and ‘can do’ attitude of students. Yet, simultaneously, it can be observed that many of the activities provided in practice are structured competitively, and this competitiveness, and the positive effects of structuring activities competitively, is taken for granted in literature and measurement focused effects studies. As such, this thesis proposes the concept of Competitive Enterprise Education (CEE), to make explicit the fundamental structure of activities, and uses the principles and resources of Realist Evaluation to develop a deeper understanding of what is happening in such programmes at secondary school level. Specifically, evidence relating to four layers of context proposed as important for programme practitioners to understand (Individual, Interpersonal, Institutional and Infra-structural) are organised to illuminate how effects are generated in Short Form (one day or less) competitions and Long Form (from eight weeks to almost an academic year) CEE. Analysis identifies what resources, already existing in the context, CEE programmes leverage to generate more positive effects as well as for whom programmes *are not* working so well. Thinking is extended towards understanding the ripple effects of CEE, and how programmes can change the context itself over time. Overall, this study contributes explanatory theorising about competitive programmes in EE and how negative, as well as positive, effects are generated, demonstrating the usefulness of Realist Evaluation and the importance of complementing measuring with thinking.

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Prologue .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1 Introduction and Background to the Study .....</b>	<b>17</b>
1.1 Purpose and Objectives .....	17
1.2 Background to the study .....	19
1.3 Enterprise Education as an Activity .....	19
1.4 Enterprise Education in Policy .....	22
1.5 Enterprise Education in England .....	24
1.6 Competitive Enterprise Education as Taken-for-Granted .....	26
1.7 Competitive Enterprise Education Defined .....	28
1.8 <i>What Works</i> and Competitive Enterprise Education .....	30
1.9 Learning about <i>What Works for Whom, and Why?</i> .....	33
1.10 Extending thinking towards <i>What does it work for?</i> .....	34
1.11 Competitive Enterprise Education – Conceptual Frameworks.....	36
1.11.1 Competitive Enterprise Education – A Linear Conceptualisation.....	37
1.11.2 Competitive Enterprise Education – A Realistic Conceptualisation .....	39
1.12 Outline of the Thesis.....	43
1.13 Summary of Chapter.....	45
<b>2 Literature Review .....</b>	<b>48</b>
2.1 Purpose and Principles – a Problematising Approach.....	48
2.2 Selecting a Domain of Literature.....	51
2.3 Search Strategy .....	54
2.4 Categorising.....	55

2.5	Mapping and Narrating.....	59
2.6	Review Results – Insights from Exploring ‘The Evidence Base’ .....	60
2.6.1	Using Positive Results from Serious Games Literature.....	60
2.6.2	Using Positive Results from Voluntary Long Form Competitions.....	63
2.6.3	Using Literature which Obscures the Nature and Effects of Competing.....	65
2.6.4	Using Measurement Focused Studies Which Wash Out Context.....	67
2.7	Choosing Texts for Close and Deep Reading.....	68
2.8	EE Impact Measurement Studies – Summaries and Problems.....	70
2.8.1	Enterprise Education – Influencing Students Perceptions of Entrepreneurship ..	70
2.8.2	The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurship Competencies and Intentions.....	72
2.8.3	Measuring the Enterprise Potential in Young People.....	73
2.8.4	The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurship Skills and Motivation.....	75
2.8.5	The Impact of Enterprise Education on Attitudes to Enterprise in Young People: And Evaluation Study.....	78
2.8.6	The Effect of Early Entrepreneurship Education: Evidence from a Randomised Field Experiment.....	81
2.9	EE Impact Measurement Studies – Insights from Close and Deep Readings .....	84
2.9.1	The Programme is the Treatment.....	84
2.9.2	Unobservable Differences.....	85
2.9.3	Limited Explanation.....	86
2.10	Conclusion and Necessity of a Realistic Way Forward .....	87
2.11	Summary of Chapter.....	87
<b>3</b>	<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>89</b>
3.1	Ontological Perspective - Realism .....	89
3.2	Realism in this Study – Scientific Realism .....	90
3.3	Epistemological Perspective.....	91
3.4	Implications of Philosophical Perspective on Evaluation Research and Practice.	93
3.5	Methodology – A Qualitative Study Drawing on Realist Evaluation .....	95
3.6	Research Design .....	96
3.7	Method – Semi-Structured Interviews.....	97
3.8	Sampling.....	99
3.9	Collecting Data .....	101
3.9.1	Recruiting Programme Practitioners.....	101

3.9.2	Interviewing Programme Practitioners .....	104
3.9.3	Transcribing Data.....	106
3.9.4	Analysing Data.....	107
3.9.5	Coding Against Conceptual Frameworks .....	108
3.9.6	Reducing Data into Descriptive Summaries .....	110
3.9.7	Identifying Insights through a Realist Thematic Analysis.....	112
3.9.8	Structuring Analysis around Four Layers of Context.....	112
3.9.9	Abduction - Theorising from the Perspective of Two Realistic Questions .....	116
3.9.10	Retroduction – Theorising Explanations .....	119
3.9.11	Writing as Analysis.....	120
3.9.12	Summary of Collecting and Working with Data .....	122
3.10	Ethical Issues .....	123
3.11	Validity .....	124
3.11.1	Validity in Realist Work .....	125
3.12	Reflections on the Methodology.....	127
3.13	Summary of Chapter.....	131
<b>4</b>	<b>Theorising Short Form Competitive Enterprise Education.....</b>	<b>132</b>
4.1	Structure of Findings .....	132
4.2	Description – Short Form CEE in Programme Practitioners Own Words .....	134
4.2.1	Programme Shorthand .....	134
4.2.2	Content.....	135
4.2.3	Logistics.....	138
4.3	Re-Description – What is Short Form CEE Leveraging from the Context? .....	141
4.3.1	Individual Capacities .....	142
4.3.2	Interpersonal Relationships.....	146
4.3.3	Institutional Setting.....	148
4.3.4	Infrastructural System.....	151
4.3.5	Summary – What is Short Form CEE Leveraging from the Context? .....	156
4.4	Re-Description – For Whom is Short Form CEE Not Working so Well? .....	157
4.4.1	Individual Capacities .....	157
4.4.2	Interpersonal Relationships.....	163
4.4.3	Institutional Setting.....	170
4.4.4	Infrastructural System.....	174
4.4.5	Summary – For Whom is Short Form CEE Not Working so Well?.....	179
4.5	Summary of Chapter.....	180
<b>5</b>	<b>Theorising Long Form Competitive Enterprise Education.....</b>	<b>181</b>



5.1	Structure of Findings .....	181
5.2	Description – Long Form CEE in Programme Practitioners Own Words .....	182
5.2.1	Programme Shorthand .....	182
5.2.2	Programme Arc .....	183
5.2.3	Programme Support .....	186
5.2.4	Finale as Milestone .....	187
5.3	Re-Description – What is Long Form CEE Leveraging from the Context? .....	189
5.3.1	Individual Capacities .....	189
5.3.2	Interpersonal Relationships.....	197
5.3.3	Institutional Setting.....	201
5.3.4	Infrastructural System.....	206
5.3.5	Summary – What is Long Form CEE Leveraging from the Context?.....	213
5.4	Re-Description – For Whom is Long Form CEE Not Working so Well?.....	214
5.4.1	Individual Capacities .....	214
5.4.2	Interpersonal Relationships.....	222
5.4.3	Institutional Setting.....	227
5.4.4	Infrastructural System.....	230
5.4.5	Summary – For Whom is Long Form CEE Not Working so Well? .....	237
5.5	Summary of Chapter.....	238
<b>6</b>	<b>Theorising CEE.....</b>	<b>239</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	239
6.2	Research Objective 1 – To Explore and Question Assumptions about ‘What Works’ in CEE.....	241
6.2.1	Using Positive Results from Serious Games Literature.....	242
6.2.2	Using Positive Results from Voluntary Long Form Competitions.....	246
6.2.3	Using Literature which Obscures the Nature and Effects of Competing.....	250
6.2.4	Using Measurement Focused Studies Which Wash Out Context.....	253
6.3	Research Objective 2 – To Explore Positive and Negative Effects of CEE.....	254
6.3.1	Short Form CEE.....	255
6.3.1.1	More Positive Results – Equipped at the Starting Line .....	256
6.3.1.2	More Negative Results – Arriving on the Back Foot .....	258
6.3.1.3	Implications.....	260
6.3.2	Long Form CEE.....	261
6.3.2.1	More Positive Effects – Contexts of Abundance.....	264
6.3.2.2	More Negative Results – Contexts of Scarcity .....	268
6.3.2.3	Implications.....	271
6.4	Research Objective 3 - to consider whether CEE may change the context itself over time. ....	274

6.4.1	Ripple Effects of CEE.....	274
6.4.1	Explanations of success and failure in the legitimisation of inequality .....	278
6.5	Summary of Chapter.....	282
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>284</b>
7.1	Overview .....	284
7.2	Potential limitations.....	287
7.2.1	Literature Review.....	287
7.2.2	Realist Approach.....	289
7.2.3	Sample.....	290
7.2.4	Theorising .....	291
7.3	Contribution to Knowledge .....	292
7.4	Contribution to Practice.....	294
7.5	Opportunities for further research .....	298
7.6	Ways forward in practice .....	301
7.6	Reflections on the PhD experience.....	306
7.6.1	Developing as a Scholar.....	306
7.6.2	Developing a Realistic Perspective.....	308
	<b>References.....</b>	<b>310</b>
	<b>Appendices – There are 6 appendices .....</b>	<b>326</b>
	Appendix 1 – Visualisations Mapping Literature in BGECWW.....	326
	Appendix 2 – The Use of Literature in BGECWW .....	328
	Appendix 3 – Narrative Summary of Use of Literature in BGECWW .....	333
	Building the context – setting the scene for Business Games and Enterprise Competitions.....	333
	Building the case for Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. ....	334
	Building a definition for Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. ....	335
	Building a picture of Business Games and Enterprise Competitions in Practice. ....	335
	Building an account for the impact of Business Games and Competitions.....	336
	Recommendations on developing the evidence base.....	339
	Appendix 4 – Participant Information Sheet .....	341
	Appendix 5 – Consent Form.....	345
	Appendix 6 – Summary of Scholarly Activity connected to PhD study .....	346
	Publications and writing .....	346
	Conferences and workshops .....	347

Other scholarly activity .....	348
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## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1 - Linear Conceptualisation of CEE</b> .....	38
<b>Figure 2 - Realistic Conceptualisation of CEE</b> .....	42
<b>Figure 3 - Variations in Short Form CEE</b> .....	140
<b>Figure 4 - What is Short Form CEE Leveraging from the Context?</b> .....	156
<b>Figure 5 - For Whom is Short Form CEE Not Working So Well?</b> .....	179
<b>Figure 6 - What is Long Form CEE Leveraging from the Context?</b> .....	213
<b>Figure 7 - For Whom is Long Form CEE Not Working So Well?</b> .....	237
<b>Figure 8 - Theorising CEE Ripple Effects</b> .....	281

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1 - EE Impact Measurement Studies .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Table 2 - Contrasting Realism with Positivism and Constructivism .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Table 3 - Overview of Participants.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Table 4 - Initial Discussion Guide for Interviews .....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Table 5 - Example of Data Organisation for Long Form CEE.....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Table 6 - Example of Contextual Insights in Long Form CEE.....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Table 7 - A More Positive Pathway in Short Form CEE .....</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>Table 8 - A More Negative Pathway in Short Form CEE.....</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>Table 9 - Advantageous Contexts in Long Form CEE .....</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>Table 10 – Disadvantageous Contexts in Long Form CEE.....</b>	<b>270</b>

# List of Abbreviations

BGECWW – Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works?

CEC – The Careers and Enterprise Company

CEE – Competitive Enterprise Education

EE – Enterprise Education

EBP – Evidenced Based Policy

RCT - Randomised Controlled Trials

RE – Realist Evaluation

# Prologue

In this thesis I propose and fill out the concept of Competitive Enterprise Education (CEE) and offer a contribution to knowledge and practice in the field of Enterprise Education (EE). As a prologue to this, it is useful to situate this academic work within the context of my professional life in EE, a field in which I have worked since 2006.

My initial role was for a local authority school improvement programme which used enterprise to energise school culture and as a theme to develop curricula. I was involved in training primary school teachers to develop enterprise through the curriculum. At the start of my time in EE, I had competitions and competitive activities handed down to me as an appropriate and effective pedagogy and passed this practice on to educators I worked with.

As part of my role, I developed and delivered professional learning for teachers, to support them to integrate enterprise into the curriculum. At training sessions, we would model activities such as a box production exercise where teachers worked in teams, responded to a brief, ‘pitched’ their ideas and a team would be declared the winner. I found it curious that in evaluation forms, in relation to feeding back on the most worthwhile or successful element of the training, responses included ‘winning the pitch was great’, or ‘our team winning!!’.

Regarding reflection on ‘anything you would change or improve about the training?’, remarks from participants included ‘I can’t believe we didn’t win’, or ‘not winning the challenge.’ I was surprised that *adults* were sufficiently concerned with winning or losing that they would focus their feedback on that aspect of the activities. These early experiences (observing adults’ varying reactions to competitive activities), planted a seed in my mind about how the same intervention can inspire different reactions in participants, leading to fun and elation for some, and anxiety and disappointment for others.

My professional life in EE has involved working with schools in the UK and Europe and I observe that competitions and challenges are a fixture across the board, ubiquitous in practice and promoted in policy. In England, where I live, where my children go to school and where I most often practice, guidance about ‘what works’ in enterprise education for schools now recommends competitive activities *for all* 11-18 year olds. The notion of ‘what works’ is linked to approaches to evidenced based policy, where experimental studies and systematic reviews are seen as the route to producing rigorous evidence to support decisions about what interventions to promote. The idea is that effective educational programmes can be identified, often through Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs), and then scaled up so more participants will benefit. As a result of my early experience in EE, observing a range of reactions in adult participants to ‘the same’ competitive activity, I do not find this idea fully convincing.

Therefore, when ‘what works?’ arrived in EE, with the seminal school guidance ‘Business Games and Competitions. What Works?’ (Hanson et al., 2017), published by The Careers and Enterprise Company, I felt concerned that complex educational programmes were presented as simple treatments that could be given to students and consistent results achieved.

Meanwhile, in evidence-based policy making and evaluation, the question ‘what works?’ has been expanded through the development and application of Realist Evaluation (RE), a strategy which has an *explanatory* rather than a judgmental focus. Researchers using this approach acknowledge that *effects* generated through programmes *are contingent on context*, and that the role of a researcher is to better understand what works for whom (or not) and why?

Using the perspective and resources offered by RE, in this thesis I aim to provide an alternative account of what can be considered rigorous research by illuminating unexplored variation in the effects of CEE activities in schools. This approach provides knowledge about



negative, as well as positive effects that can be generated in such activities, and also provides the opportunity to consider if and how programmes might influence *the context itself*, over time. The credibility of using Realist Evaluation to expand knowledge is reflected in the publication successes which have been achieved whilst working on this thesis. In this study, I have appreciated the opportunity to collect and work with data from stakeholders involved in CEE programmes at a regional and national level, using this empirical material to theorise – think through – this ubiquitous but under-researched type of programme.

# 1 Introduction and Background to the Study

## 1.1 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to propose the concept of Competitive Enterprise Education (CEE) and undertake a holistic exploration of *for whom (and what)* this type of activity *works well for (or not) and why* in school settings.

In school-based Enterprise Education (EE), programmes and activities which are competitive are often presented as unproblematic and recommended to educators as ‘what works’ (Hanson et al., 2017). However, it has long been argued that the legitimacy of EE is persistently constrained by a reliance on such taken-for-granted activities/methods (for example, pitching competitions and mini companies), and there should be more attention paid to questioning the foundation and impact of such methods (Fayolle, 2013; Fayolle et al., 2016; Fletcher, 2018; Hytti, 2018). Consequently, in this thesis I will argue that CEE is *simultaneously ubiquitous and under-theorised*, and that undertaking a deep and comprehensive exploration of commonly adopted competitive activities is *a contribution to the call to revitalize EE* by questioning received wisdom in knowledge and practice (Berglund and Verduijn, 2018).

EE programmes are demanded globally and delivered at every stage of education, though is *not clear whether this is beneficial* for all individuals or wider society (Anderson et al., 2009; Fayolle, 2013; Fayolle et al., 2016; Loi et al., 2021). Whilst there was initial strong interest in researching such education in relation to small business management and entrepreneurship, overall, this interest has been declining, along with diminishing attention to policy related research (Rosa, 2013; Volery and Mazzarol, 2015). In terms of *evaluating effects* of EE, it

has been said that experimental methods such as Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) and systematic and meta-analytic reviews are the most rigorous approach to constructing knowledge and learning ‘what works’ (Rideout and Gray, 2013; Hooley, 2016; Longva and Foss, 2018). However, I will argue that a focus on measurement approaches to evaluation obscures crucial contextual variations which influence outcome patterns in CEE, and which have hitherto been concealed by the focus on presenting average effect sizes. Instead, in this thesis, theorising - that is, thinking through – will encourage readers to move beyond ‘what works?’ (Rideout and Grey, 2013), into ‘what works, for whom, in what circumstances and why?’ (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), and towards ‘what does it work for?’ (Biesta, 2007). This means departing from a measurement study approach (which might tell us ‘what worked’ in a specific programme, at a specific time), and instead adopting an alternative approach which aims to support the development of foresight (Jagosh, 2020), by theorising how effects - more negative as well as more positive - for individuals, are influenced by contextual factors, and also considering how a programme might change the context itself over time.

The following objectives will be pursued to fulfil this aim:

- 
- 1. To explore and question assumptions with regards to the evidence base for Competitive Enterprise Education.**

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  - 2. To explore positive and negative effects in Competitive Enterprise Education.**

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  - 3. To consider whether Competitive Enterprise Education changes the context itself over time.**

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The contribution to knowledge of this thesis is the proposal and elaboration of the concept of Competitive Enterprise Education, as well as deeper *understanding and explanations* about for whom (and what) such competitive activities work well for (or not) and why. Whilst impact measurement studies in EE have generated mixed results and limited explanation, this thesis will prioritise the development of insight and explanation about negative, as well as

positive, effects for individuals and extend thinking towards ways in which a programme itself might influence the context into which it is inserted. This contribution to knowledge helps facilitate a *re-thinking of taken-for-granted competitive activities* by unsettling assumptions (such as the assumption that EE programmes are simple treatments that can be prescribed as *what works*, or that they somehow naturally lead to the development of confidence and skills for participants). This is important because *the unsettling of assumptions is recognised as being a pre-cursor* for more emancipatory approaches in EE (Berglund et al., 2020). Now the overall purpose, objectives and contribution of this thesis have been introduced, the background to the study is explored.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

In the following sections I introduce the reader to the background for this study, including the arrival of EE in the author's home country and how EE in schools was conceptualised in early literature. The taken-for-grantedness of competitive activities in policy and practice is discussed, as well as the emergence of 'what works?' guidance about competitive activities in EE. Two conceptual frameworks are introduced to orient the reader as to what is meant by Competitive Enterprise Education and to illuminate what it means to move from a linear conceptualisation of these activities towards a more realistic conceptualisation.

## **1.3 Enterprise Education as an Activity**

Enterprise Education first gained policy traction in Britain after *it* was imported from the United States in the 1960s (Davies, 2002; Sukarieh and Tannock, 2014). The 'it' that was imported was activities provided by Junior Achievement (JA), a US based enterprise organisation which started as an after-school club activity in Springfield, Massachusetts in

1919 (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2014). These activities were brought over by Sir Walter Salomon – a British banker, later knighted by Margaret Thatcher – after he had seen the programme in action on a visit to the USA in the late 1950s, and ‘Young Enterprise’, as it was known in England, was founded in 1962. (Young Enterprise UK, n.d.a). The first UK Company Programme was launched in 1963 and involved 113 students starting eight firms.

This initial (and enduring) format – the ***Company Programme*** – involved youngsters establishing a real business where they might experience the *joys and the sorrows of commerce* (Grant, 1986). In just ten years 22 Young Enterprise Area Boards were established, delivering Company Programmes across the country, and where teams competed for recognition and prizes against other teams, regionally and nationally (Young Enterprise UK, n.d.a). Perhaps it is not surprising then, that in early writing to build the conceptual foundations for Enterprise Education (EE) in schools in the UK, Jamieson (1984), proposed defining enterprise not by what it is, but *by what schools mean when they say they are ‘educating for enterprise’*. In the seminal work ‘Schools and Enterprise’, he proposed that enterprise education could be characterized by the experience of the ‘*mini-enterprise*’, through which students might be educated about business, foster skills for enterprise, and learn through being enterprising to solve problems and create their own futures (Jamieson, 1984).

The idea that EE characterised itself in the form of activities was further developed by Grant (1986). He noted the expression of enterprise through mini-company formats “...*apparently on the assumption that the activities in question will lead to student learning in a form capable of transfer to life outside school*” (Grant, 1986, p. 61). Whether or not EE was well defined or understood, Grant observed that it was proving to be a *powerful concept*, prompting the generation of much *educational activity* (Grant, 1986).

Early writers critiqued this conflating of EE conceptually and practically. Crompton (1987) asserted that *EE as mini company activities* could, at best, represent pedagogic liberation and deepened student participation but, at worst, could be propaganda for corporate hegemony and “*education for capitalism*” (Crompton, 1987, p. 5). Gibb repeatedly drew attention to the confusion and misuse (Gibb, 1987), misleading and multi-meaning (Gibb, 1993), and synonymous and stereo-typical (Gibb, 2007) use of the terms ‘enterprise education’, ‘entrepreneurship education’ and ‘small business training’. He asserted that the lack of agreement on concept resulted in a “*veritable pot pourri of activity*” under the enterprise/entrepreneurship umbrella, and too much deconstruction, rather than building the basis for a “*stronger conceptual and pragmatic frame*” (Gibb, 2008, p. 3). Caird went so far as suggesting that “*it may be time to **abandon the general label of enterprise education***” as it confuses fundamental differences between programmes (Caird, 1990a, p.47), furthermore it creates problems for assessment and development when labels are applied in different contexts (Caird, 1990b).

Early literature also recognised that problems of classification feed into problems of evaluation, where widely used phrases take on a generic meaning that educational activities may not fulfil (Curran and Stanworth, 1989). After all, if it is not known what is specific to any particular phrase, how does one know what the basis of a teaching programme might be? Or how its effectiveness may be evaluated? Activities which exist under the banner of enterprise education could differ fundamentally in being concerned with different aims, such as small business training or competency-focused enterprise education, and each should be evaluated to determine their success in achieving their aims (Caird, 1990).

Therefore, in relation to EE *the concept*, I align with Gibb’s (2002) conclusion that because of a lack of common agreement on definitions, meaning can only be inferred from the focus and purpose of specific public policy initiatives. In this thesis, I view school-focused

enterprise education (as it is more often known in England) and entrepreneurship education (as it is more often known in Europe and globally), *as an idea, or set of ideas, that is packaged into a programme*, prescribed by policymakers, delivered by providers and educators and recommended as an effective route to creating certain benefits or ameliorating certain problems. This view of *EE as a programme* has been described in detail elsewhere, and an argument forwarded that programmes are a policy, as well as a practical and conceptual issue (Brentnall et al., 2018a). Therefore, in the next section I introduce assumptions made in policy about EE and the types of programmes delivered in its name.

## 1.4 Enterprise Education in Policy

In school-focused policy at the global level, programmes provided under the label of enterprise and entrepreneurship education are assumed to deliver effects for students such as developing persistence and self-confidence (UNCTAD, 2012). In addition to this beneficial personal development, such education should also nurture students' positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship and business, inclusively highlighting it as a viable career path for all young people (OECD/EU, 2021). Skills to be developed through enterprise and entrepreneurship programmes are framed as both soft skills - attitudes such as persistence and self-confidence - as well as harder skills - such as start-up knowledge and financial literacy (UNCTAD, 2012). To develop these skills, it is recommended that policies should target stakeholders from every level of education, from primary school, through secondary and on to further and higher education.

Intervention options recommended include mainstreaming entrepreneurship awareness and behaviours from primary school, encouraging entrepreneurship training for teachers, promoting entrepreneurship through extra-curricular activities and mentoring programmes,

and encouraging private sector sponsorship of development activities. Good practice examples include Junior Achievement Young Enterprise's programmes; Disney's Hot Shot Business Game and the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) programme (now, Enactus), where students present their business ideas in a global competition (UNCTAD, 2012).

In Europe, entrepreneurship is defined as a key competence (Bacigalupo et al., 2016). In this framing, EE exists to prepare young people to be responsible and enterprising individuals, with relevant skills, knowledge, courage and commitment (Bacigalupo et al., 2016). Whilst the definition is broad, it is noted that events and competitions, presentations and pitches are identified as the most commonly used intervention in EE, where: *"... traditional start-up methods (pitches, competitions, events, business or idea plan) are - to some extent and often in an adapted way - applied across all education levels. For instance, a primary school level initiative uses less business-like terminology when asking children to describe and present their 'Big idea' to the 'Dragon panel'"* (Komarkova et al., 2015, p. 65).

The situation is similar for national governments in the United Kingdom (UK). Governments in the UK tend to use the term Enterprise Education to label programmes, research and guidance (Iredale, 1999; Hytti et al., 2002; Jones and Iredale, 2010) that cover similar ground as Entrepreneurship Education in Europe. Scottish programmes aim to encourage all young people to develop skills for learning, life, and work (National Improvement Hub, 2022). Welsh provision is aiming to develop young people's attitudes and skills, help them realise their potential and have the drive to turn ideas and opportunities into reality (Welsh Government, 2012). Irish policy refers to developing young people's ability and willingness to turn ideas into action through skill such as creativity, innovation, and the ability to identify, create and seize opportunities (Ireland, Department of Education and Skills, 2016).



In Scotland, recommended provision includes setting up a community café, a bag company or taking part in an entrepreneurial competition (Scotland's Enterprising Schools, n.d.a). In Wales, a new curriculum framework has enterprise and creativity as a driver (Welsh Government, 2022). In addition, there are well-established programmes to support students to be entrepreneurial, such as the Enterprise Troopers competition (Business Wales, n.d.a), and recommendations for extra-curricular suspended timetable days, competitions and Dragon's Den activities (Welsh Government, 2012). In Ireland, Junior Achievement and BizWorld programmes, mini company projects and bootcamps and exhibitions are recommended for primary and secondary students (Department for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, n.d.a.). In the following section I explore the English context, where I practice and have most experience, in more depth.

## **1.5 Enterprise Education in England**

In England, enterprise education has, since 2014, been brought together with careers education and promoted by The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), an organisation set up by Secretary of State for Education Nicky Morgan, to prepare young people for adult life and inspire them about the possibilities of the world of work (Department for Education, 2014).

A fuller discussion of the policy history of EE in schools in England has been provided elsewhere (Brentnall and Culkin, 2018), but an important recent development has been the establishment of CEC, which followed a government review – Enterprise for All - led by Lord Young (2014). Young called for Enterprise Education to be a captive, coherent and continuous journey for young people, from as soon as they started school and all the way through, to motivate them to learn and excel. Broad goals, about a positive attitude,

confidence and sense of can-do were sought for *all young people*. As such, the term Enterprise Education was used to include learning which would take place *inside and outside of the curriculum*, and teachers were called upon to infuse an “*enterprise flavour*” into curriculum materials (Young, 2014, p. 5).

However, the approach taken by CEC, has been underpinned by The Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Careers Guidance (Holman, 2014). In the Gatsby guidance *enterprise schemes* are referred to as one of a number of *enrichment activities* (indicating a more extra-curricular focus), where students will learn from employers about the skills that are valued in the workplace and are categorised under Gatsby Benchmark 5 (Encounters with Employers).

The Careers and Enterprise Company promoted two types of enterprise scheme under this categorisation (Hooley, 2016): enterprise activities (short term activities delivered in schools that involve the simulation of business challenges); and enterprise competitions (longer term business competitions involving employers where groups of students develop and run a small enterprise). Following that framing, further guidance about ‘what works?’ was presented in a publication called *Business Games and Enterprise Competitions What Works?* (Hanson et al., 2017), which is reviewed in Chapter 2.

What is important to note in the background to this study is that *there is a pattern at every level of EE policy*. Enterprise Education is often *described in broad terms*, as a means of preparing young people with the skills and attitudes for life and learning, and as a route to positive personal development. But alongside this, the activities and programmes which are often recommended *are competitive*. One might assume, given the prominence and frequent promotion of competitively structured activities in policy, that these programmes are well understood and well researched. However, the following section shows how the competitive structure of activities is often taken-for-granted without question in EE literature.

## 1.6 Competitive Enterprise Education as Taken-for-Granted

As discussed, the concepts Enterprise Education (the more common term in England and the UK), and Entrepreneurship Education (the more common term in Europe), are framed broadly for educators, focused on developing skills and attitudes, yet it can simultaneously be observed that prescribed activities are often competitive.

To ‘take-for-granted’ means to *‘fail to properly appreciate something, especially as the result of overfamiliarity’* and *‘assuming something is true without questioning it’* (Oxford Languages, 2022). Taken-for-grantedness in everyday life means there is low attention and low consciousness about routinized elements of human behaviour (Garfinkel, 1967; Colyvas and Powell, 2006). Enterprise education has been called a taken-for-granted professional domain, where practices and assumptions are handed over with little questioning or reflection (Fayolle, 2013; Fayolle and Loi, 2018; Berglund and Verduijn, 2018). In proposing the concept of Competitive Enterprise Education I aim to unsettle the taken-for-grantedness of competitive activities in EE, and summarise arguments made in more detail elsewhere (Brentnall, 2020), below to demonstrate the need to do this.

Taken-for-grantedness involves leaving a phenomenon undefined and unexamined. In EE, although impact studies such as Peterman and Kennedy (2003) and Athayde (2009) are used to justify competitive approaches in guidance for schools (Hanson et al., 2017), these impact studies do not define the competitive element of activities. Instead, articles simply state that they are investigating Junior Achievement (JA) and Young Enterprise (YE) programme outcomes or use the phrase ‘mini-company’ as shorthand for the activity which is the subject of study. It appears that it is not necessary – for authors or readers - to define the competitive nature of these activities, it is simply taken-for-granted.

The other quality of taken-for-grantedness is that a phenomenon in question is left unexamined (Quattronne and Hopper, 2001). In the literature, this may be observed in studies where competition is mentioned in a straightforward, unproblematic way. For example, a study about the Company Program reports “*...at the end of the school year, the mini-companies participate in National and European Competitions and Trade Fairs*” (Johansen et al., 2012, p. 115). Another study advises to incorporate community and business leaders into activities to “*award students...who propose the most promising business initiatives*” (de Lourdes Carcamo-Solis et al., 2017, p. 294). A further study states that students will “*exhibit at trade fairs [and] compete with other mini-companies, first on the regional level, and if successful, nationally*” (Quesel et al., 2017, p. 2). These matter-of-fact statements do nothing to examine or reveal the qualitative experience of those competing. In other research which explores EE at school level, idealized versions of EE are described, where students are considered to be involved in a motivating, active learning experience (Jones and Iredale, 2010), or where pedagogy focuses on students’ own interests and reflective action (Moberg, 2014). Competitions may be mentioned as an activity in the EE menu, or studies showing promising effects included (Jones and Iredale, 2010, 2014), but beyond that they are left unexamined.

This lack of attention to competition and competing has led to an obfuscation of this fundamental characteristic more broadly in EE literature, with no code for competition in three seminal systematic reviews (Pittaway and Cope, 2007; Martin et al., 2013; Nabi et al., 2017). Whilst terms such as ‘extra-curricular’ and ‘entrepreneurship pedagogy’ appear, *the exact nature of the activity is opaque* (Pittaway and Cope, 2007). Similarly, Martin et al. (2013), are only able to make a distinction between ‘training’ and ‘education’ activities. Even in a *pedagogy review*, Nabi et al. (2017) *do not specifically identify competition* as a feature of practice. Authors of reviews will be limited by the material they have to work with, and a

limitation identified in each review was a lack of description in the articles inspected. Pittaway and Cope (2007, p. 494) reported that very few studies ‘*examine programmes holistically, in the sense of recognising links between methods and approaches ...*’ or comparatively evaluate pedagogies in relation to alternatives. Martin et al. (2013, p. 221) concluded that future research needed to report ‘‘*main elements of course syllabus ...course content and structure*’’ to try and ascertain if modes of delivery might affect outcomes. Nabi et al. (2017, p. 288) also called for greater pedagogical detail and recommended that future researchers provide ‘*detailed information about the pedagogical methods, so we can understand the impact of pedagogical design and methods*’’. Explicitly distinguishing the competitive nature of EE may help in classifying and evaluating activities, programmes and policies and therefore *Competitive Enterprise Education* would be a more productive and accurate reflection of many activities that happen in schools. In the next section I develop a definition for this concept.

## 1.7 Competitive Enterprise Education Defined

Two recent guidance and policy documents contribute towards an understanding of competitions and competitive learning in enterprise education. Firstly, ‘Business Games and Enterprise Competitions What Works?’ describes competitions as:

*Contests where individuals or teams compete to beat other teams by developing (and in some cases implementing) an idea and/or product or service. These competitions could be simulated (e.g. played in a classroom with fake money) or real (e.g. setting up a micro-enterprise which sells real products to real people).*

(Hanson et al., 2017, p. 4)

Whilst games are described as:

*Activities which have rules and goals and which challenge participants, and which may be individual or team based. They are distinct from real activities and usually attempt to simulate a real life scenario.*

(Hanson et al., 2017, p. 4).

While European guidance does not have a specific manual on competitions, challenges, or games, these activities are the most common format for integrating EE into the classroom (Komarkova et al., 2015). The term ‘Competitive Learning’ is used:

*Competitive Learning describes a learning form where competitive elements are used in order to achieve better learning outcomes, frequently resembling a real market economy situation. It is often used by means of business plan and business idea competitions.*

(Komarkova et al., 2015, p. 84).

Therefore, the essence of Competitive Enterprise Education is that whether students are involved in a simulated ‘best ideas’ activity or whether they are being judged on the presentation of their real-world business performance, the process will be competitive, where someone or some team beats others.

Thus, I define Competitive Enterprise Education (CEE) as:

*Any enterprise or entrepreneurship education activity or process where there will be judged, either formally or informally, to be a winner or winners.*

(Brentnall, 2020, p.8).

A discussion establishing the routine application of this format has been presented (Brentnall, 2020). This demonstrated that competitively structured activities are applied not only at the *market driven* end of EE, such as in mini-company formation, but also at the *mission driven* and *social* end of EE, where, one might have assumed that differing underpinning philosophies could have suggested the utilisation of different pedagogies. Indeed, it is because *CEE holds such broad appeal* and is deployed across such a broad range of enterprise education programmes that more attention should be paid to the approach and how it is assumed to work.

Competitive activities are assumed to appeal to the “*instinct of play and sport which is inherent in the human race*” (Junior Achievement, 1912, quoted in Sukarieh and Tannock, 2009). In education for enterprise and entrepreneurship, better understanding is needed regarding the effects of developmental interventions, including *negative* as well as positive effects (Kreuger, 2007). However, a situation persists where not enough scholarly attention is given to questioning taken-for-granted activities (Fayolle, 2013; Berglund and Verduijn, 2018), or understanding the potentially undesirable effects for individuals or society (Fayolle et al., 2016, Berglund, Hytti and Verduijn, 2020). In research, ideals and assumptions *need to be shaken up to problematise what seems to have become natural* (Verduijn and Essers, 2013). That recommendations for EE *approaches that are competitive are presented within a ‘what works?’* narrative is, I argue, problematic in and of itself, and I discuss this in the following section.

## **1.8 *What Works* and Competitive Enterprise Education**

In England, The Careers and Enterprise Company utilise the ‘what works?’ narrative (Hooley, 2016), to describe the impact of EE interventions for all 11-18 year olds. This

narrative emulates the medical model of evaluation, suggesting that the effectiveness of educational programmes can be assessed through experimental research and systematic review (Hargreaves, 1996; Evans and Benefield, 2001). Within guidance to schools ‘Longer Term Competitions’ are presented as “*consistently effective*” and having a “*strong evidence base*” (Hooley, 2016, p.3), whilst the amalgamation ‘Business Games and Competitions’ are presented as “*potentially effective*” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. V). Despite the generally positive characterisations presented in such guidance, some academic studies of EE activities which are structured competitively show concerning results, including varying decreases in skills, business knowledge, self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention (Oosterbeek et al., 2010; Huber et al., 2012; Heilbrunn and Almor, 2014). Fayolle (2013) describes *a lack of interest in the mixed results of EE impact studies* as one of the fundamental weaknesses which limits the legitimacy of the field. Since this study aims to explore for whom (and what) Competitive Enterprise Education works well for (or not) and why, *how EE is evaluated is therefore a crucial consideration.*

The most influential evaluation research in EE has been identified in a co-citation analysis (Loi et al., 2016). In these works authors position themselves and their approach as ‘scientific.’ Martin et al. (2013), and Pittaway and Cope (2007), respectively present a quantitative meta-analysis of outcomes and a systematic literature review. Whilst Athayde (2009), Oosterbeek et al. (2010) and Von Graevenitz et al. (2010), conduct empirical studies to measure the effects of EE programmes. Indeed, in their review of evaluation approaches in EE, Rideout and Gray (2013) assert that quasi-experimental and experimental designs are the ‘gold standard’ to which researchers should aspire. This suggestion frames *the programme itself* as the agent of change, a treatment which can be administered and its effects measured.



After many years working in education, I have to admit to feeling sceptical about relying solely on statistics for my understanding of programmes and their impact. If I read that a ‘treatment group’ was measured at baseline and post-intervention (Oosterbeek et al., 2010), I question if it possible to ‘treat’ participants with an EE programme as if they are patients receiving a dose of medicine. When I read a statistic that 57% of school students who took part in a competitive programme say they would like to participate in enterprise activities at university (Jones and Colwill, 2013), my mind is drawn to thinking about the 43% that do not. I want to know why. Was it something about *the activity*? Was it something about *them* or *their circumstances*? I wonder about the moments and interactions that might encourage or diminish students’ ideas and enthusiasm within the programme itself. The *idea that ‘what works’ can be identified* (and specifically through the experimental research design of Randomised Controlled Trials), is a relatively new arrival in EE (c.f. Rideout and Gray, 2013; Longva and Foss, 2018). However, in *educational research more broadly*, ‘what works’ has been debated for many years. The idea of identifying ‘what works’, and the accompanying focus on RCTs, has been discussed variously as: promoting an instrumental model of educational research which removes value judgements and extends audit cultures (Hammersley, 2001); reducing the social power of professional knowledge/knowning and obscuring the political dimension of policy making (Clegg, 2005), limiting questions of evaluation to what works instead of what matters or is important for society (Biesta, 2007; Tseng et al., 2017), and implicitly working to *interventionise* education, where the combination of tightly focussed interventions *and* a lack of methodological diversity in evaluating these interventions do not generate the rich understandings of educational practice needed to better develop provision for a dynamic world (Burnett and Coldwell, 2021). The importance of EE *connecting* with other fields to reflect upon and critique established practice and research has been forwarded (Fayolle, 2013; Kyro, 2018). As a result of these

concerns it is important to move beyond evaluative questions such as ‘what works’, and the in the following sections I summarise this need.

## 1.9 Learning about *What Works for Whom, and Why?*

In this thesis, I frame Competitive Enterprise Education as a set of ideas that is packaged up into programmes and interventions (such as one-day challenges or longer term competitions), and is claimed to provide certain benefits. In evidenced-based policy literature, such phenomena are called ‘complex social programmes’ (Pawson, 2006; Pawson, 2013), and this characterisation aligns with EE authors who highlight the specific programme-based nature of EE and its link to policy making and goals (Gibb, 2002, Kyro, 2018). In evidenced based policy such programmes have been characterised as a “*particular case of social change*” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.56), which should be recognised as being complex, open and in constant development. This view posits that in such programmes, it is the *unseen* reactions and reasoning of participants which is causing or contributing to a change (or not), and these reactions will be dependent on both personal context and the wider programme and social context (Pawson, 2006; Pawson, 2013). Indeed, if programmes are theories about what makes a difference to engineer social change (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 56), ‘scientific’ approaches to evaluation can be counter-productive:

*...hypotheses are abridged, studies are dropped, programme details are filtered out, contextual information is eliminated, selected findings are utilized, averages are taken, estimates are made... this is all done in an attempt to wash out ‘bias’ ...however, in this purgative process the very features that explain how interventions work are eliminated from reckoning.*

Pawson (2006, p. 42).

Instead of aiming to generate a score on ‘what worked’, an alternative approach would be to explore and track theories (ideas), of *why* programmes work for different people in different contexts in order to improve the design, delivery and targeting of programmes (Wong et al., 2017, Jagosh, 2019, Jagosh, 2020). The focus in such a study is on trying to *generate foresight* and *explain* what might need to be in place for programme results to happen (Jagosh, 2019; Jagosh, 2020). EE literature identifies the sorts of positive effects which are sought for individuals, including creative problem solving, empowerment and freedom to choose one’s future (Jones and Iredale, 2010), and entrepreneurial skills and mindsets such as leadership, personal control and achievement (Athayde, 2009; Pepin and St Jean, 2018). But do all students experience positive effects? And what needs to be in place for these effects to happen? In addition to effects on individuals, it is also possible to extend evaluative thinking *beyond* ‘what works, for whom, in what circumstances and why?’ by asking ‘what does it work for?’ The next section describes a rationale for extending thinking in this way, based on considering the effects of CEE programmes beyond the individual.

## **1.10 Extending thinking towards *What does it work for?***

Enterprise and entrepreneurship education research and practice has repeatedly been described as lacking criticality (Fayolle, 2013; Fayolle et al., 2016; Berglund and Verduijn, 2018; Berglund; Hytti and Verduijn, 2020). This deficiency has been identified for some time, for example, Bechard and Gregoire (2005), found that just 4 out of 103 EE papers reviewed had an element of sociological critique. Studying EE as if it exists in a vacuum means that wider social, political and moral concerns and effects are not surfaced, even though “*society is the ultimate client of EE*” (Fayolle, 2013, p. 9). Therefore, it is not only possible, but desirable and necessary to try to extend evaluative thinking to consider not only

the effects (negative as well as positive), on individuals, but also to consider whether the programme might *change the context itself* over time.

A motivation towards considering concerns and effects *beyond the individual* is increasingly noticeable. For example, Berglund and Verduijn (2018) aim to revitalize EE through critical exercise, and the journal Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy published a special issue ‘Unsettling EE’ (Berglund, Hytti and Verduijn, 2020). There have been conferences and workshops to focus on sustainability issues (RENT, 2018), humane entrepreneurship (ICSB, 2020), inclusivity (RENT, 2021), public and social value (ISBE, 2021), and social effects (3E, 2022) in EE. Issues such as individualism, inequality, poverty and ecological breakdown have prompted calls that enterprise, entrepreneurship, *and related education* are designed to be inclusive and supportive of democracy (Leffler, Svedberg and Botha, 2010; Hytti, 2018), humane (Parente et al., 2020), transformational (Ratten and Jones, 2018), socially and environmentally sustainable (Loi et al., 2021) and able to inspire hope and contribute to social justice in an era of crisis (Dodd et al., 2022). This clearly signals an expanding interest, not simply in whether EE *works*, but rather, concern in terms of whether (and how) the programmes might re-produce or transform the context itself.

In education research, it has long been argued that evaluative questioning should be extended towards social, moral and political contexts by asking: *what does it work for?* (Biesta, 2007). Biesta posed this question in his critique of the ‘what works?’ narrative in educational research, positing that the *real* need in educational research lay in widening the scope of thinking beyond technical and functional questions of ‘what works?’ towards “*questions about the desirability of the ends themselves*” (Biesta, 2007, p. 21). Hence, this study will venture beyond thinking about positive (and negative) effects for individuals and aim to

consider whether there is *any evidence* whether the competitive structure of activities influences or changes the context in any way. Now the direction of thinking in this thesis has been introduced, in the following sections I present a conceptual framework to elaborate CEE and introduce how it was thought about at the beginning of the research process.

## **1.11 Competitive Enterprise Education – Conceptual Frameworks**

A conceptual framework is used by a researcher when they have decided that they cannot meaningfully research with reference to only one theory, and instead synthesise theoretical and empirical elements to create their own conceptual framework (Imenda, 2014). A conceptual framework draws many sources and may include multiple perspectives and concepts, but it represents the *researcher's integrated understanding* of issues related to a specific research problem (Imenda, 2014). A conceptual framework has also been called a *lens* and a *heuristic device* to guide a study (Maxwell, 2012).

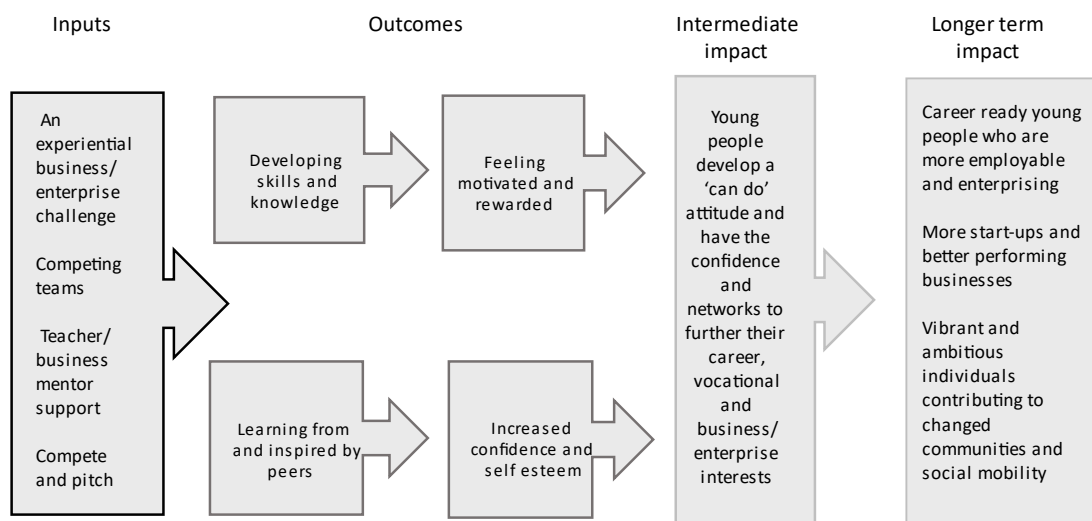
The multifaceted and messy nature of social programmes makes a broad conceptual framework particularly useful in that it offers a structure within which to develop theorising which will arise from the data (Shearn et al., 2017). There are “*no fixed rules or constraints*” on how you construct a conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2012, p. 86), and sources may include a-priori theory and research, experiential knowledge, empirical studies and thought experiments (Maxwell, 2012). A conceptual framework cannot capture everything about the subject of study, though it should represent or reflect reality, or at least the researcher's interpretation of this. In the first year of my PhD, prior to data collection, I developed two such frameworks, a linear conceptualisation of CEE, and a realistic conceptualisation of CEE (Brentnall, 2020), and will introduce these now.

### 1.11.1 Competitive Enterprise Education – A Linear Conceptualisation

The first conceptual framework I developed helped me structure and integrate assumptions that are made about the benefits of CEE. Essentially this first conceptualisation helps illuminate the taken-for-granted assumptions which surround EE that is competitive, and sets out the assumed benefits and outcomes of such programmes. It was created by synthesising positive outcomes expected from CEE *which are articulated in a range of policy and guidance documents* with which I interact in my professional life, as well as building on a previous attempt to map out such benefits (Brentnall et al., 2018a). A number of generic logic models (Braag and Henry, 2011; EC, 2015; McLarty et al., 2010; Young Enterprise, 2014) were synthesised to summarise the key components of CEE with the assumed benefits and immediate and longer-term impacts in order to present a logic of CEE (Figure 1). Guidance and policy from *across my professional experience* (English and European documents), were included in the synthesis. For example, as discussed in Chapter 2, in English guidance (Hanson et al., 2017), enterprise competitions are assumed to create cognitive outcomes (analytical and quantitative skills, creativity, and problem-solving), as well as increasing business knowledge, employability skills, personal effectiveness (confidence, resilience and self-efficacy), which leads to ‘career readiness’, whether in self-employment, employment, or training. Working with employers provides students with feedback which facilitates learning as well as new contacts which build social networks and cultural capital. In European policy, competitions are positioned as being an integral element of EE strategy development and a model of good practice (European Commission, 2006; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016). In the short term, enterprise competitions are credited with being able to motivate and reward students and to develop their entrepreneurial skills and that students will learn from and be inspired by their peers through the process (European Commission, 2009, 2010, 2015). In the longer term more start-ups, better employment,

higher earnings, and more general economic growth are predicted (European Commission, 2015).

Figure 1 sets out a basic linear logic for CEE. This model is significant because it says - according to the consulted policy and guidance which underpin CEE - something about how it is assumed this “intervention *intervenes*” (Pawson, 2006, p. 20, emphasis added).



**Figure 1 - Linear Conceptualisation of CEE**

This figure was provided to interview participants so we had a shared understanding and reference point regarding *what outcomes* according to policy, CEE was aiming to achieve.

This framework also acted as an aide memoire for me to reflect on (and use during initial coding), to remember what competitively structured programmes aim to achieve in EE.

However, and as I have argued (Brentnall, 2020), models and guidance which depict positive change happening in neat, linear fashion mask the myriad of potential outcomes that are likely in CEE. What is therefore needed - and central to this study - is a more realistic

understanding about how different effects – negative and unforeseen as well as positive – are generated and knowledge about what might influence different effects. As such, in the next section, I offer an alternative—realistic—conceptual framework for thinking about CEE.

### **1.11.2 Competitive Enterprise Education – A Realistic Conceptualisation**

Social programmes, such as CEE - whether that be a one day competition or a student mini company - can be characterised as a “*particular case of social change*” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 56) and as such will, inevitably, comprise of interplays between “*individual and institution, of agency and structure, and of micro and macro processes*” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 63). Exploring context in social programmes is particularly important in better understanding the unseen reactions and reasoning of participants in a programme (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006).

In particular, there are four contextual layers to which researchers exploring social programs should attend:

- the individual capacities of the key actors (motivations, resources, and reasoning).
- the interpersonal relationships supporting the intervention (between participants and between staff and each other),
- the institutional setting (culture, character, and ethos of the place), and
- the wider infra-structural system (political support, resources, and public/community support).

Pawson (2006, p. 31).

Recognising these layers means that the straightforward logic presented in Figure 1 is insufficient to explain (or study) human action and social change within a programme or class of interventions such as CEE. Instead, deeper attention must be focused on the social

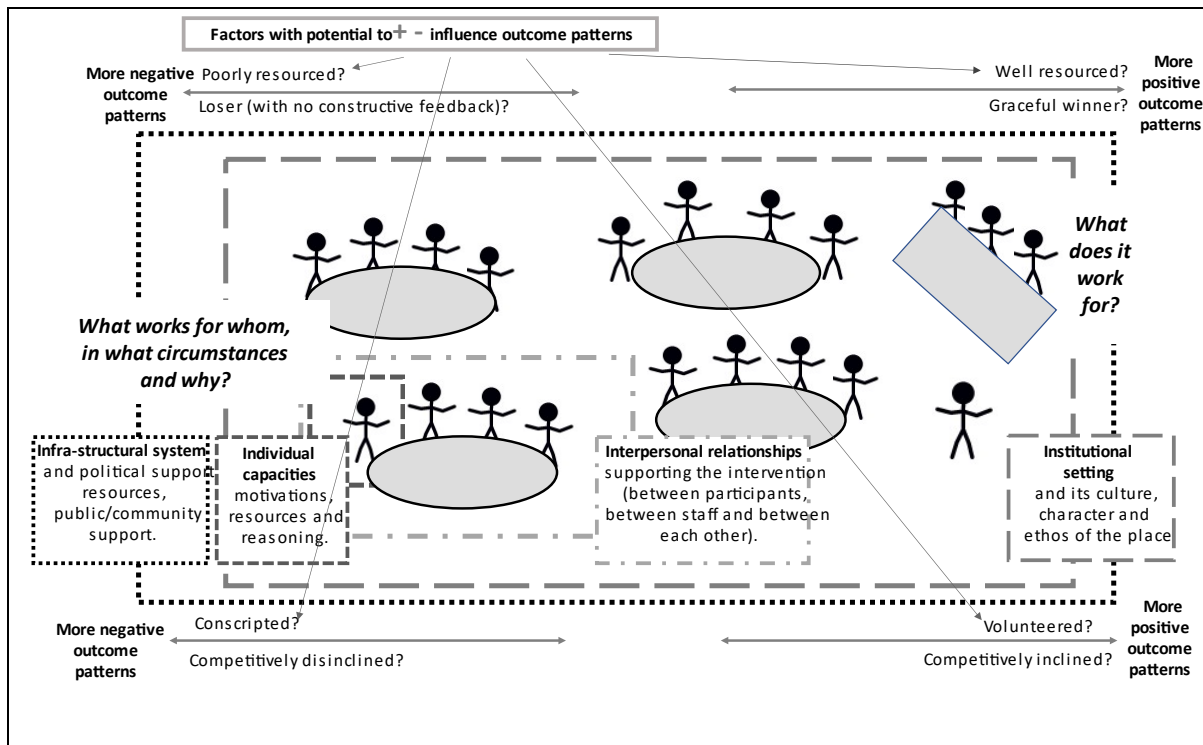


relations, organisational structures, and the web of personal and social expectations that a programme is forged within (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

The consequence of this position is understanding that it is not programmes that cause an effect, but rather programmes offer (and sometimes take away) resources to (and from) participants (Greenhalgh et al., 2017). From this perspective, we must *expect* different outcomes in any programme, and the goal should be to try and understand *why* different interventions seem to work selectively for different participants (Pawson, 2006). The purpose is not to deliver a verdict and prove if something works or not; instead, rigor comes from exploring “what works, for whom, in what circumstances and why?” and providing insight and foresight that might prompt programme targeting and innovation (Jagosh, 2019; 2020). In addition, it is important that researchers participate in ‘organised scepticism’ (Pawson, 2013), that is, they undertake the vital cross-examination which is required to provide scrutiny of the widely promised benefits of social programmes and to illuminate alternative theories and unintentional consequences. Undertaking such an initial exercise (comparing outcomes claimed in policy with literature from education, psychology, and EE) yielded four sets of factors from the literature which appear to be significant in influencing outcome patterns in enterprise competitions and challenges (Brentnall, Diego Rodriguez and Culkin, 2018a). This initial review identified that it seems to be important whether a participant is:

- competitively inclined or competitively disinclined
- conscripted or a volunteer
- a winner or loser in the activity, and
- poorly resourced or well resourced (socially and materially as an individual, team, school, and community).

So, while policy (as presented in Figure 1) seems to assume all students will appreciate competitive formats and experience positive outcomes such as skills and knowledge, motivation and confidence, individual inclinations toward competitions and one's existing entrepreneurial identity will shape reactions and responses (Almas et al., 2016; Falck et al., 2012). While there are unreserved recommendations for competitively structured activities, Oosterbeek et al. (2010) suggest that conscripting students into activities could be harmful. While competitive activities render the majority of participants 'losers', Huber et al. (2012) identified that a BIZ World competition appeared to provide most benefit in terms of pro-activity, self-efficacy, and intention to start a business to those who won. In addition, winning itself can be problematic and should be done with grace and humility; otherwise, an inflated sense of entitlement and unethical behaviour can develop (Schurr and Ritov, 2016). Finally, while guidance and policy on competitions present them as transformative vehicles for learning and social mobility, Heilbrunn and Almor (2014) identified that students from less-advantaged socio-economic backgrounds can be further disadvantaged through competing against better equipped peers. Indeed, negative perceptions of one's perceived social rank have been identified as a potential mechanism for the diminishment of entrepreneurial intention; so rather than EE being a great equalizer, it can reinforce, rather than attenuate, different starting conditions (Brandle and Kuckertz, 2019). While these factors could act as moderators for a quantitative study, in realist informed work, they act as theoretical leads, which sensitise the researcher in pursuit of richer explanations regarding for whom, in what circumstances and why, positive and negative outcome patterns are generated.



**Figure 2 - Realistic Conceptualisation of CEE**

Figure 2 synthesises these factors with the four contextual layers identified at the beginning of this section to more realistically reflect the myriad of potential outcomes possible for individuals participating in CEE. In this figure, I want to draw attention to the complex, human elements of such activities, so *participants* in the diagram—students, judges, and educators—are *represented figuratively* to prompt thinking about the difficulty of replicating an activity and its effects consistently. The contextual layers are represented as porous, to promote thinking about how these levels would interact and how action in one layer may influence change in another. Finally, instead of labelling boxes as inputs, outcomes, and impact, two questions prompt thinking. Instead of asking “what works?,” thinking is extended towards acknowledging *a spectrum of outcomes* and to ask the more realistic question: “what works for whom, in what circumstances and why?” Then, because I agree that education is an inherently moral and political endeavour (Biesta, 2007), the second

question: “what does it work for?” prompts consideration towards effects *beyond the individual*, that CEE may reproduce or transform.

Initially, I called these two figures ‘models’ – a linear and realistic model of CEE (Brentnall, 2020), and it is acknowledged that the words model and framework are often used synonymously (Imenda, 2014). Since then, I have also read Swedberg’s work on theorising (Swedberg, 2014; Swedberg, 2016a), and the development of theorising diagrams (Swedberg, 2016b), and can see how they can be conceptualised in this way. A theorising diagram is distinguished from a theory picture or model, in that it is deliberately open and flexible – it can be thought about in ways that cannot be decided in advance. A model is closed in nature, it represents a *finished* theory where there is only one way of seeing it; but a theorising diagram, in contrast, does not have a single solution but it can be worked out in different ways (Swedberg, 2016b). One criteria Swedberg identifies for a theorising diagram is that *you’re inspired to theorise* by it, and about it. In this study the frameworks provided a frame to inspire my thinking (and that of interview participants), and a way of thinking through interacting factors and generating new insights.

Now I have introduced the purpose and background to the study, the direction of thinking I am engaged in (and aiming to prompt), and the conceptual frameworks developed to support my thinking, I will present an outline to the thesis.

## **1.12 Outline of the Thesis**

I present this thesis in a prologue and eight chapters. This first chapter has set out the background for the study. I have introduced difficulties related to classifying enterprise education and the synonymous nature of enterprise education as a concept with enterprise as an activity and its taken-for-granted competitiveness. I have proposed the concept of

Competitive Enterprise Education as a better reflection of what is often happening in practice and introduced conceptualisations of this phenomenon.

Chapter two, the following chapter, explores the “evidence base” for Competitive Enterprise Education activities in schools by presenting a problematising review of the guidance document ‘Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works?’. This illustrates assumptions associated with the prescription and evaluation of enterprise education activities which are competitive in schools and provides a rationale for undertaking a realistic study of EE which is competitive.

Chapter three explains the methodological strategy for collecting and working with data. The data collection method used – Realist Informed interviews – is described including the rationale regarding who was recruited for interview, the basis of the discussion guide and adaptations made to the interview process. The process of collecting and working with data is described - as well as a reflection on the methodology - before presenting two findings chapters.

Chapter four presents data relating to Short Form CEE, that is interventions which last a day or less. It identifies resources, pre-existing in the context on which competitive activities rely to achieve their outcomes, but which are undertheorised. It summarises contextual considerations at four layers (individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural), which help generate more positive outcomes or which are associated with more negative outcomes, and which may prompt thinking about what is actually happening in Short Form CEE programmes.

Chapter five presents data relating to Long Form CEE, that is interventions which last over a number of weeks or months, potentially up to an academic year. It identifies resources, pre-existing in the context on which competitive activities rely to achieve their outcomes, but

which are undertheorised. It summarises contextual considerations at four layers (individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural), which help generate more positive outcomes or which are associated with more negative outcomes, and which may prompt thinking about what is actually happening in Long Form CEE programmes.

Chapter six consists of a discussion where findings are theorised – thought through - from a realist perspective. This involves both drawing on the realist perspective to make sense of the findings, and also working towards the realist aim of achieving a level of conceptual abstraction. Findings of the study are thought through in relation to ‘the evidence base’ which was considered in Chapter 2 and the research objectives of this study.

Chapter seven is a conclusion to the thesis which involves considering the limitations of the study, the contribution to knowledge, the contribution to practice and suggestions for future research which are also discussed. A reflection on the PhD is provided.

Now the background for the study has been introduced and the thesis outlined, in the next chapter I present a problematising review of the “evidence base” for EE interventions which are competitive.

## **1.13 Summary of Chapter**

This chapter introduced the purpose, objectives and background to the study, which is focused on proposing the concept of Competitive Enterprise Education (CEE) and exploring for whom competitive activities in Enterprise Education work well for (or not) and why in 11-18 settings.

The focus of the study was justified by explaining that Enterprise Education (EE), is demanded at every level of education, but is critiqued for relying on *taken-for-granted*

activities (for example, pitching competitions and mini companies). The impact of such activities (in terms of effects for, and beyond, individuals), is not well understood and so it was proposed that EE that is competitive is simultaneously ubiquitous and under-theorised, and that explicitly defining and conducting a holistic exploration into CEE will support a re-thinking of taken for granted competitive activities.

The chapter set the study in a broader policy and practice context. It explained the genesis of EE activities from Junior Achievement, and the arrival of the mini-company programme in England and summarised how early literature illuminated the connection between EE as a concept, and EE as an activity. The chapter showed that despite concerns and misgivings discussed by some scholars, competitive activities are promoted by global organisations and national governments.

The chapter explained that in the home country of the author (England), competitive activities are now presented as ‘what works’ in EE, with a guidance document – Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What works? – promoting challenges and competitions for 11-18 year olds. As a result, it was argued that the phrase EE does not capture the competitiveness of activities that are promoted in practice and proposed that Competitive Enterprise Education would be a more accurate and productive concept.

The chapter argued that presenting activities as *what works* is problematic in itself, and that evaluative thinking should be extended into considering *what works for whom (or not) and why* (which recognises the possibility that negative as well as positive results are likely to be generated in any activity), and towards *what does it work for* (considering whether the programme changes the context itself in any way). To support this endeavour conceptual frameworks of Competitive Enterprise Education were introduced, illustrating how such activities are thought about in linear, output-outcome-impact, ways and how such activities

can be thought about in a more realistic way, where contextual factors and variation in experience will influence more positive and more negative effects. The chapter concluded by presenting an outline to the thesis.



## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Purpose and Principles – a Problematising Approach

In any study, different types of review have different purposes, ranging from summarising, synthesising, critiquing or presenting the state of the art (Grant and Booth, 2009). The review in this thesis is informed and influenced by writing which explicitly undertakes to unsettle assumptions and problematise existing literature or a body of work around a subject (Beddoes, 2011, Cannady, Greenwald and Harris, 2014, Marron, 2014). This strategy is called ‘problematisation’ (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013), and guidance about how to proceed in this chapter is drawn from scholars who have set out how problematisation can be applied in a review (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013; Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020).

Problematisation is described as an alternative strategy to a gap spotting or gap filling approach, where researchers build on or around existing literature rather than identifying and challenging foundational beliefs (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). Its broad thrust is to *deliberately* identify and challenge assumptions and open up what is already known around a subject (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). A problematising review (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020), regards reviews as an exercise in how to “re-think existing literature in ways that generate new and ‘better’ ways of thinking about specific phenomena” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020, p. 2090). This can be achieved by putting assumptions contained within literature ‘into conversation’ with theory and or concepts which challenge underlying beliefs (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013).

Four core principles have been elaborated by Alvesson and Sandberg (2020, pp 1297 - 1301), to guide a review process: reflexivity; reading broadly but selectively; problematising not accumulating and less is more. In relation to reflexivity, authors should try and actively avoid

taking conventions for granted, or simply reproducing them or reinforcing them. The role of the researcher in the construction of the review is central, therefore ideals such as rationality and procedure should be downplayed. Instead, authors are called to “work with doubt and recognise intuition” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020, p. 1297), aiming for insightfulness rather than rigour and pseudo-rigour. This means that my account includes some of the twists and turns of my thinking, and what prompted me to pursue a particular way of working with the literature. In relation to the second principle - reading broadly but selectively - the idea that a review needs to cover a large amount of work is rejected. Instead, *resisting* the “full inventory approach” may encourage authors to be less “assumption blind” and “reduce the risk of box thinking and taking an existing research domain as given” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020, p. 1299). A more limited but careful set of readings should allow for more “critical scrutiny and insight generation” and less “vacuum cleaning” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020, p. 1298). This means that the review explores the body of literature first (within which there is a broad array of literature, from serious games, careers, psychology and neuro science and enterprise education), and then explains how I selected texts for close and deep reading, rather than applying criteria to include or eliminate studies. A third principle of the approach is to use a problematising review to question rather than trying to identify missing pieces, the aim is *not* accumulating literature but rather problematising it (making visible underlying assumptions and taken for granted ideas). Alvesson and Sandberg (2020), advise two interrelated issues are important to consider in this regard, first the identification or construction of a domain of literature targeted, and the specific texts chosen for deep readings and re-readings. They advise particular caution regarding label guided domain specifications, where results from key words and concept searches are reviewed and integrated, resulting in ambiguous and misleading coherence. Instead, constructing the review domain should be done in a “thoughtful, creative and critical” way (Alvesson and Sandberg,

2020, p. 1292), which doesn't assume clear or absolute boundaries, and has a stronger focus on "paradigmatic assumptions and ways of constructing reality" (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020, p. 1300). This means, in the selection of the body of work I identify, I have thought about how literature is used to construct '*the evidence base*' for enterprise education that is competitive. It is hoped that the specific texts chosen for close reading inspire some rethinking or revision of key literature at a deeper level, making its underlying assumptions (which are harder to detect) more visible (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020, p. 1299). This means, having described how I select certain texts for close and deep readings, I try to unpick underlying assumptions and question elements of taken-for-grantedness in these items. The fourth principle is less is more, which de-emphasises reading a large number of studies, and emphasises coming up with new and unexpected insight (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020, p. 1300). This means, whilst I identify a large body of text (and talk through how I worked with it to gain insight into the construction of the evidence base), the close and deep readings are confined to a smaller number of texts.

In summary then, the goal of the literature review in this thesis is to utilise the core purpose of problematisation (*deliberately* identifying assumptions underlying literature), and the intellectual resources offered by the approach (principles which guide *how* to unsettle what we know), to surface and challenge taken for granted assumptions in literature related to the subject of this thesis – enterprise education that is competitive. In the case of this review, and because of the policy-influencing claims made regarding literature which represents 'the evidence base' for competitive activities in EE, I put literature into conversation with theory from *evidence-based policy* (c.f. Nutley et al., 2003; Head, 2008; Oliver et al., 2014; Tseng et al., 2017). This approach also satisfies calls for researchers from enterprise education to connect with fields from which insight and new learning may be gained (Fayolle, 2013).

Therefore this review connects to the field of Evidenced Based Policy making, and its application in education studies.

This chapter unfolds in the following steps. First, I explain the domain of work that I will explore and problematise. Then I describe how I worked with the literature, categorising, re-categorising and mapping it in different ways to gain insight into how it is used to justify competitive activity prescriptions. I describe how I selected a number of texts – impact measurement studies of enterprise and entrepreneurship education programmes - for close and deep reading, and then describe the papers and elaborate some critical insights. In this process I demonstrate the problematic-ness of the literature use by putting assumptions into conversation with the field of Evidenced Based Policy (c.f. Slawson and Shaughnessy, 1997; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Nutley et al., 2003; Clegg, 2005; Pawson, 2006; Biesta, 2007; Oliver et al., 2014; Tseng et al., 2017; Malone and Hogan, 2020). I connect the critical insights generated through the review process with arguments from researchers in evidenced based policy who challenge the notion of ‘what works?’ and propose alternative, more realistic approaches which explore ‘what works, for whom and why?’ (Pawson, 2006; Greenhalgh et al., 2017). The chapter concludes by setting the stage for a realistic methodological strategy. In the next section I describe the domain of literature chosen for problematisation.

## **2.2 Selecting a Domain of Literature**

One of the challenges with problematisation is that it is not always obvious how to sort and de-limit existing studies into a *specific domain* ready for assumption challenging (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). Whereas a traditional literature review may develop a search strategy around some key concepts and then provide a rationale for which papers are included or

eliminated, a problematisation requires a rationale for *identifying a body of work* or domain of literature that will be explored.

As the main concern of problematisation is to deliberately try to identify and challenge assumptions underlying existing literature, the strategy is less concerned with covering all possible studies in a field than identifying the domain of literature targeted, and then “the specific texts chosen for close and deep readings and re-readings” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013, p.57). Techniques for selecting texts might be done on the basis of focusing on an exemplar or defining study (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013; Abbott, 2004); or to concentrate on one or more authoritative summaries of literature or some classical text or texts (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). Therefore, a problematisation strategy involves “a more narrow literature coverage and in-depth readings of key texts” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013, p. 57).

In chapter 1 I argued that Enterprise Education is a contested concept, and one so broad that it doesn’t capture the *practical reality* that many activities are competitive. In addition, these problems of classification have been said to feed-in to problems of evaluation, for if it is not known what is specific to any particular phrase (Enterprise Education), how does one know what the basis of a teaching programme might be and what practical variation might exist which influences outcomes? Simultaneously, in practice, it can be observed that competitions and competitive activities are widely prescribed in policy and provided for students at every level of education. So, it is useful (and important) to ask - *what is the basis of this prescription?* How and what literature is used to justify this focus?

A school focused guidance document, authored by Hanson, Hooley and Cox (2017), Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works? (BGECWW, hereafter), offers a body of work *that is of particular interest*. The document was published by The Careers and Enterprise Company, the body which is responsible for coordinating and funding careers and

enterprise provision in England. The document is part of The Careers and Enterprise ‘What Works?’ series. The mission of The Careers and Enterprise Company, in relation to research, is described on the last page of the document, stating it recognises “the importance of rigorous evaluation” and it works with the Education Endowment Foundation and Bank of America Foundation to develop “the most effective” and “best in class” approaches to careers and enterprise education (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 32).

BGECWW specifically builds a case for Enterprise Education approaches that are competitive [Business Games and Enterprise Competitions], for 11-18 year olds in secondary schools and colleges. The authors use a variety of literature to substantiate recommendations that influence practice, and, in their own words, the document is “...the first attempt we can locate to draw together *the evidence base* on business games and competitions...” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 18, emphasis added). As such, the literature contained within BGECWW has the paradigmatic quality (a way of constructing reality), sought after in a problematising review in that *it claims to be the evidence base* for enterprise education approaches which are competitive and related literature is, therefore, a relevant body of work to explore.

In selecting this as the body of literature to study, it is important to acknowledge that this review does pose drawbacks as well as opportunities. Whilst this issue is addressed more fully in the [limitations](#) section of the study, it is useful to say, at this point in the thesis, that the author is not oblivious to these issues. A more traditional approach would have unearthed the most up to date literature, and studies that might have taken new approaches to studying effects and impacts. However, I strongly argue (and expect the literature review to demonstrate), that such approaches are not filtering down to influence guidance and recommendations at practice level. Therefore focusing on such a guidance document which is published by a government funded quango explores and highlights this issue. It has also been noted that there was strong initial interest in researching education in relation to small

business management and entrepreneurship, including in schools (c.f. Gibb, 1987; Caird, 1990a; Gibb, 1993; Gibb, 2008; Jones and Iredale, 2010). Overall, the interest in education has been declining, along with diminishing attention to policy related research (Rosa, 2013; Volery and Mazzarol, 2015). Therefore, this review makes a contribution to calls for more policy related research and education by having its focus on the school-focused guidance document Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works? Ultimately, I adhere to the idea that an original and significant contribution to knowledge is based on *an assessment of a knowledge system* (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013), and that a knowledge system can be creatively constructed. In the following sections I explain how this strategy was pursued in this thesis.

## 2.3 Search Strategy

Ancestry searches, or backward searches as they are also known, are a search strategy which entails searching through reference lists and footnotes to identify literature that has been used within a text (Atkinson et al., 2014). The criteria for reporting such strategies are that accounts provide enough detail so that the *extent* of the search can be evaluated, and that the *process* is transparent enough that it could be replicated (Atkinson et al., 2014). The criteria for choosing the reference list/s should also be clear, as well as any decisions made about the basis for the inclusion or elimination of literature. Authors writing about reporting standards in literature searches accept that iterative variations in literature searches are expected and legitimate, such as finding a new reference that expands a search, but that the process of the search should just be described in as transparent a way as possible (Atkinson et al., 2014).

As discussed in the last section, the starting point for my ancestry search is the school focused guidance document Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works?

authored by Hanson et al. (2017). This guidance document specifically builds a case for enterprise education approaches *that are competitive*. My process involved collating all items in footnotes and references into a master spread sheet. This gave me a list of 74 items to search for. I was able to get digital or physical copies of 71 of these items (three items were not available).

In a typical review, the goal at this point may have been to apply criteria to establish which papers would be included or eliminated. However, in a critical review of Evidence Based Policy, Oliver et al., (2014), argue that more research does not necessarily lead to better policy decisions or outcomes and, as a result, they propose a new agenda for evidence-based policy research agenda. Part of this agenda is undertaking studies which determine “*what information and evidence*” is used in policy and guidance processes (Oliver et al., 2014, p. 7, emphasis added). In addition, Alvesson and Sandberg (2013, 2020), aim that a problematising approach involves broad reading before selections are made about which texts to engage with more deeply. Thus, at this stage, it was not my goal to eliminate literature, but to better understand what information and evidence had been used by the authors of the guidance, which I describe in the next section.

## **2.4 Categorising**

To further the goal of better understanding what evidence had been provided by authors, I undertook a process of categorising the literature used in BGECWW. This involved reading and re-reading abstracts or introductions of all the collated literature, considering which journal or sources items originated from, and then developing pragmatic categories to group similar items. This process led to the re-organisation of the literature under seven headings: Grey Literature; Careers and Employer Engagement; Serious Games; Programme



Evaluations; Neuroscience/Psychology; EE Impact Measurement Studies and Enterprise Education. Grey literature is material such as reports, website material, surveys and other publications, manuals and handbooks that are not controlled by a publishing organisation (Adams et al., 2016). Other headings emerged as a result of the subject matter of the content, for example, Neuroscience and Psychology or Careers and Employer Engagement articles and such content were grouped together. Literature related to Enterprise Education was separated into general papers, and then impact studies using measurement approaches.

I developed the first iteration of a table which included the 71 available items categorised under these different headings. Some of the items jumped out at me as authoritative, influential items. For example, *The Evaluation of Enterprise Education in England* (McLarty et al., 2010), and an International Literature Review (Hughes et al., 2016), were written to *provide direction for practice*. Hughes et al. (2016) write that their systematic review is identifying ‘What Works?’ in careers education (including enterprise interventions) to generate educational, economic and social outcomes (Hughes et al., 2016; pp 22-46). Equally, the phrase ‘what works’ is used in the Evaluation of Enterprise Education in England, in terms of seeking ‘what works’ in measuring perceptions and embedding enterprise in schools, and schools sharing ‘what works’ in terms of partnership and networking (McLarty et al., 2010, p. 6, p8, p88, p106). I conducted ancestry searches in both of these items to identify whether common literature was used in these two studies and BGECWW and discovered something that interested me.

Whilst the Evaluation of Enterprise Education in England was published in 2010 and the International Literature Review was published in 2016, *neither* publication included two papers: *The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurship Competencies and Intentions* (Oosterbeek et al., 2008) and *The impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurship skills and motivation* (Oosterbeek et al., 2010). Yet these papers were

impact studies and, in my professional experience, well-known and well-cited papers. One would have been available to be reviewed in 2010, and both were available in 2016, and yet, neither paper appeared in either publication, despite one being a *national evaluation* (McLarty et al., 2010), and one being a *formal international literature review* (Hughes et al., 2016). My existing knowledge of the Oosterbeek et al. papers (2008 and 2010), was that authors pointed to the mixed results of the student mini-company programme they evaluated. I found this very strange. The international literature had found *more obscure* literature that I had not heard of before, yet it did not include two well-known impact studies of entrepreneurship education (though it included older studies such as Peterman and Kennedy, 2003). This prompted me to see how the Oosterbeek papers had been used in Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works?

The first article - *The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurship Competencies and Intentions* (Oosterbeek, van Praag and Ijsselstein, 2008) – was referenced as a footnote in connection with the following sentence on p. 14 of BGECWW:

“Conversely, other studies find that participating in such games reduces entrepreneurial intent, perhaps because they provide insights into what entrepreneurial careers involve.”

(Hanson et al., 2017, p.14)

The second article - *The impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurship skills and motivation* (Oosterbeek et al., 2010) – was referenced as a footnote in connection with the following sentence on p. 13 of BGECWW:

“The team and social nature of business games and enterprise competitions helps develop the ability to make social contacts.”

(Hanson et al., 2017, p.13)

Whilst the reference relating to Oosterbeek et al., 2008), did reflect the possibility that participating in games could reduce entrepreneurial intent, the reference relating to Oosterbeek et al. (2010) made no such mention, despite a direct statement in the abstract : “The results show that the program does not have the intended effects: the effect on students’ self-assessed entrepreneurial skills is insignificant and the effect on the intention to become an entrepreneur is even negative.” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p. 442).

The experience of seeing how the Oosterbeek et al. (2008, 2010) studies were used (or significant evidence omitted) prompted me to think that the categorisation of literature I had developed and the way in which I was thinking about literature use in BGECWW was (as Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013, suggest is common), *imposing coherence* where it didn’t exist in such a straightforward way. I had created categories of Grey Literature, Serious Games literature, Enterprise Education, EE Impact Measurement Studies etc., but this orderliness, and the direct reporting of all relevant information (negative as well as positive), from a paper, *was not* the way that literature was used in the document BGECWW.

In relation to *business games* and *enterprise competitions*, two quite different activities, I reflected that there was not a section on evidence specifically *from* Serious Games literature *about* the use of *digital games* and *simulations*. Equally, there was not a specific section on evidence from *enterprise competitions* about the impacts of face to face interventions. Instead, many sentences referred to ‘business games and enterprise competitions’ in tandem, as if they could be considered the same intervention type and literature from across different fields was referenced to justify particular arguments even if they were not referring to the same type of programme.

I recognised at this point that, in my initial orderly categorisation of literature, I was making “arbitrary divisions and crude ways of representing studies” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020,

p1290), and in danger of a “superficial and simplistic” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2020, p1290) review, which did not reflect the how different literature was used to purposefully construct the evidence base for competitive enterprise education. Though a more complex task, the next step I took was to (re)review BGECWW, in light of the categories I now had in mind, to develop a picture of *which* literature was used *where*, and to *what ends*.

## 2.5 Mapping and Narrating

To further develop a picture of how evidence and information was used in BGECWW I re-read a hard copy of the document, annotating it with the codes of literature categories I identified and noting which categories of literature were being used where. I made free hand mind maps of the use of literature, and notes, reflections and comments. My next step was to make visualizations on PowerPoint slides of these notes to capture the use of literature through the document ([Appendix 1](#)). Then I built a table, iterating through several variations, until coming to a final product that (within the confines of a table), better reflected *what* literature *was used where* in the BGECWW paper ([Appendix 2](#)). Following this, I wrote a narrative summary ([Appendix 3](#)) of how different literature was used in BGECWW. This intuitive and emergent process helped build my knowledge of how literature was used to construct the ‘evidence base’ for enterprise education activities that were competitive, what the problems with this were and which texts I would select for close and deep reading.

The narrative summary (Appendix 3), details the use of literature in BGECWW and through the process of creating this summary, a number of issues (potential problems) were striking to me. First, by far the greatest literature source used as evidence for the prescription for Business Games and Competitions comes from *Serious Games* literature, a markedly different type of digital gaming intervention than the usual face to face provision students in school experience

and which I have most observed in practice (and especially the one-day competition which is a staple in schools). Second, in terms of studies specifically focusing on enterprise education, there was reliance on a small number of impact *measurement* studies. These are used authoritatively in the text to justify competitive approaches, but my practical knowledge of the papers was that they held within them more nuance and potential red flags than was reflected in the BGECWW guidance document. In addition, *not one* of these studies has one day competitions as its focus. In the next section I expand these thoughts and problematic assumptions to provide critical insights about ‘the evidence base’ for enterprise education that is competitive, and to explain the texts which I chose for close and deep reading.

## **2.6 Review Results – Insights from Exploring ‘The Evidence Base’**

In this next section I elaborate critical insights developed from exploring how ‘the evidence base’ is constructed in BGECWW and connect these with the field of evidenced based policy making. As problematisation aims to generate new questions (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013; 2020), each section ends by posing a question which may prompt some re-thinking or unsettle assumptions.

### **2.6.1 Using Positive Results from Serious Games Literature**

By far the greatest literature source used as evidence for the prescription for *Business Games and Competitions* comes from *Serious Games* literature (see Appendix 2). Whilst a small number of the papers deal with Serious Games at a school level (Protopsaltis et al., 2014; Dunwell et al., 2014), generally the papers were focused on higher education. The issue with this is that classifications of Serious Games describe them as mostly digital interventions (estimated 90% in one survey), and the remaining 10% being played on non-computer-based

games (10%) including games made for DVD, Game Boy, Nintendo, Palm Pilot, PlayStation, and Plug-and-Play (Ritterfeld and Ratan, 2009). The digital format of Serious Games is confirmed in a recent review of Serious Games in Entrepreneurship Education (Fox et al., 2018). According to these authors, Serious Games are computer-based learning simulations, where the main focus is the use of a digital game-based learning environment to support “serious” outcomes (Fox et al., 2018).

The extent to which Serious Games literature is used in BGECWW, as well as using the example of Roller Coaster Tycoon given as a type of a school focused game, might give readers the impression that Serious Games are a well-established and widespread pedagogical tool. Indeed, so Dunwell et al. (2014), report that the website Me-Tycoon had (at time of writing), 38,097 visits, and 408,247 views of embedded educational videos, which reads like an impressive reach. Yet, as a practitioner of EE in schools since 2006, my experience or observations of Serious Games is limited. Whilst I am *aware* (through professional knowledge of the makers of the game), of the use of SIM Venture with school students, *I have never* been involved in delivering or observing such activity. Furthermore, the school-focused *Employer Engagement Toolkit* (Mann et al., 2017), which is noted in BGECWW as an important contribution to understanding careers and enterprise provision **in schools**, *does not mention* Serious Games. Instead, as previous evaluations have found (McLarty et al., 2010), Mann et al. (2017) identify an over-reliance on *challenge days*, with the Mann et al. (2017, p.12) survey finding teachers were ‘most familiar’ with ‘one day competitions (80% of respondents were familiar with ‘one day competitions’, 59% with ‘long form competitions’ and 38% with ‘learner enterprises’). There is *no mention* of Serious Games in *either* of these studies.

Thus, in regard to the ‘evidence base’ in BGECWW, one problem is that justifications for competitive face to face interventions in schools (which from my practical experience tend to

be compulsory and involving large numbers of students), are made by using evidence from interventions with older students in non-compulsory, higher education, where students have more choice about the course, module and activities they undertake. Can these studies really be counted as evidence for *school focused face to face enterprise competitions*, where younger students are in compulsory education, and may or may not have elected to take part in an activity (as is the often the case for a one day competition) or may be competing against other, better equipped schools (as is the case for many longer term competitions)? Does the premise that because Serious Games present a safe environment for learning, where students can take risks and fail with support (Hanson et al., 2017, p.4; Fox et al., 2018), mean that this assumption transfers unproblematically to a face to face compulsory one day competition or a long form competition?

This insight illuminates an important flaw in the evidence base, which is where *irrelevant studies* (Slawson and Shaughnessy, 1997; Head 2008), are used to make policy prescriptions. Relevance is based on the type of information being presented and the frequency of the problem in your practice (Slawson and Shaughnessy, 1997). Information about Serious Games may be interesting, but if it is not a common intervention in schools in practice, and evaluations and tool kits with practitioner surveys don't register it as familiar, then evidence regarding this intervention is not relevant to the practical situation in school-based enterprise education. In addition, practitioners and researchers in EE, will have "practical wisdom" and "implementation knowledge" (Head, 2008, p.6), from which they might assess that the difference in context between a digital game and a face to face competitive enterprise activity is significant enough to question whether 'what works' in Serious Games *might not work* in enterprise competitions. It has been argued that the use of irrelevant evidence damages the evidence movement because it increases concerns about the "political motives behind research" where research is used as a "political weapon" and "you can find research to

support anything” (Tseng et al., 2017, p. 5-6). Thus, I pose the question: *is not using evidence from Serious Games to make claims about ‘Business Games and Enterprise Competitions’* - as if these activities are comparable even when practitioners will know they are not – *problematic* in light of how different the interventions are?

## **2.6.2 Using Positive Results from Voluntary Long Form Competitions**

Reflecting on the table at [Appendix 2](#), it is noticeable that there are a relatively small number of Enterprise Education Impact Measurement Studies and/or EE literature that authors of BGECWW rely upon to make activity prescriptions. EE scholars have identified school level provision as an under-researched domain (Liguori et al., 2019), and BGECWW itself states that more research is needed regarding enterprise activity in schools (Hanson et al., 2017). Taking a closer look at the impact measurement studies used to justify prescriptions in BGECWW, it is not only that the studies are small in number, it is also that they are focused on the *long term* competitive enterprise programme format, known variously as a company programme, or student mini company. Thus, another problem with the construction of the evidence base in BGECWW is that positive results from impact studies which focus on longer term – and *voluntary* - interventions, are used to justify one day competitions, where students do not have the option of not volunteering or dropping out of the activity.

Looking more closely at these impact measurement studies, four papers report positive results (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2009 & 2012; Huber et al., 2012). But authors of these papers acknowledge that their studies involved either students or schools *volunteering* for the programme and that *initial differences* (between students and the positive pre-disposition of schools) and the resulting potential for *self-selection bias* is *extremely difficult to control for*. This possibility (that initial differences of volunteers may contribute to results), is reinforced by the fact that two studies which report negative effects from long



form competitions were from an intervention which *was compulsory* (Oosterbeek et al., 2008 & 2010), and therefore did not potentially benefit from self-selection bias.

These issues and limitations are underplayed in the BGECWW guidance. Indeed, potential negative effects (of a compulsory competitive activity) have one, small mention, which re-frames diminished skills and intentions in a flattering light, as increased realistic insight into what entrepreneurial careers involve (Hanson et al., 2017, p.14). Yet the authors of the original study *challenge this view*, offering an alternative theory “...the program participants may simply have disliked the program. Various factors may have contributed to that: participation is compulsory, the time and effort demanded from participants is relatively high to the credits they earn, the number of students per group is large and may hamper involvement...” (Oosterbeek et al., 2008, p. 18). This possibility *is not* highlighted in the guidance to schools. This omission could provide an example of what, in Evidenced Based Policy, has been called “the partisan use of evidence”, where, either for tactical, casual, opportunistic or systematic reasons, some evidence is ignored or dismissed (Head, 2008, p.5). However, in policy making, without an observational understanding of the policy practice process (Oliver et al., 2014), it is impossible to understand why, and in what ways, certain evidence was used (or not), and therefore one cannot ascribe any particular reasoning to the authors of BGECWW.

The critical insight that this review *can* provide is in revealing *how* evidence and information is used (or not). For example, in a peer-reviewed version of Oosterbeek et al. study, which is also referenced in BGECWW, the authors of the impact measurement study go further in their defence of their negative findings. They provide additional information to explain why their negative findings are trustworthy and conclude the results are “worrisome and indicative of an ineffective program” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p 452). However, this concern is not communicated in the BGECWW guidance for schools, potentially providing an example of

how ‘convenient ‘facts’ may be harnessed to an argument’, whilst other information is ignored in ‘evidence-based’ policy making (Head, 2008, p.5). Overall, in BGECWW, the implications of using positive results from impact measurement studies of long form and *voluntary* interventions which involve an element of individual or school level self-selection, are not properly explored.

Of greater surprise, given their prevalence in school-focused EE practice, the review of *what* information and evidence is used in the guidance reveals that *not one* impact study presented in BGECWW deals specifically with the short form – one day – compulsory face to face competition that is most frequently deployed in practice (the Dragon’s Den day or Enterprise Challenge type intervention). This illuminates an important potential *evidence-policy gap* (Oliver et al., 2016). Thus, I pose this question: *do we not need impact studies focusing on these one day and compulsory interventions?* Do we not need this as they are the *most typical* activity in school, and also (as has been associated with negative effects in long term competitions), *because* they are compulsory?

### **2.6.3 Using Literature which Obscures the Nature and Effects of Competing**

Another problem with the literature used in BGECWW is that it pays little attention to the very structure of the activities – that interventions *are competitions* and students *are competing*. Programme names - Young Enterprise, Junior Achievement, Student Mini Companies - are used as short-hand for the ‘what’ enterprise and entrepreneurship education is in impact studies, without addressing the competitive nature of these activities in a meaningful way.

Apart from in the description in the Biz World study (Huber et al., 2012), *no* impact measurement study addressed the practical reality that these activities are competitive and culminate in awards, prizes, winners and losers: it is simply not dealt with. Yet, Huber et al.

(2012) show that when results are studied to see how variances in treatment might affect results, significant *positive* effects are found in relation to *winning*. What other variances in experience might influence outcomes? What is the influence and effects of losing? Because of the lack of detail in exploring the nature of these interventions, BGECWW and the literature contained within does not tell us.

In addition to the lack of interest in the competitive structure of activities, there is also a lack of interest in negative results in literature used in BGECWW. When students' entrepreneurial intentions decrease authors of BGECWW articulate this as a potential benefit (Hanson et al., 2017), as students have achieved more realistic expectations and won't pursue entrepreneurship when they don't have the skills. Yet are these explanations really acceptable when a student is in secondary school, or, in *primary school* and surely still developing their skills and attitudes? Surely such an assessment becomes even more problematic when, as the heterogenous data from Huber et al. (2012) points to, effects might be generated by *programme variance* (winning or losing), not simply the act of participation in itself? One related issue is that programme evaluations tend to start from an assumption of the 'positive', they search for positive results, positive 'spill over' effects are assumed (Huber et al., 2012), even negative experiences are explained as being positive (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003). This illustrates another problem with 'the evidence base', where limited interest in negative or unintended effects means that the full range of outcomes in programmes is not understood or explored (Malone and Hogan, 2020). In addition, in relation to evidence and research *in education*, the argument has been made that policy making should be about more than "technocratic" questions about "the effectiveness of educational means and techniques", and should also discuss what is desirable in education and for society more widely (Biesta, 2007, p. 5). Thus, I pose the question: *is it not important that we have more evidence about the experience of competing* (and the unintended and negative consequences which may be

generated)? Do we not want to develop a better understanding of ‘for whom’ such activities work well (or don’t), and the ripple effects (Jagosh et al., 2015), such activities might create?

#### **2.6.4 Using Measurement Focused Studies Which Wash Out Context**

Finally, and at a deeper, meta-theoretical level (the philosophical assumptions that underpin research and are discussed by Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013), the reliance in BGECWW on impact studies *focused on measurement*, raises more questions than are answered. As Huber et al. (2012), say, their study presents results “on average”, so the authors are not able to discuss differences that exist between students or what may cause different outcomes, indeed, they conclude the study is “almost silent about the precise driving force behind the results” (Huber et al., 2012, p.22). Regarding average effect sizes, the average of nine plus one is five, but those two numbers (if we imagine that they are different perception scores aiming to measure the effects of a programme), represent quite different experiences and outcomes which are not reflected in an average effect measurement.

This insight illuminates how the very act of *averaging measurements to articulate effects* obscures understanding regarding the variance that exists within and between individuals, teams, schools and the programme itself (different mentors, different processes, different results – winning or losing, for example). Measurement studies alone cannot account for this complexity or generate deep insight into the mixed results seen in studies (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006). The focus on measurement and statistical control aims to create unbiased and robust results, yet, it is acknowledged, by authors (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2009 & 2012; Huber, 2012), that initial differences between students and the positive pre-disposition of schools towards entrepreneurship and relating self-selection bias *are extremely difficult to control for*. This illuminates a common limitation with the ‘evidence’ provided, that there may be some ‘unobservable characteristics’ which authors

admit they cannot control for, but which might be contributing to programme results. Thus, I pose the question: *do we not want to know more about these unobservable qualities?* Do we not want to know about the characteristics of individuals, schools and communities that may influence participation and positive outcomes, or which may exclude or disadvantage some students or schools?

Now that some critical insight has been gained regarding the construction of ‘the evidence base’ in BGECWW, in the following section I introduce which texts I chose for close and deep reading.

## **2.7 Choosing Texts for Close and Deep Reading**

In the preceding sections I have aimed to demonstrate the usefulness of using a problematising approach in reviewing a domain of literature. This approach has shown that ‘the evidence base’ as presented in BGECWW uses irrelevant and flawed evidence and illuminates a significant policy-evidence gap in the provided guidance, where no effects studies are provided which focus on one day, compulsory face to face enterprise competitions, even though these are the most frequently provided activities in practice. A goal in a problematising review is to gain a deeper understanding of assumptions which may underlie key literature and which can be harder to unearth (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). Therefore, I will now explain which key literature I selected for close and deep reading.

In my professional observations, and direct experiences, of enterprise education, the most common programmes and interventions are one day challenges (often known as Dragon’s Den days and Enterprise Challenges), and longer term competitions (often known as student mini companies or company programmes). Given the problems identified with ‘the evidence base’, these foundational interventions require more evidence and better theorising. In

addition, EE in schools is an under-researched domain (Liguori et al., 2019; Hanson et al., 2017), as such it is no surprise that there is a lack of evidence and theory building around school-related programmes. More robust studies of the impact of EE are said to be needed (Rideout and Grey, 2013), and measurement or experimental studies particularly valued regarding to identifying effects of EE (Longva and Foss, 2018; Costa et al., 2021). Given the value placed on measurement studies, and the relatively small number of EE Impact measurement studies that are relied upon to make policy prescriptions, the articles I choose for close and deep reading are the six impact measurement studies which appear in BGEWCC and also appear in influential evaluation publications by McLarty et al (2010), and Hughes et al. (2016) and which are summarised in Table 1.

Text (Author/s)	Included in the Evaluation of Enterprise Education in England (McLarty et al, 2010)?	Included in Careers Education: International Literature Review (Hughes et al, 2016)?
1. <i>Enterprise education: Influencing students' perceptions of entrepreneurship</i> (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003).	Yes	Yes
2. <i>The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurship Competencies and Intentions</i> (Oosterbeek, van Praag & Ijsselstein, 2008).	No	No
3. <i>Measuring enterprise potential in young people</i> (Athayde, 2009).	No	Yes
4. <i>The impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurship skills and motivation</i> (Oosterbeek, van Praag & Ijsselstein, 2010).	N/A	No
5. <i>The impact of enterprise education on attitudes to enterprise in young people: an evaluation study</i> (Athayde, 2012).	N/A	Yes
6. <i>The Effect of Early Entrepreneurship Education: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment</i> (Huber, Sloof & Van Praag, 2012).	N/A	Yes

**Table 1 - EE Impact Measurement Studies**

In the following sections I summarise these articles one by one, working through the papers individually, and in chronological order, to build insight and accumulate a sense of what a close reading of these papers can tell us. This process surfaces critical insights and enables a problematisation of the works.

## **2.8 EE Impact Measurement Studies – Summaries and Problems**

### **2.8.1 Enterprise Education – Influencing Students Perceptions of Entrepreneurship**

The first paper I consider is *Enterprise Education – Influencing Students Perceptions of Entrepreneurship* (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003), the only paper, out of all six, which is referenced in both the Evaluation of Enterprise Education in England (McLarty et al., 2010), and the International Literature Review (Hughes et al., 2016). The article examines “the effect of participation in an enterprise education program on the perceptions of the desirability and feasibility of starting a business (Peterman and Kennedy, p. 129). Authors describe that a sample of secondary school students enrolled in the Young Achievement Australia programme (a Junior Achievement Franchise), as analysed using a pre-test/post-test research design, and that participants report ‘significantly higher perceptions’ of both desirability and feasibility of entrepreneurship. A closer reading underneath these headlines identifies that the degree of change in perceptions is related to the positiveness of experience on the programme. In addition, those who volunteer for the programme were more likely to report positive prior experience of enterprise education. Authors identify that their results may indicate that “YAA participants may have a pre-disposition to entrepreneurship prior to their participation” (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003, p. 139). But they say that though “...this is a weakness in the study, the main focus of the study is on the change in perceptions”, which the authors say “...is not affected by the initial differences between the control and test

group (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003, p.139). In BGECWW, this study is used to evidence that leadership is an outcome of activities: “Participating in enterprise competitions and business games can support individuals’ capacity to lead others” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 13). Whilst the word ‘can’ does imply some contingency, what we find out from a close reading of the original study is that this contingency includes whether the experience on *the programme was positive or not*. However, in the paper, positive experience on the programme is considered in relation to prior experience in EE, and whether this prior experience is positive or not. It is forwarded that: “levels of perceived desirability and/or perceived feasibility may have been lower at time two if they regarded their prior experience as positive” (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003, p.140). Authors suggest that diminished perceptions may be as a result of an unfavourable comparison with a previous high-positive experience (rather than say, some negative experience on the programme), creating a positive interpretation of a negative result. In addition, whilst desirability of business start-up is said to have increased statistically, the feasibility of starting a business is not. This is explained in relation to the age of the students, and them not being at the right “stage of life” to contemplate start up, rather than considering that some experience on the programme influencing feasibility perceptions (Peterman and Kennedy, pp 140 – 141). Peterman and Kennedy also acknowledge that their study *is not* a study about the initial differences between students, and therefore, we should ask: how legitimate is it to generalise from the perceptions of a volunteer who has positive experiences, to the non-voluntary student population which might have a range of experiences, positive and negative? Yet, the contingencies expressed in the study - that positive changes depend on positive experiences, and that initial differences between students are important, but unexplored - are not made clear in BGECWW. Finally, whilst there is an abstract program description, which assumes development of competencies and skills through practical experience of the lifecycle of the firm, we learn nothing of the



qualitative experience of program participants or the nature of competing which is integral to the mini-company/Junior Achievement process.

### **2.8.2 The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurship Competencies and Intentions**

The second paper I consider is *The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurship Competencies and Intentions* (Oosterbeek et al., 2008), which despite being a before/after, test and control group comparison study, *is not* included by McLarty et al. (2010), or Hughes et al. (2016). The article “analyses the impact of a leading entrepreneurship education program on college student’s entrepreneurship competencies and intentions using an instrumental variables approach in a difference in difference framework” (Oosterbeek et al., 2008, abstract). The results of this study conclude that “...the program does not have the intended effects: the effects on students’ self- assessed entrepreneurial skills is insignificant and the effect on the intention to become an entrepreneur is even *significantly negative*” (Oosterbeek et al., 2008, p.17, emphasis added). Like Peterman and Kennedy, these authors acknowledge the difficulty evaluators have because of ‘unobserved characteristics’ of students (Oosterbeek et al., 2008, p2). Though they aim to limit these difficulties by applying various statistical checks. A big difference between this paper and Peterman and Kennedy (2003), is that the participants in the programme, the Junior Achievement Student Mini Company programme, are not volunteers, rather participation is mandatory and students are compulsorily enrolled in the programme as part of their college course (Oosterbeek et al., 2008, p.4). Students complete an ‘e-scan’ survey, said to measure entrepreneurial traits and skills and again, authors declare “we do not exclude the possibility that the treatment and control groups differ in terms of unobservables that might affect the measured outcomes” (Oosterbeek et al., 2008, p.10). The negative impact of the programme is explained by ‘lecturers and business coaches’ not as an indication that the programme is

ineffective, but that it “makes students perceptions more realistic”, proposing “...the benefit of the program could be that students with low levels of entrepreneurial competencies become less enthusiastic about entrepreneurship” (Oosterbeek et al., 2008, p. 17). Indeed, this is how the study is used in BGECWW, as evidence to say “...other studies find that participating in such games reduces entrepreneurial intent, perhaps because they provide insights into what entrepreneurial careers involve” (Hanson et al., 2017, p.14). Yet Oosterbeek et al. (2008) go on to challenge the view of lecturers and business coaches in their paper, offering an alternative theory “...the program participants may simply have disliked the program. Various factors may have contributed to that: participation is compulsory, the time and effort demanded from participants is relatively high to the credits they earn, the number of students per group is large and may hamper involvement...” (Oosterbeek et al., 2008, p. 18). However, because the focus is on measurement, we do not qualitatively know how the influence of such experiences might play out in practice; a different approach would be needed for that. Authors do, however, call their own results “worrisome” and “indicative of the ineffectiveness of the program at the school of our study” (Oosterbeek et al., 2008, p.18).

### **2.8.3 Measuring the Enterprise Potential in Young People**

The third paper I consider is *Measuring the enterprise potential in young people* (Athayde, 2009), where a research instrument was designed and tested which measured attitudes towards characteristics associated with entrepreneurship. The paper uses a control group cross sectional design where students from six secondary schools (some who participated in Company Programme and a representative sample of non-participants) complete an ATE Survey (Attitude Towards Enterprise) and results are compared. Like the first two papers discussed, the programme which students participate in is the Young Enterprise (the UK model based on US Junior Achievement), Company Programme. And, as with the other two

papers, descriptions of the programme are abstract and generic: “During Company Program, 15-19 year olds set up and run their own enterprise in school over the course of the academic year” (Athayde, 2012, p. 482). No mention of the details of the process, no discussion of competing, which is integral to the experience. In reviewing existing literature, Athayde, discusses the results found by Peterman and Kennedy (2003), saying “...the researchers found that the entrepreneurial experience at school had a positive impact on students, who recorded significant changes in their perceptions towards starting a business”, but no mention is made of the contingencies on which this might depend, or the pre-existing differences which authors acknowledged could be problematic. No mention is made of Oosterbeek et al. (2008), as a counter-point to the impression that entrepreneurial experiences are positive. Students participating in the study were from a mix of: 3 state schools, 1 of which was a single sex school and 3 private schools, one of which was a single sex boys school. Comparing ATE scores, Athayde finds that ethnicity, having a self-employed parent, type of school attended and participation in an enterprise programme are statistically significant in higher ATE scores. This nuance – that *school type* for example has *more influence* than programme participation – is *lost in translation* from the research paper to the BGECWW publication, which simply references Athayde as evidence that “...some research finds that participating in games and competitions has a positive effect on the likelihood of young people to consider entrepreneurial careers (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 14).

In her study, Athayde acknowledges that “there may be some self-selection bias” in the sample, but that “does not undermine the potential of participation in the Company Program to positively influence attitudes towards enterprise” (Athayde, 2009, p 496). In addition to the results showing the possibility of contextual factors (not just programme participation) to influence test scores (individual characteristics, family experience, school etc.), the author explains that designing a test to assess ‘latent enterprise “potential”’ exposed weaknesses in

reliability, validity and the measure, casting some doubt on the whole endeavour of measuring latent enterprise potential, but again this caution and nuance does not make it into BGECWW. As with the other papers, we have no detail or insight about the qualitative experience of students, the experience of competing, or how the contextual factors used as dependent variables might interact in practice to generate outcomes or influence test scores.

#### **2.8.4 The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurship Skills and Motivation**

The fourth paper I consider is *The impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurship skills and motivation* (Oosterbeek et al., 2010). This paper is a peer reviewed version of the 2008 impact measurement study which was published by the Institute for the Study of Labour (Oosterbeek et al., 2008). The title varies slightly, referring to impact on ‘entrepreneurship skills and motivation’, whilst the 2008 version refers to impact on ‘entrepreneurship competencies and intentions’ however the same theoretical framework is used, and the keywords for the 2010 article include ‘entrepreneur competencies and skills’ and ‘entrepreneur intentions and motivations’; these words are used interchangeably but the article is about the same study, sample, process and results that were published in 2008. Like the 2008 article, they report: “The main finding of this paper is that the SMC program does not have the intended effects: the effects on students’ self-assessed entrepreneurial skills is insignificant and the effect on the intention to become an entrepreneur is even significantly negative.” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p. 443). There are a few key additions to the text though. In the introduction the authors look more in-depth at the connection between entrepreneurship and economic growth. They refer to one of the “most famous and accepted theories.... supporting the economic importance of entrepreneurship...”, provided by Schumpeter (1911), who argued that entrepreneurs introduce new entrepreneurial combinations which destroy equilibrium in the economy, and create new equilibrium

(creative destruction), thus “assigning a central role to entrepreneurship for growth” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p. 2010). Reverting to the 2008 text, the connection is then made back to policy aspirations that increased levels of entrepreneurship can be reached through education, and that the “dominant entrepreneurship education program in secondary schools in the US and Europe is the Junior Achievement Young Enterprise student mini-company (SMC)” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p. 443). Just after this, and in relation to the students/college they study, a new addition to the text is inserted: “In contrast to most other interventions in which entrepreneurship training is provided, this program works with a general population of students and not with a group of individuals who self-selected into entrepreneurship” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p.443), underscoring the mandatory nature of the program they investigate. The next addition to the text is within the ‘empirical strategy’ section, where authors debate what conclusions can be drawn from the results, as data was taken from only two locations. They quote one source (Donald and Lang, 2007), which states that standard errors cannot be calculated in a two by two case and therefore we should be cautious in drawing conclusions. Then they quote another source (Wooldridge, 2006), which argues that such criticism is indistinguishable from a common question raised in regards to any ‘difference in difference’ analysis, which is: ‘How can we be sure that any observed differences in means is due entirely to the policy change?’ (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p.445). The answer (according to Wooldridge), is in appropriate randomisation, which, Oosterbeek et al. say is part of their study “In our study, the assignment of students to locations is as good as random” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p.445), the implication being: there can be confidence in drawing conclusions from the results. The next additional text in the paper is also in the ‘empirical strategy’ part of the article. Authors discussing the limitation of the research design, which (just as the 2008 paper), states: “The main limitation of our research design is that we only compare students from two different locations of the same school. Whether the

programme is more or less successful when implemented elsewhere remains an open question (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p.445). In this 2010 version they go on to add: “It should be noted however...that we had no reason to suspect that the program...would do worse than the average school running this program. It was suggested to us by representatives of Association Jong Ondernemen [which]...certainly has no interest in evaluating the program at a school that performs poorly. If anything, we were afraid that they would suggest us to approach a school that would perform above average” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p.445). Authors go on to discuss that they checked the schools’ (academic) performance, and found it ranked above average (but not top), and provide a substantial footnote relating to school comparison, clarifying that whilst the school they studied scored above average in regular rankings, there was no information known about the ‘relative performance of the SMC program in this school relative to others.” Essentially authors seem to be underscoring that they were directed (by the provider) to this school, suggesting the likelihood that they (the provider) had confidence in the performance of the school, and that, more generally (in academic rankings), the school performed above average. Other significant additions to the text comes in the section: Treatment Effects. New sources are provided in relation to the observation that “the scores on entrepreneurial traits increased among students in the control group” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p 450). The authors draw on work from Roberts et al. (2001) and Robins et al. (2001), to say that such increases are “consistent with the development of traits in young adulthood” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p 450). They then contrast this with results from the treatment group, the new text reading: “The scores did not change significantly among students in the treatment group. Apparently, the experiences in the treatment program give *less room* to developing traits...”, they go on to note that it is only significantly lower (in the treatment group) for ‘endurance’ (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p 450, emphasis added). As in the 2008 version, they go on to conclude that the finding that entrepreneurial skills do not

increase more for treated than untreated students is *indicative of an ineffective program* and that the negative effect on entrepreneurial intentions *cannot* be assessed as beneficial.

Another addition to the 2010 text is where authors examine whether the treatment effects men and women differently: “The main difference is found for the program’s impact on entrepreneurial intentions...both men and women have lower entrepreneurial intentions after being exposed to the program, but the negative impact is more prominent for women...”

(Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p 450). Authors suggest that this may be because women may have experienced that running a business is hard to combine with other time uses, but there is no indication why this might be the case, and if there are alternative reasons as to why women’s intentions are lower. Overall, my interpretation of the additions to text in the peer reviewed journal article (as opposed to the 2008 report), is that they tend to *objection handle* methodological issues *in order to suggest that the (negative) result should be taken seriously*; authors repeat the line that the results are “worrisome and indicative of an ineffective program” (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p 452). But again, because the focus is on measurement, we don’t have the detail of students’ experiences which might help us better understand or explain the worrisome results. The extent of the concern expressed in the paper is simply not reflected in BGECWW, where Oosterbeek et al. (2010) is used as a reference to support the statement “The team and social nature of business games and enterprise competitions helps develop the ability to make social contacts” (Hanson et al., 2017, p.13).

### **2.8.5 The Impact of Enterprise Education on Attitudes to Enterprise in Young People: And Evaluation Study**

The fifth article I consider is *The impact of enterprise education on attitudes to enterprise in young people: an evaluation study* (Athayde, 2012). This paper presents a study designed to measure the effect of participation in a Young Enterprise Company Programme on young people’s attitude to starting a business and on their enterprise potential. A longitudinal and

pre-test, post-test survey (Attitude to Enterprise, ATE questionnaire), design is used with a sample of 276 young people at the start of a programme, and nine months later. Athayde discusses that the way of dealing with selection bias in her study was to establish a realistic counterfactual group to demonstrate that participants were not more likely to have greater enterprise potential than the control group. Questionnaires were matched “through a combination of gender, ethnicity, school attended, date of birth and sometimes handwriting styles” (Athayde, 2012, p. 713). The final sample matched 200 participants (from two state comprehensive girls schools, one selective voluntary aided boys school, one co-educational independent school and two co-educational state comprehensive schools and with 76 non-participants. A number of steps to control for sample bias were described, such as statistically checking that there were “no significant differences between the participant and the control group in the three of the demographic categories: age, ethnic background and having a parent in business” (Athayde, 2012, p. 714). Another statistical method (using t-tests), was used to show that “there was no significant levels of difference between the levels of enterprise potential between the two groups”, thus any changes in enterprise potential can be more confidently attributed to participation (Athayde, 2012, p. 715). In terms of results, Athayde explains that participation in the Company Programme was correlated with an increase in ATE test scores, but that these scores were also influenced by other factors: attending a selective school, having a parent in business and gender. Athayde explains that *pupils at selective schools* have “significantly higher ATE test scores than pupils at non-selective schools.” Boys scores were significantly higher than girls at post-test... [and]... those with at least one parent in business scored significantly higher” (Athayde, 2012, pp. 717-718). Differences were discussed in relation to ethnicity too, for example: “...black pupils were more likely to aspire to future business ownership than other groups; however, their ATE test scores were the second lowest following the programme” (Athayde, 2012, p 720). Athayde



discusses that the results, influenced as they are by various non programme factors, “emphasise the need for sensitivity in the deployment of enterprise education, and caution against a one-size-fits-all model” (Athayde, 2012, p. 721). In BGECWW, Athayde appears as a reference (number 50), on p.12, in relation to discussing impacts of business games and enterprise competitions, but is not linked to in the text directly, so it is not possible to say exactly how this reference is deployed. However, what is clear is that the caution expressed by Athayde in the conclusions of the paper, are not reflected in the whole sale prescriptions made in BGECWW. Athayde urges: “The argument for an “enterprise culture” or an entrepreneurial society has...become a ubiquitous discourse at both international and national policy levels. There is a danger, however, that this focus may be accompanied by complacency, an uncritical acceptance of enterprise policy initiatives and the continued investment of public money” (Athayde, 2012, p.722). Athayde calls for academics and policy makers to challenge uncritical acceptance and build an evidence base with sound and rigorous research. She assesses that “...the deployment of enterprise education lacks this evidence base and is therefore often wielded blindly....a more sophisticated approach is needed, which takes into account the differing needs of individuals in diverse circumstances” (Athayde, 2012, p. 722). Though Athayde is highlighting the importance of contextual factors that influence programme outcomes, she acknowledges that the measurement approach does not develop explanations for them (Athayde, 2012, p. 719). In addition, she concludes that though participating in a YE programme is correlated with levels of enterprise potential, other factors “which include elements of human and social capital” may be more influential “because they are so much more deep seated” (Athayde, 2012, p. 723). However, such factors and unobservable differences between students, are difficult to explore in a measurement study, where matching is based on necessarily reductive categories such as age and gender,

differences are expressed in test scores and the students' programme experience is rendered in a few short, abstract and generic lines.

### **2.8.6 The Effect of Early Entrepreneurship Education: Evidence from a Randomised Field Experiment**

The sixth and final paper I consider is *The Effect of Early Entrepreneurship Education: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment* (Huber et al., 2012), the only study which is based in primary education and which aims to analyse the effect of 'early entrepreneurship education'. The paper describes a randomised field experiment, evaluating Biz World, an entrepreneurship programme taught in the final year of primary school. The sample for the experiment is primary schools which sign up for the Biz World programme. This group was randomly assigned to a treatment and control group and, using a difference in difference approach, self-reported scores on cognitive and non-cognitive skills and entrepreneurial intentions were measured and compared. Out of all the papers, Huber et al. give the most room to describing the five-day programme in some detail (Huber et al., 2012, pp 4 – 5). This includes being the first evaluation study to explicitly address the competitive nature of the programme, though this is done in a relatively matter of fact way, saying that at the end of the final day "the team that was most successful, in the sense that it has created the highest company value, wins" (Huber et al., 2012, p. 6). They go on to elaborate: "A small gift for the winning team is usually provided by the entrepreneur or company sponsoring the programme. Moreover, the BizWorld foundation provides each member of the winning team with a winning certificate. In general, children are very motivated to win." (Huber et al., 2012, p.6). In describing the design of the experiment, issues such as randomisation and the sample, internal validity and external validity are described. With regards to randomisation, it occurs at class level (so, it is possible, within a school, that one class was initially assigned as treatment and one as control). All classes eventually participated, but there was a time lag

between treatment and control, to enable comparison. Because all schools volunteered for the programme, Huber et al. say "...thus we assure that all schools on our sample have the same pre-disposition towards entrepreneurship" (Huber et al., 2012, p.7). The final sample consisted of 85 treatment classes (and 1729 pupils) and 33 control classes (and 684 pupils). To demonstrate internal validity, Huber et al. do various statistical checks to "compare the observed characteristics of the individuals in the treatment and control group" (Huber et al., 2012, p. 9) and conclude that there are "no observed pre-treatment differences between the treatment and control group" (Huber et al., 2012, p. 10). To demonstrate external validity, various data is shared which shows that the schools in the study are representative of the wider population and there is no reason to think that they execute the BizWorld programme any differently than might happen elsewhere. Children are described as having to fill out "extensive questionnaires" with questions relating to three areas, non-cognitive entrepreneurial skills, cognitive entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial intentions (Huber et al., 2012, p 7). Children responded to three skill statements relating to nine non-cognitive areas, seven multiple choice related to cognitive entrepreneurial skills and relating to intentions, had to select 3 favourites from a list of 22 occupations and answer a question about the desirability to 'start a company' one day.

The main findings of this survey were "On average, the [non-cognitive] skills level in the treatment group increase to a larger extent than the control group...the results are [statistically] significant for seven skills" (Huber et al., 2012, p. 4). It is interesting to note that six non-cognitive entrepreneurial skills of the control group also develop positively and significantly over the same time, showing control group children develop non cognitive skills "through the regular lessons offered" and "do not spend the time that the treated children spend on the program idly" (Huber et al., p. 17). For cognitive entrepreneurial skills there is a slight, but insignificant net effect, thus "the program does not seem to have the intended

effect in the development of entrepreneurship knowledge” (Huber et al., p. 18), and the program “has a negative effect on the intention towards becoming an entrepreneur” (Huber et al., p.18). The first intention measure (re future job choice), decreases slightly within the treatment group and increases within the control group, resulting in a “negative though insignificant” net treatment effect; but the second measure on intention to start a business decreases significantly for the treatment group whereas in the control group there is significant positive change, overall creating a significantly negative net effect (Huber et al., 2012, p.18). Though, in regard to intentions, authors say that the lack of validated measures for intentions means they treat the results with caution.

Authors look at heterogenous effects across groups, that is, whether change was moderated in any way by factors such as age, gender, intended high school track and other potential influences and share a couple of “noteworthy” results (Huber et al., 2012, p.20). Of particular relevance to the subject of this thesis is that authors looked at “the possible effect of some variation in the treatment, like being a member of the winning team, or the size of the team, on the change in outcome” (Huber et al., 2012, p. 20). Authors write: “Indeed, we find a significant positive effect on the development of pro-activity, self-efficacy and the intention to start a business for children that were members of the winning team”, statistically signalling the importance of exploring the nature and effects of competing, and its power to influence skill and intention outcomes. In addition, they found that ‘General Managers’ and ‘Finance Directors; develop their skills most, though children are assigned these roles by the teacher, thus, it is not possible to claim that the treatment caused the effect, as the roles were based on teachers’ selection. In their conclusions, authors acknowledge that the study is “almost silent about the precise driving force behind the results” (Huber et al., 2012, p.22), so again, we have another measurement study where its results might prompt more questions (and a search for explanation), than they answer. In addition, because authors acknowledge

that these schools, volunteering as they did for the programme, may have certain (positive) pre-dispositions, which mean the results are not valid for compulsory participation.

Having explored the content of the six EE impact measurement studies in greater depth, I conclude this chapter by summarising insights which emerge from the preceding narrative.

These insights provide an extension to problems presented earlier in the chapter and are more related to paradigmatic assumptions – or deep beliefs (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013) - which underpin the development research itself. I connect the assumptions made in impact measurement studies with critique (and possibilities) regarding research and evidenced based policy making (Hammersley, 2001; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006; Pawson, 2013; Emmel et al., 2018). These authors propose *Realist Evaluation* as a rigorous alternative approach to investigating effects of programmes and set the scene for the realist methodological strategy adopted in this thesis.

## **2.9 EE Impact Measurement Studies – Insights from Close and Deep Readings**

### **2.9.1 The Programme is the Treatment**

Implicit within the focus of a measurement study is the idea that the programme being evaluated is the causal agent in its own right (Pawson, 2006). When studies talk about treatment and control groups (Oosterbeek et al., 2008; Huber et al., 2012), and conducting pre-test and post-test questionnaires with samples of students (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003), there is an unspoken assumption that it is the intervention that is doing the changing (Pawson, 2006), and that the intervention is the only difference between the *before* and *after*. Indeed, it has been said that the causal powers of an intervention are the unspoken assumption of the ‘what works’ paradigm (Pawson, 2006). This is described as a major problem in evidenced

based policy – the casting of complex social programmes as if they are simple treatments (Pawson, 2006), and not exploring the way that differences in context will influence how programmes play out for different participants (Greenhalgh et al., 2017a).

## **2.9.2 Unobservable Differences**

Studies which focus on measuring effects are often described as being unbiased (Oosterbeek et al., 2008; Oosterbeek et al., 2010; Huber et al., 2012), supporting the assumption that this type of research is the rigorous, empirical work that is needed to judge the effects of programmes (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2012). However, authors of such studies simultaneously acknowledge that unobservable differences between treatment and control groups cannot be excluded, and indeed may be affecting measured outcomes (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Oosterbeek et al., 2008, 2010; Huber et al., 2012; Athayde, 2010, 2012), throwing *the assumption* of rigour into question. In evidenced based policy, measurement studies and experiments have been critiqued on the basis that they obscure the complex and messy reality of social programmes, leading to artificial and misleading results (Pawson, 2006). Pawson summarises: “...programme details are filtered out, contextual information is eliminated, selected findings are utilised, averages are taken...” (Pawson, 2006, p. 42). Whilst all this activity is done in an attempt to “wash out bias”, this “purgative process” eliminates the very features that might explain how and why an intervention is working for different participants in different contexts (Pawson, 2006, p. 42). An alternative – realistic – assumption is that nothing works everywhere or for everyone (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), and instead, studies should investigate the circumstances under which a programme will work (or not) and why.

### 2.9.3 Limited Explanation

Authors of impact measurement studies acknowledge that whilst they may be able to present some statistically significant results, what they lack is explanations behind what is causing effects to happen. Some studies admit they are *almost silent* on what is driving results (Huber et al., 2012), authors also call for other researchers to *develop explanations* behind their results (Athayde, 2012). What is clear is that measurement studies do not build comprehensive understanding of what is happening for different participants in a programme, or what might be causing effects to happen. In evidenced based policy, Realist Evaluation has been developed to provide explanation as it is focused not on judging ‘what works’ but on exploring ‘what works for whom and why’. Realists pursue knowledge about features of the context into which programmes are inserted to better understand what contributes to or affects the operation of the programme and resulting outcomes (Greenhalgh et al., 2017). A part of the realist explanatory effort is to achieve a certain level of conceptual abstraction regarding ways of thinking about programmes, whether that be some standard or routine processes or abstract concepts or conditions that can be used in other inquiries (Pawson, 2013). Abstraction is a key explanatory tool (Pawson, 2000), as it helps to develop understanding about an event “as an instance of a more general class of happenings” (Pawson, p. 1). Abstraction is the thinking process that allows social theorists to participate in generalisation, in that an abstract conceptual framework is a source of transferable lessons (Pawson, 2000). Whilst this study is supported by some frameworks for thinking about Competitive Enterprise Education (presented in Chapter 1, section [1.11](#)), the researcher is also aware that theorising develops over time and spontaneously (Pawson, 2013). Models and frameworks which pre-judge what is to be proven do not necessarily increase scientific knowledge (Hammersley, 2001), and inspiration for theorising and abstraction may come from diverse and unpredictable sources over the period of a study (Emmel et al., 2018).

## 2.10 Conclusion and Necessity of a Realistic Way Forward

The approach taken in this literature review was to utilise a problematisation approach (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013; 2020), to investigate how literature was used in the school focused guidance document ‘Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works?’ The document claims it presents “the evidence base” for enterprise education activities that are competitive (Hanson et al., 2017). However, we now have a fuller understanding, as a result of mapping the use of literature in the document, that “the evidence base” in BGECWW is problematic in the way that it uses irrelevant and flawed evidence, omits certain information and does not provide explanations for results. This review has put literature (and the assumptions which underpin such literature), into conversation with ideas from evidenced based policy making, and introduced Realist Evaluation as a specific methodological strategy which has been developed to address criticisms of impact measurement and experimental studies. In the following chapter, in relation to this study, a methodology is presented which adopts a realistic strategy. This methodological strategy is underpinned by an alternative set of assumptions and is better equipped to help build explanations of both positive and negative results regarding what works for whom (or not) and why.

## 2.11 Summary of Chapter

This chapter presented a problematising review of literature used in ‘Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works?’ (BGECWW), a guidance document which is said to have coalesced ‘*the evidence base*’ for competitive activities in EE. A justification for taking this approach – a problematising approach and the body of work in the literature review coming from BGECWW – is provided by linking back to the assumption challenging nature



of this study, the thesis objective of unsettling *what works* and the opportunity to address more calls for more policy related research in EE.

The chapter used the problematising strategy of putting empirical material (in this case, the content of the guidance document BGECWW), into conversation with theory which helps unsettle assumptions (in this case theory and insight from the field of Evidenced Based Policy where authors consider the quality and use of evidence and information in policy making and guidance). The techniques used in the review were described, and review results and insights presented.

The chapter showed that, in relation to BGECWW, a document which promotes and justifies competitive approaches, some of the literature and information used is either irrelevant, flawed and/or evidence is omitted. In addition literature used obscures the nature and effects of competing and relies on measurement focused studies which do not illuminate variations in context and experience. Close and deep readings of six EE impact measurement studies were described, and problems surfaced through these close reading – how programmes are framed as simple treatments, how unobservable differences are unexplored, and the limited explanation developed through measurement approaches – were identified.

The chapter concluded by summarising the necessity for a realistic way forward and the usefulness of Realist Evaluation to generate evidence and help build explanations regarding both positive and negative results in CEE.

### **3 Methodology**

This chapter will set out the methodology used to study CEE programmes. The philosophical underpinning, that is the ontological and epistemological assumptions which underpin the study, are introduced. The methodology for this PhD - a qualitative study drawing on realist evaluation - is presented. Then the research design - including method, sampling, data collection, analysis, ethical issues and validity - is introduced. The chapter concludes with a reflection from the researcher on the experience of developing and applying the methodology.

#### **3.1 Ontological Perspective - Realism**

Ontology is the study of being and the nature of existence. As illuminated in Chapter 2, limited explanations are generated when research approaches lack ontological depth, and therefore alternative philosophies are needed to open up and transform what is known about EE and its wider impact. Guidance about the relationship between philosophies and the study of social programmes makes clear that philosophical assumptions have powerful implications for research and evaluation design, data requirements and analysis (Greenhalgh et al., 2017b).

As there are many different schools of philosophy, Greenhalgh et al. (2017b), contrast three broad schools of philosophy – positivism, constructivism and realism – to provide a simplified account of the crucial differences. Positivist ontology holds that there is an objective reality, existing independently of human interpretation, and governed by natural laws, while the constructivist position lacks a clear ontology as it asserts that all knowledge is both socially and individually constructed and interpreted and therefore we can never be quite sure what reality is like or even whether it exists (Greenhalgh et al., 2017b). The realist perspective accepts that there is a reality that is independent of the human mind, and that both

the natural and social world are independent of and interdependent with, our understandings of them. From this perspective social systems and constructs (such as the banking system, economic system, education system, and gender, class, culture etc), exist and exert their own powers. These systems and constructs both affect people and can be affected by them, and any changes in a system will be the result of complex interactions within and across all these different dimensions, rather than simply an outcome of a policy or programme (Greenhalgh et al., 2017b). Realism has been called a ‘depth’ ontology (Jagosh, 2017; 2019), because it posits a view of reality where things that we experience or can observe are caused by deeper, usually non-observable processes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006). This particular understanding of causation is called generative causation – the idea that things we can see at the observable layer of reality may be caused (generated) by ‘deeper’, non-observable processes - and it is a distinguishing feature of the realist perspective (Greenhalgh et al., 2017b).

### **3.2 Realism in this Study – Scientific Realism**

While there are many types of realism (Johnson and Duberley, 2000; Pawson, 2018), the specific philosophy often elaborated in relation to Realist Evaluation and the application of its principles is Scientific Realism (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006, Pawson, 2013; Emmel et al., 2018). Pawson (2006; 2013), explores how scientific realism has its roots in ideas proposed by Roy Bhaskar, who distinguished different domains (the empirical, the actual and the real), to conceptualise how *things we can’t see and are difficult to measure* are actually what is causing something to happen. Reality, he argued, is made up of the empirical (events that are observed and experienced), the actual (events and non-events generated by the real), and the real (causal structures and mechanisms with enduring properties). Thus, since an observable change can be caused by something that is not

observable, realists take the view that: what causes something to happen has *nothing to do with* the number of times we observe it to happen (Sayer, 1999). Causation is at the heart of realist evaluation and causation is about examining *what* causes something to happen (Greenhalgh et al., 2017). Thus, researchers studying from a realist position prioritise building theory (ideas, explanations) about *why* something might work (or not).

### 3.3 Epistemological Perspective

Epistemology is described as the nature of knowledge, what is entailed in knowing and how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998). The positivist position claims it is possible to observe the empirical world in a neutral manner through the accumulation of objective sense data while from the constructivist position, there are no neutral grounds for knowledge since all observation is subjective and laden with value.

A crucial distinction realist authors try and make, is that it is important to resist the collapse of ontology into epistemology. This epistemic fallacy (Bhaskar, 1997; Maxwell, 2012), happens when matters to do with the nature of reality (the ontological dimension), are conflated with matters to do with how researchers can know that reality (the epistemological dimension). Rather than ontology and epistemology simply being reflections of each other, the realist position asserts that ontology has important implications and a distinct contribution to make (Maxwell, 2012). Realists hold the ontological position that *there is a mind independent reality*, but that epistemologically, *all enquiry and all observations are shaped and filtered through the human brain* (Greenhalgh et al., 2017b).

The result of this epistemological position is that knowledge (in general, and also specifically about social programmes and how they work), will always be partial, incomplete and

changing because the problems and possible solutions are “*endlessly complex*” (Pawson, 2013, p. 104). However, what the epistemology of Scientific Realism (the epistemological perspective as applied by researchers investigating complex social programmes), offers is a position which ***better aligns knowledge with reality*** (Jagosh, 2017). This is because it encourages a search for that which cannot be observed, which is difficult to measure, but which might actually determine why, and in what circumstances, socially contingent programmes work, or not (Jagosh, 2017). This epistemology accepts that: “*there is no such thing as a final truth or knowledge we can never reach absolute certainty, realism argues that it is possible to work towards a closer understanding of the nature of reality, because reality itself constrains the interpretations that can reasonably be made of it*” (Greenhalgh et al., 2017b, p. 1).

Pawson (2013), underscores the particular sensibility of those undertaking evaluative research informed by this perspective. He says they should understand that science makes slow and partial progress, that business is always unfinished, and that any system, its outcomes and contingencies are understood only as a result of “*continuous empirical and theoretical labour*” (Pawson, 2013, p. 67). Crucially (for this research project), Pawson (2006; 2013), elaborates how the philosophy of Scientific Realism underpins an applied approach – ***evaluation and evidenced based policy*** – and therefore it is his interpretation that is most relevant and helpful to the task I am undertaking, which is to theorise about a family of interventions (enterprise education programmes which are competitive), which are prescribed for students in schools and colleges. From the scientific realist position described by Pawson, researchers are trying to uphold the quest for objectivity (Pawson, 2006), but doing this by exposing scientific claims to scrutiny (Pawson, 2013). Pawson encourages the

researcher to engage in organised scepticism, where “*each study should seek to challenge, enlarge and refine inferences*” from previous work (Pawson, 2013, p. 107).

### **3.4 Implications of Philosophical Perspective on Evaluation Research and Practice**

Guidance (Greenhalgh et al., 2017b), demonstrates the difference the realist philosophical perspective has on the practice of research and evaluation and is summarised in Table 2 (overleaf). Researchers working from the realist perspective are engaged in trying to identify unobservable processes which may be causing programme outcomes (rather than assuming that a programme caused an outcome).

In summary, realism accepts a mind independent reality, but recognises that observations of it are filtered by humans, therefore knowledge is fallible and partial, and evaluators may work towards better understandings, but these will never be final or conclusive (Greenhalgh et al., 2017b).

As a researcher this means acknowledging that while I might be trying to work towards a fuller understanding of reality, I will always be offering knowledge that is partial and incomplete. This position has implications for how research should be judged, which is discussed later in the chapter in relation to standards of, and success criteria for, the research.

	Positivism	Realism	Constructivism
Ontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Objective reality independent of human mind</li> <li>- Governed by natural laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a mind independent reality</li> <li>- Natural and social systems exist and exert their own powers</li> <li>- Humans can affect natural or social systems, and they are affected by them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lacks a clear ontology (as knowledge is socially and individually constructed, we can never be sure what reality is like or even if it exists).</li> </ul>
Epistemology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observer and observed are independent</li> <li>- We can identify 'facts' through cycles of observation and theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All enquiry and all observations are shaped and filtered through the human brain.</li> <li>- There is, therefore, no such thing as 'final' truth or knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We cannot prove what is 'true' or 'not true': 'facts' are just things that are accepted to be true (at least by many in a particular context), therefore meanings and interpretations are what can be identified.</li> </ul>
Role of evaluator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify and report observable facts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To work towards better understanding of whether, how and why programmes work, but cannot provide 100% 'proof' of any conclusion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To identify and report meanings and interpretations.</li> </ul>

***Table 2 - Contrasting Realism with Positivism and Constructivism***

In the next section I introduce the methodology for this thesis.

### **3.5 Methodology – A Qualitative Study Drawing on Realist Evaluation**

A methodology is a “*strategy or plan of action*” (Crotty, 1998, p. 6), which shapes choices about methods and how they are employed. The methodological strategy used in this thesis draws on Realist Evaluation (RE), an approach which aims to understand the multiple, sometimes contradictory impacts and unintended ripple effects of policy reform (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Porter, 2007; Jagosh et al., 2015). RE has been developed to explore and evaluate complex social programmes and how outcomes, negative and unintended as well as positive and intended may be generated when a programme interacts with different individuals in different contexts. Context is very important in realist research because a key premise of realist evaluation is that a programme will only ‘work’ if the circumstances are right (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This means that a realist approach helps to extend thinking about ‘what works?’ towards ‘what works, for whom, in what circumstances and why?’ (Pawson, 2006; Wong et al., 2017). This approach aims to elaborate what might work in different contexts (Pawson, 2006), therefore it would support the goal of developing insight into how outcomes are generated in enterprise education activities that are competitive, and foresight into different effects for different students in different contexts (Jagosh, 2020), as well as considering if there is any evidence whether programme influence the context itself over time (Jagosh et al., 2015).

While realist research is methods neutral (Pawson, 2006; Mukumbang et al., 2020), it offers a qualitative method (the realist interview), which is feasible for a researcher to carry out in a PhD study and aims to offer richer explanations about how outcomes are generated in programmes (Pawson, 2006; Manzano, 2016). This strategy and method will help fill out explanations about what is happening in CEE programmes, which current quantitative impact measurement studies do not provide.



Finally, as RE aims to build knowledge about *why* social programmes work (or don't), the approach can also help unsettle an entrenched programme and facilitate a rethink of existing policy (Pawson, 2006). Therefore, such an approach may also act as a way of unsettling assumptions regarding a taken-for-granted activity (enterprise education activities which are competitive).

While a fuller argument of the usefulness of realist evaluation *in relation to the evaluation of enterprise and entrepreneurship education* has been made elsewhere (Brentnall, Diego-Rodriguez and Culkin, 2018a; Brentnall, Diego-Rodriguez and Culkin 2018b), this thesis presents the opportunity to put the realist methodological strategy *into practice* and collect data from which to build explanations about effects of enterprise education which is competitive. In conclusion, the approach of undertaking research utilising the philosophical principles and methodological resources of Realist Evaluation, offers a strategy through which I can pursue the objectives of this study. In the following sections I present the research design, including method, sampling, data collection and analysis, ethical issues, and validity.

### **3.6 Research Design**

This research design for this PhD aims to develop better *understanding and explanations* about for whom competitive activities work well for (or not) and why. In Chapter 1 I proposed the concept of Competitive Enterprise Education (CEE), and elaborated linear conceptualisation with assumed programme outcomes and a realistic conceptualisation of such programmes and factors which might influence outcomes (section [1.11.2](#)), which set the scene for the study. The second framework proposed a realistic way of thinking about CEE and in this study, and I will collect data through semi-structured realist interviews (Pawson

and Tilley, 1997; Manzano, 2016), to elicit evidence which I can relate to that, realistic, framework. The first, linear, framework provides the assumptions for what successful programmes might achieve and my focus is on learning about students' experiences and 'for whom programmes work (or not)' by interviewing stakeholders involved in designing/delivering, commissioning, and coordinating CEE programmes. In addition, a small number of stakeholders involved with non-competitive/cooperative skills-building programmes and education were interviewed to prompt counter-factual thinking (Danermark et al., 2002).

Analysis involves using four layers of context (Pawson, 2006) in social programmes as a lens through which data could be organised and then interpreting data from a realistic perspective. The following sections describe the method, sampling, data collection and process and experience of analysis.

### **3.7 Method – Semi-Structured Interviews**

The interview is a method which is used to understand, evaluate, or assess a person, situation or event (Cohen et al., 2018). The interview is a key data collection technique used to gain information from different stakeholders involved in *social programmes* (Wong et al., 2016). Researchers utilising the realist perspective have developed a particular approach to interview – the Realist Interview – which researchers use to explore, refine, build or challenge theory related to complex social programmes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Manzano, 2016). Overall, the Realist Interview aims to *understand* programmes and how outcome patterns are influenced by context (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Manzano, 2016; Mukumbang et al., 2020).

Realist interviews may be conducted for theory gleaning, theory refining or theory consolidation purposes (Mukumbang et al., 2020). Given the limitations of current

measurement approaches and lack of explanatory theorising, “*theory gleaning*” regarding programme modalities, contextual conditions and how outcomes are generated is important and (Mukumbang et al., 2020,p. 491). Mukumbang et al. (2020), also distinguishes between programme practitioners (those who design and implement an intervention) and programme subjects or participants (those who participate in the programme and are the intended beneficiaries), and discusses how theory elicitation from the first category of actors (programme practitioners), is a useful first step in realist theorising. As such, this study involves conducting in-depth interviews with programme practitioners who can provide evidence about CEE, specifically: commissioner/managers; consultant/providers and school-based educators involved in coordinating, designing and/or delivering such programmes and a small number of practitioners providing skills building activity that was non-competitive/cooperative, to promote counter-factual thinking. Counter-factual thinking is the positing of alternative circumstances (Danermark et al., 2002; Mukumbang et al., 2020), thus, speaking to practitioners who take a cooperative approach to enterprising activities, or a SEN (Special Educational Needs) educators who takes an inclusive approach to an enterprise competition, enables the exploration of thinking through alternatives to competitive activities.

The realist interview process has been described as a ‘teacher-learner’ cycle, where researchers use an interview schedule or discussion guide and/or other stimulus to ‘teach’ interviewees about particular programme theory under exploration, then the interviewee goes on to ‘teach’ the researcher, from their own particularly informed way, about what is working for whom. (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Interviewees are treated as knowledgeable about a programme from their particular practical perspective, and as a result, a greater role is given to explaining ‘the conceptual structure’ of the investigation to them and then the interviewee explaining their own definition and experiences of the situation in order to glean evidence

about what is working for whom (or not) (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 167). I discuss the practice of the interviews further on in the chapter, but in the following section describe how choices were made about who to interview.

### 3.8 Sampling

The sampling choices in realist qualitative research are based on the goal of *providing good explanation* (Emmel, 2013). That is the defining factor. Therefore, in this study, a range of stakeholders involved as programme practitioners in CEE (who will have significant experience from which to craft explanations) were sought to participate. I did not seek to interview students involved in participating in CEE, but rather concentrated my efforts on programme practitioners (Mukumbang, 2019). I made this decision for three reasons, first, given that realist research has a tendency to be overly complex and overwhelming for researchers, even interdisciplinary teams of researchers (Emmel et al., 2018), it was important to be pragmatic and create boundaries in order to fulfil the research objectives of this project. I felt that research goals such as exploring assumptions, developing foresight and deepening understanding about what is actually happening in CEE were more likely to be achieved in conversation with experienced programme practitioners providing evidence on their totality of experiences, rather than with students, who would be speaking about their personal experience. Second, by focusing attention on those who have responsibility for the design, delivery and commissioning of CEE activity, the research interview, focused as it was on co-creating knowledge of CEE programmes, had a somewhat engaged quality (Van de Ven, 2007). Programme practitioners can be considered ‘project agents’ (Coldwell, 2019), that is, people who have agency regarding the design and development of programmes. Therefore, through and after an interview they can reflect upon what they do and why, potentially influencing thinking and future actions. Finally, in realist work, the scientific realist’s

philosophical underpinning aims for objectivity, while accepting that ideas are filtered through the minds of individuals (Pawson, 2006). Essentially, that means that in this study programme practitioners are treated (and trusted) as having important knowledge – evidence – about what works, for whom and why, and that the researchers’ task is not to question their motives or evidence, but to work out *what needs to be in place* (in terms of the contextual conditions of the programme and the participants), to generate the assumed effects (Pawson, 2006; Manzano, 2016; Mukumbang, 2019). Therefore, in this study, the following programme practitioners – involved in designing, delivering, managing and commissioning CEE (or non-competitive skills building activities) for 11-18 year olds – were interviewed in order to gain evidence regarding how and for whom CEE programmes work (or don’t):

- **Commissioner/Managers** – (commissioners/funders/managers) who may have theories (ideas) about CEE activities and why resources are directed in certain ways.
- **Consultant/Providers of competitive activities** – who design and deliver activity across many schools and may have theories (ideas) about what works for whom from this broad experience.
- **Consultant/Providers of non-competitive activities** – who design and deliver non-competitive activity across many schools and may have theories about what works in skill development activities from a non-competitive perspective, which prompts counter factual thinking.

- **School Based Educators** – teachers or coordinators/leaders of activities who are based in schools and may have theories about what works based on deep experience in one or two settings.

Now the method (realist interview) has been introduced, I describe the process of collecting data in this thesis.

## 3.9 Collecting Data

Data collection in this thesis involved recruiting participants for interview and conducting and transcribing interviews, the process of which is described in the following two sections.

### 3.9.1 Recruiting Programme Practitioners

Once I gained ethical approval for the study, I sought participants through asking contacts to distribute information to their networks via email. Gray (2013), describes how using social media, getting gatekeepers on side and using existing networks are strategies for gaining access. Due to previously working in EE support in and beyond the Sheffield City Region, I had contacts and networks regionally and nationally, through which to gain access to stakeholders. I also shared information about the research study on social media, which led to contacts outside my immediate geographical region participating in interviews. I also emailed people directly if they had particular experiences that would be relevant. To underscore though: each participant had experience of designing, delivering, commissioning or managing CEE which could help develop or refine theory related to this type of programme.

Enterprise education practice is a relatively small world; that is, there are short connection chains (Schnettler, 2009) between individuals and, as a result, some of the participants were known to me. Six participants were entirely new to me; one was only known to me via social

media. Sometimes, interview participants informally referred me to a relevant colleague or contact who they thought would be a relevant interviewee. These cases of ‘snowballing’ (Emmel, 2013, Quinney et al., 2016), introduced me to two of the six participants who were entirely new to me.

Researchers interviewing people from the same community of practice, acquaintances or people they know have the status of being insiders, which can create tension between needing to reveal what appears problematic and needing to exhibit the principle of not doing research participants harm (Myers, 2019). I explored these issues in my ethics application for study and received approval (Ethics ID: ER9511408).

One important point to note in relation to recruiting participants is that I tried, through contacts and networks, to access school-based educators from schools which might be characterised as operating in *significantly deprived areas*. I was unsuccessful at doing this. While I did secure a connection to an educator in such a school, after several attempts of trying to arrange and rearrange the interview it emerged the educator did not have capacity to participate. While this was disappointing, it perhaps demonstrates the daily challenges that educators working in low-resource, high-challenge situations face. Two of the school-based educators I interviewed did have significant experience working in lower-resourced, higher-challenged schools, and these two interviews were particularly insightful in the way the participants were able to draw comparisons between poorly resourced and well-resourced environments. Table 3 introduces the participants in this study. Appendix 4 and 5 provides copies of the participant information sheet and consent form.

Commissioner/Managers (CM)			
Programme Practitioner label	Informing about...	Reach...	Interview details

CM_1	Short and Long Form provision.	Regional	Face to face, 1 hr 13 mins.
CM_2	Short and Long Form provision.	Regional	Face to face, 55 mins.
<b>Consultants/Providers – Competitive (CPC)</b>			
CPC_1	Short and Long Form provision.	Regional	Face to face, 1hr 4 mins.
CPC_2	Short and Long Form provision.	Regional	Face to face, 1 hr 28 mins.
CPC_3	More Short Form provision.	Regional	Face to face, 1 hr 23 mins.
CPC_4	More Long Form provision.	National	Face to face, 1 hr.
CPC_5	More curriculum provision.	National	Face to face, 1 hr 21 mins.
CPC_6	Short and Long Form provision.	National	Telephone, 56 mins.
CPC_7	More Long Form provision, more socially focused.	National	Telephone, 1 hr 1 min.
<b>Consultants/Providers - Non-competitive (CPNC)</b>			
CPNC_1	More Short Form provision.	National	Face to face, 1 hr 47 mins.
CPNC_2	More in-curriculum provision.	National	Face to face, 53 mins.
<b>School Based Educators (SBE)</b>			
SBE_1	Short and Long Form provision, from a lower resourced setting.	Participation in local and regional competitions.	Face to face, 1 hr 34 mins.
SBE_2	Short and Long Form Provision, from a well-resourced setting, experience of low resourced setting.	Participation in local, regional, national competitions.	Face to face, 1 hr 3 mins.
SBE_3	Short and Long Form Provision, from a well-resourced setting, experience of low resourced setting.	Participation in local, regional, national competitions	Face to face, 1 hr, 10 mins.



SBE_4	More Long Form provision, from a diverse setting but with resources.	Participation in local, regional, national competitions	Face to face, 57 mins.
SBE_5	More Long Form provision, from a Special Educational Needs setting.	Participation in local competitions.	Telephone, 44 mins.

**Table 3 - Overview of Participants**

For clarity, when I define local, regional and national participation I am doing this *in relation to the programme practitioners experiences of competing* (as opposed, for example, in relation to their geographical relationship to me). Local relates to experiences within a borough (which could be a town or a city), regional relates to experiences where schools from different but neighbouring boroughs compete, and national relates to competing within/across England. After recruiting participants but before the interview, I provided information via email about the study, the right to withdraw and the two frameworks (linear and realistic) and the purpose of the study. In this information I made a distinction between the linear framework representing assumed outcomes which may be generated by CEE and the realistic framework illuminating the myriad possibilities and potential factors and contextual layers which may influence effects.

### **3.9.2 Interviewing Programme Practitioners**

In line with (my interpretation of) the guidance around realist interviews, I started my discussion by asking about the *ideas* programme practitioners have about CEE, in line with the assumption that all programmes are theories incarnate (Pawson, 2006), and a crucial job is to understand people's ideas about these programmes. Then the frameworks introduced in Chapter 1 were interrogated, with programme practitioners providing evidence which might

confirm, refute or develop ideas contained within. Table 4 provides the discussion guide, Including introductory statement and questions.

### **Competitive Enterprise Education— discussion guide outline**

- Summarise the aims of study— to deepen understanding and refine theory relating to Competitive Enterprise Education, and to extend evaluative questioning beyond ‘what works?’ into ‘what works, for whom, in what circumstances and why?’ and towards ‘what does it work for?’
- Summarise the interview approach
  - To facilitate a discussion about experiences and perceptions of CEE.
  - To explore ideas about the theory of Competitive Enterprise Education.
  - To provide an opportunity to reflect on the bigger picture – what CEE works for, not just ‘does it’, or ‘how’ does it work.

Just to re-iterate, this study has ethical approval and will be conducted in a way that protects confidentiality. Your information sheet and consent outline key information and your right to withdraw.

#### **1. Stakeholder experience/ practice of Competitive Enterprise Education**

- Could you start by saying something about your experience of competitive enterprise education.
- For examples of activity – why it is done in this way?

#### **2. Stakeholder view of Competitive Enterprise Education**

- When you hear the phrase ‘Competitive Enterprise Education’ – what does it mean to you? What ideas do you have about it?
- Why? Where have you got your ideas from? Is it clear from (policy docs, guidance, lesson plans), how competitive enterprise education ‘works?’
- What do you consider the outcomes of CEE to be? (positive and negative?).
- What causes these?
- Are outcomes the same for all students? In what ways are they different? For whom do activities work best?

#### **3. Theorising CEE**

- I’d like to get feedback on two models – **model 1** is a logic model, which I have constructed from existing policy, which sets out how competitive enterprise education is assumed to work. There’s an idea that CEE will lead to these outcomes – what can you say about how that does (or doesn’t) play out in practice? (Use programme logic model as stimulus).
- What is causing (outcomes they mention)?
- What are the reasons when it works well (or not)?
- Model 2 – is a model which I have constructed to try and reflect the complexity of competitive enterprise education. First, these layers of context are thought to be important when looking at how programmes work or don’t’ Also, these factors have been extracted from existing literature and brought together in one place, as important outcomes in competitive learning. What can you say to either confirm or refute the model.

- If you could change something about CEE to make it more effective – what would it be and why?
  - What else do you think we need to know, to understand how this programme works or not?
- 4. The Bigger Picture**
- Thinking beyond how the programme works, what reflections do you have on ‘what it works for?’ What social effects does the practice of Competitive Enterprise Education transform or reproduce? So, you might have ideas about the social status quo, or think about the difference you want enterprise education to make, not just to individuals, but to society. How does competitive enterprise education transform or reinforce things as they are now – just react to that question.
    - Explore ideas— ask how/why to deepen understanding.... Why, what it is about competitive enterprise education that causes that?
  - Have you considered alternatives to *Competitive* Enterprise Education? Why? /Why not?
  - What alternatives can you imagine to Competitive Enterprise Education? Under what circumstances could you imagine them being developed or implemented? (ask why? to explore ideas).

**Table 4 - Initial Discussion Guide for Interviews**

I did make some changes to the interview discussion guide order and technique as the interviews progressed and reflect on that in the final section of this chapter (section [3.12](#)).

### **3.9.3 Transcribing Data**

Following each interview, I transcribed the recording into a MS Word document, writing down verbatim what the interview participant and I said. I did not transcribe the interview using specific detailed transcription procedures (Hepburn and Bolden, 2017), as might be used in a conversational analysis (Richards and Schmidt, 2014). This level of detail is not required in realist investigation, which is much more about analysing *ideas and explanations* rather than analysing how someone spoke about ideas, how turns were taken, or in what order ideas were shared. While undertaking the initial transcribing, transcripts were anonymised, which means that particular details which may identify the participant were concealed or altered in order to protect participants’ confidentiality.

While transcribing, initial notes were made about ideas within the transcripts. Indeed, such nascent theorising was already in motion during and after the interviews, when I was thinking about what participants were saying or reflecting on specific elements of the interview during my car journey home. This experience aligns with the idea that ‘analysis’ exists at every stage of the qualitative research project rather than a specific period of ‘analysis’ which happens discretely after data collection and before writing up findings (Miles and Huberman, 1994, Swedberg, 2014; Jagosh, 2019). When all the interviews were completed I had 21 hours and 16 minutes of recorded material, which were transcribed into a data set of 262 pages, 151,637 words. Within the interviews I had descriptions of the events and situations I intended to study, and “*the interpretations of the persons involved and their way of describing the situation*” (Danermark et al., 2002, p.109). In the following sections I describe how I worked with the data to analyse it from a realist point of view.

### **3.9.4 Analysing Data**

Qualitative analysis has been described as a spiral, where the researcher engages in a process of moving through interrelated, iterative *analytic circles*, from managing and organising the data through to representing and visualising the data via tables, figures and accounts (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Data analysis in qualitative work is not off-the-shelf, but rather it is custom built and revised (Creswell and Poth, 2016), and should be seen as less procedural and step-by-step and more an integrated process where the researcher is engaged in an interactive and cyclical approach that is unique to them (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Conceptualisations of the experience of data analysis in qualitative study are echoed in descriptions of realist data analysis, which involve the adaptive and iterative application of realist principles to make sense of data from a realist perspective (Jagosh, 2020). Researchers aiming to use the realist approach have a philosophy, key concepts and methodological

orientation to draw upon, rather than procedures to follow (Pawson, 2006). This inexplicitness can be challenging as there is no agreed step-by-step approach to take (Gilmore et al., 2019). Instead, researchers are engaged in ‘theorising’ – thinking through data— from a realist perspective (Jagosh, 2020). This involves engaging in different types of reasoning, including data-driven deductive and inductive reasoning (Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021, Mukumbang et al., 2021), and abductive and retroductive theorising that is more theory driven and characterised by creativity leaps and hunches which the researcher aims to confirm or disprove (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014; Jagosh, 2019; 2020; Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021, Mukumbang, 2021). In the following section I describe the iterative cycles of working with the data, including a realist approach to thematic analysis (Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021), which demonstrates how the philosophical principles underpinning Realist Evaluation contribute to findings. The process of writing up the analysis imposes an ex-ante order which does not quite capture the emergent and intuitive nature of realist qualitative analysis described by Maxwell (2012). Rather, it is important to acknowledge that this element of the research design was an “*emergent process*” which involved a “*tacking back and forth*” between goals, theory, data and analysis and where plans were iterated as the research progressed (Maxwell, 2012, p. 77). The early parts of the analysis involved engaging in “*general data analysis strategies*” (such as coding, summarising and creating a point of view), described by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 184), and these are described in the following sections.

### **3.9.5 Coding Against Conceptual Frameworks**

Following the transcription of the data, the first analytic strategy employed was coding against the *a priori* frameworks presented in Chapter 1 ([section 1.1](#)). As previously discussed, in the first year of my PhD study I created two conceptual frameworks prior to collecting data and I will briefly re-cap what these were and why they are useful in this study. The first

framework was developed via exploring policy and guidance surrounding CEE programmes, to surface *existing* ideas about how a CEE programme works, what the outcomes of such programmes are and helped me structure and integrate assumptions that are made about the benefits of CEE. [Section 1.11.1](#) sets out a basic linear logic for CEE - according to the consulted policy and guidance which underpin CEE – and is significant because it aims to say something about *how it is assumed* this “*intervention intervenes*” (Pawson, 2006, p. 20, emphasis added) and provides an understanding of what positive effects would be achieved if the programme worked.

In addition to this linear conceptualisation, I developed an alternative—more realistic—conceptual framework for thinking through CEE, presented in [Section 1.11.2](#). As I discussed when presenting this conceptualisation, CEE can be viewed as a set of ideas that is packaged up into programmes and interventions (such as Dragon’s Den challenge or a long term competition), and claimed to provide certain benefits (Gibb, 2007; Brentnall et al., 2018a, Brentnall, 2020). In Realist Evaluation (Pawson, 2006; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Wong et al., 2017), such programmes have been characterised as a “*particular case of social change*” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 56) and will, inevitably, comprise of interplays between “*individual and institution, of agency and structure, and of micro and macro processes*” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 63). In Figure 2 (in section [1.11.2](#)), those involved in this case of social change (*the students, the teacher, the judges*), are represented figuratively, to draw attention to the complex and messy (Shearn et al., 2017), *human* nature of social programmes. Then, crucially for the approach taken in this study, Pawson’s four layers of context (Pawson, 2006, 2013) – individual, interpersonal, institutional and infrastructural – are blended with factors likely to influence outcomes – competitively inclined (or not), volunteer (or not), winner or loser (or not) and well resourced (or not).

Coding against these frameworks was the first analytic strategy I used to organise interview data. Chunks (Shearn et al., 2017) of data were allocated to codes to keep information together. A chunk was allocated on the basis that it was relevant to an existing code. Sometimes a chunk of data was allocated against more than one code, for example some chunks related to confidence might appear in ‘increased confidence and self-esteem’ as well as in ‘positive effects.’ Chunks of data might be as short as a line or as long as a paragraph, whatever was needed to sufficiently convey (and remind me) of the meaning which I interpreted from it. If data did not seem to fit easily against an existing code, a new code was added. NVIVO acted as a turbo charged Excel (Provost, 2019), enabling organisation of the data against the frameworks and new codes to be added easily. This stage of analysis was essentially a process of sorting and organising (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the outcome being that the data was arranged against my *a priori* frameworks and *I was more familiar with the data*.

### **3.9.6 Reducing Data into Descriptive Summaries**

The next step I took was to develop descriptive summaries (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Miles and Huberman (1994) advise that making clusters and summarising is a typical data reduction strategy, through which a researcher is sharpening their analytic focus, and evolving their thinking as they work with the data. In creating the summaries, I connected the ideas with the source (the programme practitioner whom I was quoting), with a label in the text which helped identify patterns or discontinuities in experiences and evidence provided by programme practitioners.

Drafting, re-structuring and transforming the text into descriptive summaries was part of the process of theorising in action (Menary, 2007). This process also started to enable the beginnings of theoretical re-description (Danermark et al., 2002), as I tried to view and

understand the data more clearly from the realist theoretical perspective. This process was possible because parallel to working with the data and writing the summaries, I was reading and re-reading realist texts, listening to webinars and trying to evolve my ideas about which realist concepts helped to make sense of the summaries.

Researchers taking a realist approach often feel inundated by the *sheer quantities of data* such studies generate (Markham, 2022). In this process, researchers start to accept that a large amount of data will *end up on the cutting room floor* as choices have to be made about what to investigate thoroughly and which lines of inquiry or avenues of interest have to be discarded (Markham and Hanna, 2022). An element of my decision making at this point was to focus on the two most frequently discussed types of competitive interventions. The final analysis would focus only on the **Short Form** (one day or less) competitions, such as the Dragon's Den day or Enterprise Challenge, and the **Long Form** (which take place up to almost an academic year), such as the student mini-company. This meant that while other models (curriculum competitions, inclusive curriculum approaches), might be referred to as a way of contrasting alternatives or proposing counterfactual thinking (Danermark et al., 2002), a full exploration of these models is out of the scope of this study.

Ultimately, as Jagosh describes, realist analysis has a depth component that distinguishes its theorising (Jagosh, 2019), therefore, in this thesis, the data that needed to make the final cut was data *related to the contextual conditions* under which *more positive or more negative effects* were generated. For me, the process of reading, searching and comparing across all interviews and working the material down to a 37-page summary enabled an immersion in the data, in order to start to (re)think my ideas about *what was happening from the point of view* (Creswell and Poth, 2018) *I was trying to think from*, that is the realist point of view. The next stage was returning to more closely investigate data relating to Pawson's (2006) layers of context (individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural), which



distinguish this study and which are used as a basis for identifying insights which emerge from those layers.

### **3.9.7 Identifying Insights through a Realist Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is a well-known analytic strategy in qualitative research (Huberman and Miles, 1994; Ritchie et al., 2003; Creswell and Poth, 2018), which typically involves reducing and combining codes into themes. Thematic Analysis has been described as an intuitive method (Braun and Clarke, 2006), and, in relation to qualitative analysis, the researcher's role in constructing knowledge is appreciated and an organic and reflexive process described (Braun and Clarke, 2016, 2019). Wiltshire and Ronkainen (2021), say this reflexive approach may be contrasted with neo-positivistic codebook Thematic Analysis approaches, and that the two approaches are sometimes considered as binary (reflexive versus codebook). However, they suggest a third way – a realist approach to thematic analysis (Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021), where *deeper insight* is gained via thinking through what themes emerge from ontologically-related data. While the process of data analysis until this point had resulted in greater familiarisation with the data, organisation under codes and nascent theorising from a realistic point of view, the next part of the analytic process, aligning with the realist thematic analysis directly informed how the findings would be constructed.

### **3.9.8 Structuring Analysis around Four Layers of Context**

In this approach to Thematic Analysis, the *ontological depth of realism* is used as the frame to generate themes. This approach, described by Wiltshire and Ronkainen (2021) demonstrates how realist philosophical principles contribute to findings. It involves some data-driven coding, deductive and inductive thinking, as well as abductive and retroductive thinking. The authors acknowledge that while the presentation of their process suggests that

analysis of themes is sequential, the experience is that all themes were present in the minds of the researchers at once (Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021). In realist work, developing more ontologically deep and context-aware research is represented and pursued in different ways (Shearn et al., 2017; Jagosh, 2019; Coldwell, 2019; Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021). In this thesis I follow suggestions proposed by Pawson and Tilley (1997) and Pawson (2006), who say that researchers investigating social programmes investigate *four layers of context* as a route to better understand what is happening in greater depth. I will briefly re-cap these layers.

In social programmes, all human action is to be conceptualised as the result of unseen mechanisms and embedded within a wider range of social processes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Pawson (2006, p. 31), identifies four layers of context – Four Is - which researchers exploring social programmes should consider:

- the **individual capacities** of the key actors (motivations, capabilities).
- the **inter-personal** relationships supporting the intervention (between participants, between staff and each other).
- the **institutional setting** (culture, character and ethos of the place).
- the wider **infra-structural** system (political support, resources, public/community support).

Therefore, in *this* realist thematic analysis, I revisited data coded against the four layers of context in my descriptive summaries and revisited interview transcripts ensuring that all data related to the four layers was extracted and then organised this evidence in relation to Short Form and Long Form competitive activities. Evidence fragments (Pawson, 2021) were collated in tables created on MS PowerPoint slides. Creating tables is in itself an analytic

strategy (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Creswell and Poth, 2016), which both supports theorising and makes theorising visible via the data which is selected and crafted into a table.

Table 5 is an example of the data extraction at this stage, where for each type of programme (Short Form CEE and Long Form CEE), evidence relating to the different layers of context was linked to more positive or more negative outcomes. Essentially, this part of the process involved deductive reasoning (Mukumbang, Kabongo and Eastwood, 2021), where the researcher moves from the *general* (theoretical framework regarding layers of context), to the *specific* (the observations and evidence fragments which align to different layers). These evidence fragments tended to be provided in relation to questions such as ‘For whom do these programmes work well?’ or ‘Who enjoys these programmes?’ or ‘Who volunteers?’.

In terms of ‘working well’ or in terms of assumed positive outcomes, the linear framework presented in [Section 1.11.1](#), and provided to programmes practitioners prior to the interview, offered a shared understanding of what ‘working well’ or ‘positive effects’ might entail. The outcome of this part of the analysis was, for each type of programme (Short Form CEE and Long Form CEE), there existed eight sets of evidence fragments (regarding more positive outcomes and more negative outcomes in relation to the four layers of context). The other outcome of this process was also in the selection of the data that would be presented in this thesis (and which portions of the data corpus would be discarded) towards the goal of aiming to fulfil the realist imperative of illuminating something about how and why programmes work (Markham and Hanna, 2022).

Contextual Layer	Evidence from Programme Practitioners
Individual Capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ [volunteers are]...really high achieving...." School Based Educator 4.</li> <li>▪ "...they have to be self-motivated to do it..." Consultant/Provider 2.</li> <li>▪ "...you always get those kids that will, they will naturally take 100% out of everything, so they volunteer for everything. They're the ones that put their hands up, they're in the school choir, they're in the school production, they're in the school football team, they become prefects. They see the point in doing it." Consultant/Provider 2.</li> <li>▪ "I think they're probably equipped with a lot of the skills to succeed with enterprise from a young age, and not just through school but through home as well" School Based Educator 2.</li> <li>▪ "...[to volunteer]...you've got to have enough about you to have the confidence to try things, and so I don't think it's necessarily academic ability, it's having common sense, confidence, you know, wanting to work with other people, just having that, in them I suppose..." School Based Educator 4.</li> <li>▪ "...It ignites something in students that obviously relish a challenge...and are quite creative and like seeing ideas through from start to finish. But it works best in students that have got a real passion for what they're doing. So the students it probably works best with have already got that interest in something from outside of school, or things that they're working on, and it's probably giving the more of a framework to work with, to explore that idea with a bit more support and structure." School Based Educator 2.</li> <li>▪ "...it's the bright academic girls who will put themselves forward for things, and the bright academic boys don't, it's the naughtier boys who tend to want to be involved with... something that isn't a particularly good business idea [re-selling freezy pops, car washing]. So I think it's the idea of doing stuff outside of school perhaps, and the idea of making things and being creative, I just think it appeals more to girls." School Based Educator 4.</li> <li>▪ "...the ones that make money fast stay in, so the ones that put effort in at the start, and don't have other pulls on their time, stay in..." Consultant/Provider 2.</li> <li>▪ "...the students are so driven, that they'll spend time on it to make sure that it's right and they've got such high standards and expectations for themselves, that they're not happy with things unless it's exactly how they want it to be. "...my experience, they work a lot harder.... they'll be doing 10, 15 hours a week outside of school on it themselves, with no supervision from school..." School Based Educator 2.</li> <li>▪ "I think how competitive some of them are, almost to the point of being aggressive, aggressively competitive....they were so keen to win" School Based Educator 4.</li> <li>▪ "They just bounce back actually, because they said they were going to do something slightly different for the competition next year, so they've already said that they're going to do something slightly different, and so it's not knocked their confidence, they've used it as a learning curve." School Based Educator 4.</li> </ul>

***Table 5 - Example of Data Organisation for Long Form CEE***

The next stage was applying inductive reasoning (Mukumbang et al., 2021), which involves projecting from what we know to what we do not know and starts with a specific observation to make broad generalizations and predictions (Hayes and Heit, 2018). Therefore, at this point in the analysis, I was working from specific observations to make broader generalisations and surface themes connected to each layer linked to the realist perspective and questions at the core of this study. To support this process I used two realistic questions to shape my interpretations. I describe these in the next section.

### 3.9.9 Abduction - Theorising from the Perspective of Two Realistic Questions

In realist studies, outcomes that are intended *or* unintended effects are based on interactions between context (elements in the backdrop environment of a programme) and mechanisms – that is, the resources offered through a programme and the way that participants respond to those resources (Jagosh, 2019). Related to this, Jagosh describes how it can often be hard to untangle the context from the mechanism; context includes a range of physical, cultural, economic, psychological, interpersonal and institutional causative factors, effectively anything and everything that existed before the insertion of the programme, which means that anything and everything could be theorised as context (Jagosh, 2017). Indeed, issues with distinguishing mechanisms from contexts are a particular challenge for novice and lone researchers (Pawson, 2018). One way around this is *to avoid* trying to theorise all elements of the context and instead try to understand which elements of the context are *particularly important in generating effects* in a particular programme. Jagosh characterises this approach as trying to better understand and articulate ‘**leveraging**’ in programmes, for example: “What is leveraged consciously and unconsciously from the context to ensure the activation of the right kinds of mechanisms to maximise programme outcomes?” (Jagosh, 2017). Definitions of the word leverage help shed light on this focus. The definition for the noun - leverage - is ‘the action or advantage of using a lever’, whilst the definition for the verb – leveraging – is to ‘use something that you already have in order to achieve something new or better (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). The crucial element of the images these definitions conjure is the pre-existing nature of levers and leveraging. Leveraging refers to something that a programme relies upon to generate outcomes, but which is not part of the programme architecture and therefore is often under theorised in explanations about the programme (Jagosh, 2017).

This approach is better at answering pragmatic questions which will be useful for practitioners and policy makers to explore, rather than generating myriad Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) equations that complicate, rather than illuminate, CEE for stakeholders. In addition, as a result of the linear framework presented at [Section 1.11.1](#), I had elaborated assumptions from policy about what positive outcomes would look like, in terms of skills and knowledge, motivation and confidence and such like. What thinking about the data using the analytic filter of leveraging helped me to distinguish was what *already existed in the context* – the existing skills of students, the existing resources of educators and schools, the existing resources of a family and/or a community – that programmes relied upon to help generate more positive effects. This was also a case of me sharpening the focus of *the point of view* (Creswell and Poth, 2016), from which I was thinking.

Second, as I discussed in Chapters 1 (section [1.6](#)), an issue in EE is the taken-for-grantedness of competitive activities, and a goal of this research is to unsettle such taken-for-granted assumptions. Thus far, research which investigates effects has tended towards focussing on the positive (where even positive interpretations are provided for negative results). Therefore in this research, the second realistic question I pose as a way of interpreting evidence is ‘For whom are these activities not working so well?’ in order to search for patterns, commonalities and themes from looking at data from this perspective. Table 3.4 provides an example of the themes that emerged from the data by thinking about it from the perspective of one of these questions.

Contextual Layer	Evidence from Programme Practitioners	What is CEE leveraging in the environment?
Individual Capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ [volunteers are]...really high achieving...." School Based Educator 4.</li> <li>▪ "...they have to be self-motivated to do it..." Consultant/Provider 2.</li> <li>▪ "...you always get those kids that will, they will naturally take 100% out of everything, so they volunteer for everything. They're the ones that put their hands up, they're in the school choir, they're in the school production, they're in the school football team, they become prefects. They see the point in doing it." Consultant/Provider 2.</li> <li>▪ "I think they're probably equipped with a lot of the skills to succeed with enterprise from a young age, and not just though school but through home as well" School Based Educator 2.</li> <li>▪ "...[to volunteer]...you've got to have enough about you to have the confidence to try things, and so I don't think it's necessarily academic ability, it's having common sense, confidence, you know, wanting to work with other people, just having that, in them I suppose..." School Based Educator 4.</li> <li>▪ "...It ignites something in students that obviously relish a challenge...and are quite creative and like seeing ideas through from start to finish. But it works best in students that have got a real passion for what they're doing. So the students it probably works best with have already got that interest in something from outside of school, or things that they're working on, and it's probably giving the more of a framework to work with, to explore that idea with a bit more support and structure." School Based Educator 2.</li> <li>▪ "...it's the bright academic girls who will put themselves forward for things, and the bright academic boys don't, it's the naughtier boys who tend to want to be involved with... something that isn't a particularly good business idea [re-selling freezy pops, car washing]. So I think it's the idea of doing stuff outside of school perhaps, and the idea of making things and being creative, I just think it appeals more to girls." School Based Educator 4.</li> <li>▪ "... the ones that make money fast stay in, so the ones that put effort in at the start, and don't have other pulls on their time, stay in..." Consultant/Provider 2.</li> <li>▪ "...the students are so driven, that they'll spend time on it to make sure that it's right and they've got such high standards and expectations for themselves, that they're not happy with things unless it's exactly how they want it to be. "...my experience, they work a lot harder.... they'll be doing 10, 15 hours a week outside of school on it themselves, with no supervision from school...." School Based Educator 2.</li> <li>▪ "I think how competitive some of them are, almost to the point of being aggressive, aggressively competitive....they were so keen to win" School Based Educator 4.</li> <li>▪ "They just bounce back actually, because they said they were going to do something slightly different for the competition next year, so they've already said that they're going to do something slightly different, and so it's not knocked their confidence, they've used it as a learning curve." School Based Educator 4.</li> </ul>	<p>Existing attitudes and inclinations of individuals such as motivation, achievement, skills, drive, confidence and creativity or some pre-existing hobby influences volunteering.</p> <p>Early success such as pursuing an idea that fits criteria and making money quickly influences staying in.</p> <p>Capacity (time) students can commit influences staying in.</p> <p>Desire to compete and win influences returning competitors.</p>

**Table 6 - Example of Contextual Insights in Long Form CEE**

This step in the process of analysis involved abductive thinking in that the sets of evidence fragments can be considered incomplete sets of observations from which the researcher interprets and re-contextualises actions and events to propose explanations (Mukumbang et al., 2021). Abduction is neither a purely empirical generalisation like induction, nor is it logically rigorous like deduction (Danermark et al., 2002). What is common with abductive reasoning, however, is that the conclusion provides new insight (Danermark et al., 2002). Its foundation is *“chiefly creativity and the ability to form associations”* which *“requires a creative reasoning process...and an ability to ‘see something else as something else.’”* (Danermark et al., 2002, p.93). In this study this process is supported by the point of view of the study (Creswell and Poth, 2016), in that the ‘abstraction’ and ‘re-description’ relates to *re-contextualising data from a realist perspective*, hence the ‘themes’ (or insights),

identified in the right hand column in Table 6 are abstractions which help answer the realistic question regarding what CEE leverages from the environment.

### **3.9.10 Retroduction – Theorising Explanations**

The next stage of analysis was theorising retroductively to try to construct the “*basic conditions*” for a deeper causal understanding of a concrete event or phenomena (Mukumbang, 2021). Whereas abduction is the “...*informed imagination that leads to new ideas*” then retroduction aids theorising about *what needs to be in place* for the product of these ideas to exist (Jagosh, 2020, p. 2). Retroductive questions are phrased in such ways as: ‘How is X possible?’ (Danermark et al., 2002), ‘What is it about X that matters?’ (Tilley, 1993). The answers to these questions were different for the different types of programmes. For example, evidence fragments regarding Short Form CEE and individual capacities generated a picture which illuminated the behaviour states of participants, the importance of previous successes or failures, and how students *felt*. With regards to Long Form CEE, evidence fragments generated a picture which illuminated the actions of students – who volunteers and stays the distance in programmes – *were* influenced by individual capacities, *but also* revealed the significant role resources that school and home played. It was thinking from these questions ‘How is X possible?’ that also revealed the way that a CEE programme might change the context itself over time by influencing the meritocratic explanations of success (Mijs, 2016, 2018) provided in regard to why some students succeed or fail.

Realist analysis aims at building ‘reusable conceptual platforms’, that is, trying to identify some standard, routine processes and/or abstract concepts or conditions that can be used in other inquiries. Wiltshire and Ronkainen discuss (2021) that as analysis moves to higher level of abstraction, researchers are reliant on their expertise and experience, as well as the use or invention of concepts. In addition, researchers may gain inspiration serendipitously and from



unconventional sources, for example from newspaper articles, TV shows/documentaries or the radio which signpost some explanation or causes that help illuminate the situation under study (Emmel et al., 2018). This makes the direction of such theorising hard to predict at the beginning of a study as it can evolve suddenly or over time.

In realist study, abstraction is a “*key explanatory tool*” (Pawson, 2008, p.2). Since any event is open to endless descriptions and conceptualisations, theorists should try to work out some significant components or influences and say how these combine and interact (Pawson, 2008). With such an abstract framework in place, it allows the researcher to return to a concrete event and make sense of it; thus, the thinking process of abstraction allows one to understand an event “*as an instance of a more general class of happenings*” (Pawson, 2008, p. 2). Examples of this in the findings are the use of the concept of scarcity (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013) to describe the contextual conditions into which programmes may be inserted. In addition, particular realist concepts such as Pawson’s behaviour states (Pawson, 2013), and Jagosh et al’s (2015) ‘ripple effects’ concept, became increasingly important, but I could not have predicted this at the beginning of the analysis. The final stage of analysis was in writing, which is an underestimated but important element of realist work (Sayer, 1992).

### **3.9.11 Writing as Analysis**

The importance of writing in realist analysis has not been given enough attention (Pawson, 2021; Sayer, 1992), yet it plays a significant role in theorising. Menary (2007), provides an explanation for writing-as-thinking, when he describes how the “*creation and manipulation of written vehicles*” is “*part of our cognitive processing*” and, therefore, writing transforms our cognition and cognitive abilities (Menary, 2007, p. 621). According to Menary, completing a complex cognitive task (writing), involves interaction between neural processes, bodily processes and manipulating written sentences. From this angle, writing is “*thinking in*

*action*”, where creating and manipulating written sentences are not merely “*outputs from neutral processes but, just as crucially, they shape the cycle of processing that constitutes a mental act*” (Menary, 2007, p. 622, emphasis added). He argues that writing restructures thought because representations and scripts (such as drafting scholarly articles or putting together findings), *lead to conceptualisations* rather than simply capturing pre-existing conceptualisations of authors. Writing then, *should not* be seen as the result of thinking, but rather, it should be recognised that writing facilitates thinking, that “*writing is thinking*” (Haave, 2015, p.5). Pawson connects writing and thinking by describing how a text is the ultimate expression of the analytic process and is also the abduction/retroduction process in miniature: “*Writing is analysis....The author moves from evidence fragment to evidence fragment with a sense of cumulatively enhancing understanding and pushing further into promising explanations...This learning cycle is repeated endlessly as the backbone of the entire narrative*” (Pawson, 2021).

Alongside this, writing also facilitates verification drawing (Miles and Huberman, 1994), through the act of visiting and re-visiting text to ensure that the evidence fragments selected were useful to theorising. Writing forces the researcher to return to interview transcripts, search for words, check the context which the interviewee is discussing, prompting thinking about ‘what needs to be in place’ for certain outcomes or results to happen. The process of piecing together one piece of evidence with another to build a fuller picture is not about finding examples which justify a conclusion, but rather, identifying fragments of evidence that “*develop promising explanations*” (Pawson, 2021). In this process, Pawson explains, that the ‘analysis’ *is only visible* in the construction of the text: “*The analysis that counts is the one that is contained in your final text*” though he points out that (in accordance with views on the nature of qualitative analysis, c.f. Lincoln and Guba, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2019), this is “a *reconstruction*” (Pawson, 2021).

### 3.9.12 Summary of Collecting and Working with Data

While Realist foundational texts offer a rich philosophical and theoretical grounding, there is still confusion about how to conduct realist research and analysis (Astbury, 2018, in Emmel et al., 2018 Eds). As Astbury says “*Pawson has not furnished us with a four-volume series of cookbooks. This makes those who seek a convenient recipe uncomfortable*” (Astbury, 2018, p. 65). Instead, realist inquiry involves a flexible and creative mindset (Astbury, 2018) and creative imagination (Jagosh, 2020). The approach requires “*considerable researcher reflection*” and can make the process “*difficult to codify*” (Dalkin et al., 2015, p. 1).

While these issues have promoted criticism of realist work, in that it is difficult for others to understand the process of research (Gilmore et al., 2019), it has been argued that the best counter to this is that researchers are as transparent as possible, and try their best to describe what actually happened in the research (Jagosh, 2017). In the preceding sections I have described the experience of collecting and analysing data in this thesis (conducting realist interviews, coding against conceptual frameworks, reducing data through descriptive narratives, using the Four Is to organise more positive and more negative data against, thinking through this data from two realist questions to evolve insights related to these contextual layers and developing abstractions and explanations to support thinking through what is happening in CEE programmes). While I have aimed to make that experience transparent, I acknowledge working with data was a process that emerged rather than being a recipe that I followed. I agree with Pawson (2021), that a *final analysis is the one that exists in writing* – “writing is analysis” (Pawson, 2021), and the following chapters represent that analysis. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 I connect findings regarding the most frequently discussed types of programmes (Short Form CEE and Long Form CEE) to build a more detailed picture of what is happening in practice and elaborate how effects are influenced by

contextual conditions. Now the experience of collecting and working with data has been described, the following section deals with ethical issues.

### 3.10 Ethical Issues

My position as a researcher is that of someone firmly embedded inside a research and practice community, which has both its benefits, in terms of access and pre-understanding of the field, and complications and risks (Atkins and Wallace, 2012). For example, previous knowledge of interview participants introduces various ethical issues, such as participants feeling pressure to take part, or being coerced into expressing certain views so care must be taken not to place pressure or expectations on people to participate and their option to withdraw at any time without reason must be underscored (Quinney et al., 2016). In addition, I neither wish to professionally isolate myself from enterprise education colleagues in my practice and research community *or* offend participants in the way in which I craft my research product.

In relation to these issues, over time, I began to appreciate the benefits of the realistic perspective of the research strategy in this regard. According to this approach, I *was not* conducting a political or ideological critique (Pawson, 2006), but rather, I am trying to *generate insight*, or *explain* what might need to be in place for results to happen (Jagosh, 2020). An example of how this was helpful as the study unfolded occurred when I found a different pattern of reporting between consultant/providers and school based educators. A school based educator appeared to have *less* positive anecdotes of Short Form CEE (one day competitions), whereas a consultant provider could bring more positive examples to mind and was *more positive* about the intervention. If I was theorising from a critical position I might have framed the more positive views of a provider as being connected to a vested interest in

promoting such activities. But critical inquiry is not the goal in realist research (Pawson, 2006). Following a realistic logic of inquiry instead demands deeper thinking regarding *why* two programme practitioners have different experiences, and what needed to be in place for these different results to happen. I believe that this realist influence focused me on being *more thoughtful* and *less judgemental* when thinking through the evidence programme practitioners shared in interviews. In the following section I consider validity generally, and as it should be understood in this thesis.

### 3.11 Validity

Qualitative research generally (Gray, 2013), and realist qualitative work specifically (Pawson, 2006; Porter, 2007; Maxwell, 2012), has different standards for judging both the validity of the research and what the criteria for success may look like. Gray (2013), identifies four alternative ways of judging qualitative research. Instead of internal validity, the term ‘credibility’ refers to examining the study design and methods used to derive findings; instead of external validity, ‘transferability’ refers to exploring how context bound findings are; instead of reliability, ‘dependability’ relates to evaluating the reliability of a study’s conclusions and instead of objectivity, ‘confirmability’ refers to the degree to which the study can be audited, confirmed or replicated. However such criteria are not universally accepted as the standard by which research should be judged. For example, Glaser (1992) rejected the idea of reliability and verification, saying that the quest of grounded theory was to *generate* hypotheses, not test them. Or, it has been argued, research with critical inclinations should be judged on its ability to reveal hidden structures of oppression, reveal new insights, participate in human struggle and emancipation and move research participants to see the world in a new way (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Given this wide array of

possible ways to conceive quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research dependent on the objectives of the research, I summarise success criteria that relate to realistic research in the following section.

### **3.11.1 Validity in Realist Work**

For realist authors, concepts such as standardisation and reproducibility of results - as they are presented in scientific experimentation – are an impossibility (Pawson, 2006). Rather, validity “*rests on refutation rather than replication*” (Pawson et al., 2004, p.38). All findings should be considered tentative and fallible and exist only to “*expose a theory about how a programme works to criticism*” (Pawson et al., 2004, p. 38). While Pawson (2006, p.19), considers that the task of social science is to “*adjudicate between alternative explanations*” rather than make value judgements (Pawson, 2006, p. 19), he also makes a case that “*validity increasing*” can only be achieved by exposing scientific claims to critical scrutiny (Pawson, 2013, p.107). Yet, he argues, in the world of commissioned research and tribal advisory groups and scientific communities, critical scrutiny tends to be “*either bloodthirsty...or non-existent*” (Pawson, 2013, p.109). There is not a habit of scrutinising evaluation reports to ascertain whether its conclusions are warranted, and no “*precise, vexatious*” cross-examination of which programmes should get funded, or what problems should receive more attention. This is, he describes, mostly left to policy makers and politicians, who may have favoured programmes, or succumbed to claims about “*what the evidence shows*” (Pawson, 2013, pp. 109 – 111).

While generic standards can be useful in identifying weaknesses in research, no standards framework should replace judgement about quality: a framework doesn’t tell us what knowledge is good, instead, every piece of knowledge must also pass muster in its own field against standards which might operate there (Pawson et al., 2013). What counts as good

knowledge and good theory is a complex area, based not only on scientific utility, but on practical usefulness and novelty (Corley and Gioia, 2011). Porter (2007), identifies two particular issues that should be important in judging realist qualitative research:

*First, unless we accept that qualitative research is about something, then it makes no sense; and if it is about something, then researchers and readers have a responsibility to ensure that its accounts of that something are as accurate as possible.*

*Second...professions who engage in research-based action... have their own criterion by which to judge competing approaches to qualitative research, namely **the capacity to beneficially inform action**. Thus, the abandonment of knowledge in favour of aesthetics or multiple opinions are not approaches which can provide useful guidance either to researchers or practitioners.*

Porter (2007, p. 86, emphasis added).

As a practitioner myself, I link Porter's pleas for informing action, to calls in the wider business and management literature for theorising which makes a practical, not just a scientific, contribution (Whetten, 1989, Corley and Gioia, 2011; Tourish, 2020). According to Corley and Gioia (2011), good scholarship should be oriented towards prescience, that is, it should help develop foresight and foreknowledge, discerning "*what we need to know and influencing the intellectual framing to enlighten academic and practitioner domains*" (Corley and Gioia, 2011, p. 23). This sentiment on supporting future focused thinking echoes the call from realist authors, who argue that theorising what **could** happen in a programme in different contexts, is more useful than capturing **what happened** in this programme in this one context (Pawson, 2013, Jagosh, 2019).

The realist approach has been said to be particularly useful in developing foresight because of the effort that goes into exploring how the same programme may play out with different types of participants in different types of contexts, which in turn prompts new thinking and innovation in programme design which may multiply the impact of interventions or reduce unintended harm (Jagosh, 2020). This pragmatic and practically useful goal can be seen to align with the notion that while a piece of research might aim to unsettle some taken-for-granted notions, it should also aim to be fundamentally useful to those working within an academic community, supporting practitioners or researchers to see something in a new light, in a way which leads to new questions or revitalised practice or thought (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013; Berglund and Verduijn, 2020).

### **3.12 Reflections on the Methodology**

While this chapter describes the methodology in a straightforward way, there were a number of adaptations and experiences that I will reflect upon in relation to its application.

First, in relation to the interviews, the realist process is proposed to be configured as a ‘teacher-learner’ cycle where researchers use an interview schedule or discussion guide and/or other stimulus to ‘teach’ interviewees the particular programme theory - ideas about how a programme is working - under exploration (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Manzano, 2016). Although I intended to closely follow the advice about ‘teaching’ programme practitioners about CEE using the conceptual frameworks I developed, followed by them ‘teaching’ me about the frameworks from their perspective and experience, this strategy evolved. By the third interview, I was tired of transcribing a lot of *myself* talking, I would be explaining the framework, and then getting shorter answers from participants. They might agree with something I was explaining, but the answers were more confirmatory and not so rich. Then in



one interview we unintentionally ran out of time to address the frameworks explicitly (though I sent them out as part of my interview confirmation email). I found, transcribing this interview, that the time was used more productively (as in, there was more time for the interviewee to speak), and the discussion was richer and more insightful than when I had been directing specific focus towards the frameworks. As a result, I moved intentionally to a format where, instead of dedicating interview time to scrutinising the frameworks, I had copies of the frameworks with me at the interview and out on the table (and they were sent out prior to interview), but if people referred to them, they did this independently, rather than us intentionally going through the framework as part of the interview process.

I also found that as the interviews progressed, I was more willing to leave the comfort of the discussion guide and delve deeper into a scenario a participant was describing, when I felt it was illuminating what was happening in a programme, or what was working for whom and why. This approach was confirmed as useful by other realist practitioners, who described that through *relaxing* a discussion guide and letting participants explore programme experiences and outcomes, a researcher can unearth new nuggets of understanding (Provost, 2019). Thus, as the interviews progressed, I became more willing to follow hunches in the moment, or bring up information from previous interviews and ask for the participants experiences about these elements, and be more exploratory in my approach. As a result of factors such as distance and the interview participants' capacity, three interviews were carried out remotely, by telephone. This did not impede the gathering of experiences or ideas.

Whilst the interview schedule included questions on outcomes, such as 'what do you consider the outcomes to be?' and 'what causes these outcomes?' and 'are the outcomes the same for all students?', the responses from participants were not very well elaborated. Crudely speaking, there might be ideas about developing collaboration through team work or making decisions through leadership, but in aiming to explore specifics, responses tended to become

vague and more generalised. Sometimes interviewees would use words from the linear framework, for example making a link between an outcome and some element of a students' experience or background, such as saying that inspiration comes from good mentors, or resilience comes from the home background. It was more common that exploring general questions, such as 'for whom do these activities work well', seemed to open up the thinking of participants and provide space to respond more fully. In addition to this, we (myself and interviewees), had (through the provision of the frameworks) a picture of what assumed, positive outcomes would be. And, as the interviews went on, it became clear that there were more fundamental (and unconsidered) outcomes, such as participation in the activity itself, and these were explored through questions such as 'who volunteers?', 'who can retain themselves in the process?', 'who drops out?' – questions that do not appear on the original discussion schedule but which emerged as more critical through this study and unintended outcomes of a competitively structured activity.

In terms of the researcher, Manzano says that realist interviewers should arrive "*knowledgeable about what happens in the natural setting*" (Manzano, 2016, p. 7), meaning they should have practical knowledge of the programme and setting they are studying. While observations in field settings are *not* part of this study, as previously described, I have significant experience in enterprise education and numerous historical experiences of CEE to draw from and which can inform analytical hunches (Jagosh, 2020). Linking this to the goal of exploring the effects beyond the individual, and the ways in which CEE programmes might influence the context over time, interviewees were invited to think about 'the bigger picture' and the difference competitively structured enterprise education might make to society as well as individuals. Responses to these questions weren't very rich, participants would often reflect that they had not really thought about it before, or indeed ever had a

conversation with a colleague or staff team about enterprise education or its impacts. Alternatively, insights might be obvious, for example, Consultant Practitioner Non Competitive 1 talking about the difficulty students have cooperating. From my experience, it felt unsurprising that students steeped in a competitive society, who are often in competition in sports, academic grades, and class streaming/setting arrangements found cooperation somewhat alien. If it is obvious that competitive activities at least support, if not reinforce competitive cultures, the question for me became: so what? What effect does *this* have? One response to this question came in the surprising experience of seeing programme practitioners trying to manage their discomfort with the winning and losing dimension of CEE activities, playing with language to avoid saying losers ('less successful people') and explaining failure and success at an individual level (some students 'just work harder') even when they provided evidence that socially disadvantaged students had far less resources to undertake such work. This was evidence, in the data I collected, of ripple effects (Jagosh et al., 2015), and which I developed to generate insight into how CEE programmes may influence the context itself over time.

Finally, while teams of researchers can cross-check the theoretical and explanatory validity with each other (Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021), a researcher working alone may lean on review amongst colleagues and argument with one's discourse community as a way of testing the credibility (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). Thus, the methodological and analytic strategies presented here were both rehearsed and tested through writing (articles and conference papers), which helped develop the rationale for a realist approach and road test the realistic thematic analysis from which the findings of this study were derived. This helped cement (for me), the importance of writing and prompted the inclusion of the specific section on its importance in my research process.

Now the methodology and related issues have been described, and the experience reflected on, in the following chapters, findings are presented on Short Form CEE and Long Form CEE.

### **3.13 Summary of Chapter**

This chapter presented the methodology which was used to study Competitive Enterprise Education programmes. It set out the philosophical underpinning for the study, including ontological and epistemological assumptions, and described the methodological strategy and research design – a qualitative study, drawing on Realist Evaluation and using Realist Interviews to collect data from programme practitioners to better understand what is happening in competitively structured EE programmes.

The experience of working with data was made transparent, explaining how data was coded against conceptual frameworks, reduced into descriptive summaries and then data related to more positive outcomes and more negative outcomes was organised against the four layers of context identified as important to consider when evaluating social programmes. It was described how data organised against the four layers of context – individual, interpersonal, institutional, infra-structural – were considered from two realistic questions: what is being leveraged from the context to help generate more positive effects, and for whom are programmes not working so well?

The chapter identified the modes of inference particularly relevant to this study – abduction and retroduction and made explicit the centrality of thinking and writing to the development of this thesis. Issues relating to ethics and validity were explored and the chapter concluded with a reflection on the methodology.

## 4 Theorising Short Form Competitive Enterprise Education

### 4.1 Structure of Findings

The findings in the following two chapters are structured around the two most frequently discussed types of competitive programmes provided in schools: Short Form (one day or less) competitions or challenges; and Long Form (longer term, student mini company competitions). These two formats represent a distinct ‘family of interventions’ (Pawson, 2006), which share some fundamental qualities and characteristics, but which are transported into different types of schools with different students and different institutional contexts.

This chapter presents findings in relation to Short Form Competitive Enterprise Education (Short Form CEE). Typically, Short Form CEE consists of programmes such as Enterprise Challenge Days and Dragon’s Den activities where teams are set a challenge, develop a proposal and present their idea in a public presentation where there may be a panel or some other arrangements to judge students’ work.

To develop an understanding of this type of intervention, this findings chapter begins in the concrete, that is, with descriptions of what happens in these programmes, in programme practitioners’ own words (Danermark et al., 2002). Then, findings about *more positive effects* and *more negative effects* are organised in relation to the four layers of context (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006). These layers of context or ‘Four Is’ – individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural - were discussed in Chapter 3 ([section 3.9.8](#)), and are important for researchers of complex social programmes to consider. The data organised against the four layers of context is interpreted from the perspective of two realistic questions. In relation to more positive results seen in each of the four layers of context, the interpretation of data is guided by thinking through: ‘What is Short Form CEE leveraging

from the environment to generate positive effects?’. In relation to more negative effects, interpretation of data is guided by considering ‘For whom is Short Form CEE not working so well?’ As discussed in section [1.11.1](#), the outcomes of a programme may be positive effects for individuals, such as the skills and knowledge, motivation and confidence that are assumed to be generated in policy and guidance and described in the linear conceptualisation of CEE. However, there may also be unintended and unforeseen outcomes which have not been considered in policy or guidance but for which the data provides evidence. The ‘effects’ that are spoken about in the findings are implicit within the text, that is, they exist where programme practitioners data can be linked to some positive or negative event, experience or outcome. Description and some interpretation is provided to help build the backbone of a narrative (Pawson, 2021), that better illuminates the influence of different layers of context, and the pre-existing resources in these layers, on what is happening in practice.

This approach enables a re-contextualisation or *re-description* of data from a realistic perspective, in order to *see something as something else* (Danermark et al., 2002). In addition, this approach facilitates the emergence of themes from a realistic thematic analysis (Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021).

Overall, the approach taken in this and the following findings chapter illuminates significant areas of under-theorisation of these commonly provided programmes, the implications of which are discussed in Chapter 6. Now the approach of this part of the thesis has been discussed, the following section starts in the concrete, with programme practitioners’ descriptions of activities in their own words.

## 4.2 Description – Short Form CEE in Programme Practitioners Own Words

In following section, descriptions of interventions are provided, to orient us towards what programme practitioners mean when they are talking about Short Form CEE. Shorthand that practitioners use when talking about programmes and distinguishing features of Short Form CEE are presented, including the content and logistics of programmes and the variations that are applied to deliver this activity in different contexts.

### 4.2.1 Programme Shorthand

In relation to Short Form CEE programmes, practitioners including, School Based Educators, Consultant Providers, Commissioner Managers all variously discuss a ‘day’ in their descriptions of the typical student experience involved in Short Form CEE. This might include explaining that “*the brief for the day*” was to create a product, or “*the day would culminate with teams winning in school*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 1). Sometimes the temporal nature of the practice was used as shorthand for the type of activity they commonly saw: “*...the one day enterprise*” (Commissioner Manager 1), “*you could have a day*” (Commissioner Manager 2), or “[the school provides] ... *an off-site enterprise day...*” (School Based Educator 3).

‘Half days’ and ‘sessions’ were also described (by Consultant Provider 1), where a year group would be split in two, and one half would experience the activity in the morning, and the other in the afternoon. In terms of the shortest duration, it was described that the model of an enterprise challenge or one-day competition can be modified and “*replicated in an hour in the classroom*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2). This is where an ‘enterprise challenge’ will happen inside the curriculum over a lesson. For example, School Based Educator 4,

described that in Healthy Schools Week students in home economics are challenged to make a healthy pizza and the outcome will be judged. Consultant Provider Competitive 2 also discussed this type of provision (and the same example – design a pizza topping), saying that judging may happen more informally in the classroom, for example a teacher or visitor choosing their favourite recipe, or the most “*commercially viable*”, and describing why, but there is no awards ceremony or photographs.

#### **4.2.2 Content**

In terms of the content of ‘a day’, and what students might experience in such interventions, programme practitioners would often use the phrase ‘Dragon’s Den’ or the word Dragon (to denote a judge), as shorthand to indicate a common, overall format. Dragon’s Den is a well-known TV Series where entrepreneurs get ‘three minutes to pitch their business ideas’ to multimillionaires who might invest time, money, and expertise to kick start the business (BBC, n.d.a.). This format is used to describe what students experience on a day: “...the Dragon’s Den type thing...[students] have *a challenge*... and do a presentation...” (Consultant Provider Competitive 5).

This process may involve students receiving some stimulus, a challenge or an opportunity, working to address the problem and presenting it to judges:

*There was a problem they were expected to address, and they would choose roles and split into departments, as it were, so there would be a finance department, product and service design, marketing...they have time to develop and design their idea...then they’d present it to their tutors and the students in their tutor groups...then they’d present it to the Dragons...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1).



Whilst the original Dragon's Den format involves an entrepreneur presenting their own product or service, a variation on this in Short Form CEE is that a challenge can involve students being given an *existing product* to pitch to local employers who judge the presentations:

*[for]...the Dragon's Den challenge... we invited local employers to get involved, to judge the pitching of the products... [we gave]... each group a different product and they had to pitch it to a different local employers...and the local employers would assess their delivery, their communication skills, and it would be competitive day...*

(School Based Educator 1).

Alternatively, the day could revolve around *the development* of a product where students would build and pitch a business case:

*...we had a number of what I'd characterise as 'Dragon's Den' style challenges...they would always normally revolve around the provision and development of a product. We ran them in various contexts...and they would follow pretty similar formats, which is that the students would start the day by developing a product, they'd build a business case around it, and then they would pitch it*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3).

Sometimes the challenge presented is non-business focused, for example working in teams on an “*egg drop challenge*” where students had to design a way of protecting an egg from a fall, but that this would still culminate in presenting their idea and experience to “*the dragons*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 1). A challenge might have a specific theme, for example “*...something like environmentally friendly products*” where students developed a product that could be “*made from recycled materials*” (School Based Educator 3), or “*a green*

*theme*” such as recycling, or “*an Olympic theme*” where a day was connected to a larger social or cultural event (Consultant Provider Competitive 1). One consultant (Consultant Provider Competitive 6), stressed that challenges were based on specific business and industry input, which linked to the world of work and developed students’ knowledge about specific industries or sectors. Rather than create a new product or service, or ‘pitch’ an existing product, this approach was described as a “*broader interpretation of enterprise*” and being about “*looking at the real world of work*” and responding to some problem or challenge:

*It’s where an organisation or a sector wants to try and help young people [understand] ...what is required in that sector [and]... they design a challenge that is around a real business challenge that they are facing...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 6)

A number of providers highlighted the importance of volunteer mentors or facilitators supporting programme delivery, for example explaining students’ inspiration as being fuelled by this component, saying “*...if they’re inspired, I think it comes from...when you have good volunteers in, or business mentors in, to give that inspiration*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2). Another provider stressed that “*most of our facilitators are young people themselves*” and that having near-peer role models was a distinguishing and effective element of a day (Consultant Provider Competitive 6). These interactions between students and mentors linked to the development of students’ confidence, via the encouragement and feedback which is provided.

One programme practitioner distinguished between these more meaningful interactions between volunteer mentors and judges, and less meaningful interactions:

*I think that if they [a school] put one employer in front of those kids to set the competition and then judge it, I wouldn't class it as a meaningful interaction...If however, which is why a lot of the schools will buy in or get other people to organise it, every team has a business mentor sat at their table, or moves around and speaks to people in smaller groups, and has that interaction and that opportunity. So, you might have a team of six kids with a business mentor attached to them, or a team of six kids who move around experts and they're speaking to them in those small groups... that then starts to move towards meaningful...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

Feedback from an 'external', who, "doesn't have to say something nice" to students (School Based Educator 3), is considered developmentally valuable by teachers:

*...if someone external says, yeah, actually, in our judgement, you've achieved that standard as well, that there's something psychological about getting it from someone who doesn't have to say it.... students know that teachers, as part of their job, have to be positive about them...it isn't necessary that somebody external does that, but if they do I think it has more impact.*

(School Based Educator 3).

#### **4.2.3 Logistics**

In terms of organisation, some distinctions were made, in terms of whether the activity was teacher-led and "in-house" (School Based Educator 3), or provider led and, potentially inter-school and "off-site" (School Based Educator 3). Enterprise days could serve a year group, from approximately 80 – 130 students (Consultant Provider Competitive 1), in a hall, or potentially up to 300 where students all received and completed the brief and the challenge in

their tutor group, with support from tutors or mentors (School Based Educator 3). Sometimes a day long activity is off-site, and a competition is held between schools at a large venue (for example a football stadium). Teams will work on a challenge during the day and present, but they will also get a tour of the venue, meet teams delivering elements of the business and have a Q and A with entrepreneurs (Consultant Provider Competitive 6). Sometimes the process to take part in that activity might be competitive, so day-long activities are delivered to year groups in schools, and then a team selected from that process goes forward to a final at the off-site venue, where there might be a “*great sense of occasion*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 6). The finale of a day or a half day is most often a public pitch, but sometimes may be structured as an “*art gallery*” or “*exhibition*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2), where teams present their work in a display and judges converse and interact with teams more informally. Sometimes arrangements for judging, or selection and briefing of judges were discussed, as well as the recruitment and support of judges:

*... we had a marking grid that we gave to the judges, and when [the students] presented the judges...filled that in... it was kind of how well they completed their finance sheet in...how effective their marketing materials were. How good their research was. That kind of thing. And there was some skills things, like how well they worked as a team, whether their ideas was innovative...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1)

*...we will talk to the judges...they'll have a briefing...we also look at that in terms of recruiting the judges, we try and have as diverse panels as we possibly can...*

(Consultant Provider 6).

There are various modifications that enable Short Form CEE to be delivered in a variety of settings and in different configurations, dependent on the resources available to the school and coordinating educator. These modifications, which have initially been discussed elsewhere (Brentnall, 2020), are summarised and extended in Figure 3 and demonstrate the adaptability of the Short Form intervention, within a strong and recognisable template.



**Figure 3 - Variations in Short Form CEE**

Now we have descriptions of Short Form CEE in programme practitioners' own words, in the following section, evidence relating to the four layers of complexity – the Four Is - (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006), is presented.

### **4.3 Re-Description – What is Short Form CEE Leveraging from the Context?**

As discussed in Chapter 3 ([section 3.9.8](#)), researchers interested in understanding how positive and negative effects are generated through interventions should pay attention to four layers of context (the Four Is) which exist in social programmes - Individual capacities, Interpersonal relationships, Institutional Settings, and the Infra-structural system (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006). As discussed in section [1.11.1](#), the outcomes of a programme may be positive effects for individuals, such as the skills and knowledge, motivation and confidence that are assumed to be generated in policy and guidance and described in the linear conceptualisation of CEE. However, there may also be unintended and unforeseen outcomes which have not been considered in policy or guidance but for which the data provides evidence. In the following sections data regarding more positive and more negative effects are organised in relation to these layers and data is interpreted from the perspective of two realistic questions: first, 'What is Short Form CEE leveraging from the context to help generate more positive effects? And second, 'For Whom is Short Form CEE not working so well?' The 'effects' that are spoken about are implicit within the text, that is, they exist where programme practitioners data can be linked to some positive or negative event, experience or outcome. Description and some interpretation is provided to help build the backbone of a narrative (Pawson, 2021), that better illuminates what is happening in CEE programmes in

terms of the influence of different layers of context, and the pre-existing resources in these layers, on outcomes.

#### 4.3.1 Individual Capacities

The first category of resources which already exist in the context which Short Form CEE leverages are individual, that is: the students' existing mindset, attitudes and capabilities. In this regard, programme practitioners discuss higher achievers as doing well in one day *challenges and competitions*:

*...the [higher achievers] just have a mindset that is just a bit more 'go-getty' and initiative taking. What they were able to do and how that compared to people around them... in class, and in enterprise in particular, you are so close to people, it's very clear very quickly.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1)

These sorts of students are characterised as those who “*naturally take 100% out of everything*” and the ones who “*put their hands up...[are] in the school choir*” or “*become prefects*”, these types of behaviours are summed up as students who “*see the point in doing it*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2). As well as generic qualities such as being able to see the point in something and being go-getty, for one consultant provider, girls more generally are at an advantage, especially when it comes to the finale of the one day challenge - the public pitch:

*...the girls do present as more confident...I think that they seem more willing to take a risk in terms of the presentation, both in terms of whether they dress up or do something silly, you know, to get attention, and when I say something silly, I mean something scripted, so they've got to be a particular character in the presentation*

*say. I think on the whole, I would say that I've seen more girls willing to do that.. than boys...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 6).

We shall see in Chapter 5, that a number of other programme practitioners identify this advantage that girls have more significantly as a pattern in Long Form CEE. However, confidence is something that is identified in both girls and boys and which appears to be a notable factor in generating more positive outcomes. The next comment is from a school based educator who is talking about a male student from a less advantaged background, whose confidence – described as ‘cockiness’ – was key in this student doing well in the activity:

*...there was one young boy...who was quite cocky and a bit of a ringleader of things and...occasionally, somebody who approaches the starting line on the back foot, somehow... maybe because they're in a different environment, they're not at school, they're being given a little bit of freedom, maybe, things change for them, but that was rare, to see that.*

(School Based Educator 3).

Here, we can consider how the programme is leveraging the boy's confidence and his appreciation of freedom and novelty. This links to a phrase used by a programme practitioner regarding a one day challenge being ‘a day off’ timetable, the very fact that it is different, a rest from academic study, from classroom routine, and that is, for some students, inherently appealing:



*...for some of them they are taken out of the normal curriculum, and therefore it is just a bit of a change for a kid, from the typical day, and it's a piece in a jigsaw, it's a bit of an influence...*

(Commissioner Manager 1)

Some students with specific profiles are picked out as being more inclined towards a competitively structured day, for example an ADHD student who might “*love the competitive side*” (School Based Educator 1), or a young man with “*a high testosterone level*” who may find competition “*conducive to creativity and excitement*” (Consultant Provider Non Competitive 2). It is important to say that programme practitioners often make such comments by posing possibilities or questions, reflections or instances, rather than offering universal judgements. A commonly expressed caveat is along the lines of “*...it depends who you are...*” (Consultant Provider Non Competitive 2), demonstrating the implicitly realistic thinking that programme practitioners often articulate.

Existing inclinations and capacities which might influence students’ reactions to one day provision are also recognised to be important in preparation for, and participation in, a day. Describing a one-day offsite enterprise challenge with an environmental theme, a school based educator links existing attitude with behaviour and outcome:

*...they had to develop a product that could be made from recycled materials. There was a lot of resourcing put into that by the school, in terms of paying for venues, experts to come and support...but ultimately, the students had to provide some resources themselves, in the form of recycled material, and it was quite evident there that those who were more enthusiastic about enterprise education at the start...*

*...tended to equip themselves better for the event, and therefore had more chance of success.*

(School Based Educator 3).

In addition to being prepared, some students are simply better at getting on with the challenge, and being “*active participants rather than passive*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 1). Behaviours such as “engaging with the materials” and “*talking to the people around them*” and “*not going on phones*” indicates that students are “*staying on task*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

This evidence from programme practitioners signposts advantageous cognitive and social capacities – we can imagine that engaging with the materials may involve reading the challenge materials, idea generation, problem solving and intellectual production at an individual and social level, which requires the ability to take in and synthesise information, and the communication skills to discuss and negotiate ways forward with team mates. Whilst motivation for the task itself was described as useful for increasing participation for example, students were considered to be working well when they “*had a product they believed in*” (School Based Educator 1). Another programme practitioner summarised that, at an individual level, those already equipped to compete (with the cognitive and social capacities to engage with the task), thrived in competitive tasks:

*The one day competition in school is great for those who do well, but they do well because they came in equipped to do well. You could almost predict at the start of the day who was going to do well at the end of it, despite all the effort you put in.*

(School Based Educator 3)

### 4.3.2 Interpersonal Relationships

The second category of resources which already exist in the context which Short Form CEE leverages is the capacity for teamwork and the additional support provided by teachers. In discussing students who enjoyed one day competitions, programme practitioners described some pre-existing inter-personal qualities which support involvement, such as enjoying working with others, harmonious task distribution, supportive mentorship and engaged teachers.

In regard to the students' team working inclinations, one consultant provider reflected:

*I've seen them really enjoy it [a one day competition] and I wonder if it, I mean I don't know, but I wonder if it is a competition element that they enjoyed? Or whether it's just the different elements they are enjoying, working with different people, doing something new, yes I'm not sure actually.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

This piece of evidence connects *the capacity to work with others* with *enjoyment*. Thinking counterfactually (and we will see much more evidence regarding difficulties that arise from dysfunctional team working), if one cannot work with others or does not enjoy working with others then a team based challenge will be less enjoyable. In practice, working well together involves the ability to share and delegate tasks, for example:

*I've seen groups who are happy, where someone is happy to be doing the poster and someone is happy to be doing the finance and that's fine for some children because they're like 'this is what I like, this is what I can do, I'll do that.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

This comment indicates the importance of functional relationships at a team level. In addition to the quality of inter-personal relationships in a team, the quality of support and input from mentors or volunteers is described as an important programme component by providers. One consultant elaborates on this:

*...the one day enterprise activity, if they're inspired, I think it comes from...**when you have good volunteers in**, or business mentors in, to give that inspiration. And the way that inspiration happens, is that it might be that they do an absolutely amazing assembly or whatever, it might be that, but I'd also say it's this gaining confidence, in that, there might be a group of people, a group of young people, who might think 'oh, well we're not good at maths', but then their mentor talks them through it in a way that they do it themselves and then that business person who is not a teacher, and who is not a parent or a carer, is saying 'you're good at this, you should consider this...' so they're like feeding the confidence...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2, emphasis added)

This demonstrates the importance of interpersonal relationships, and the encouragement and inspiration which can flow from them as positive outcomes for students. Theorising this from a realistic perspective and asking - what is the programme leveraging in the context? - one might think through the significance of the phrase "*when you have good volunteers in*" (Consultant Provider Competitive 2). Thinking counter-factually, this comment illuminates the possibility of having volunteers who are *not* good, signalling that the effects of a programme delivered by a school or a provider is at least in part relying on the *skills of its volunteers and mentors*, which of course, will be variable.

Alongside the availability of good volunteers, the role of teachers within the school is also discussed as significant in generating positive outcomes. A provider might discuss the

importance of students getting “*practical support during the day by talking to the teachers*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 1), or that “*the relationship*” which is experienced through “*the support of a teacher*” in the activity helps “*something drop, something just happens*” in this interaction between student and teacher” (Commissioner Manager 1). One consultant sums up the advantage of supportive teachers:

*...you’ve got a very engaged teacher, who’s really supporting them and actually assisting them in doing the best they can within that challenge.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 6).

While the provision of business mentors or volunteer facilitators is described as a component of one day competitions and specifically identified as part of a programme by providers, these comments indicate that *teachers* - a resource already existing in the context - help the programme generate its outcomes. Thus, it is not simply the provision of the programme itself, or simply the provision of business mentors or volunteers engaged by providers, but the teacher involved in the programme which is important, a dimension which is further developed in the following section.

### **4.3.3 Institutional Setting**

The third category of resources which Short Form CEE leverages is the various institutional resources which already exist in a school. First and foremost, as the previous section started to identify, the existence of good teacher, taking ownership, is important:

*... if you’ve got a good teacher, a mover and a shaker, someone who’s invested in it, then it will happen, but often when that person leaves, everything goes with them...*

*You know there's no institutional knowledge there because they're all busy doing what they're doing.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 4).

Why might a 'mover and a shaker' be important beyond taking ownership on, and supporting students on, a day itself? One school based educator demonstrates the wider value they bring to supporting student performance in competitive activities by describing the numerous developments they established in the enterprise programme of a school where they work:

*...every year group gets to take part in some enterprise related activity...our Y7 and 8 students are in enterprise club, but also take part in an enterprise challenge, which is also a national competition...Year 9 students have the opportunity to take part in a different competition....we also enter them in other business competitions like a student investor challenge, a start-up challenge and other bespoke competitions with companies.*

(School Based Educator 2).

This description illuminates how one school based educator creates resources in the institutional setting where they are based. It is important to note that this educator is in a well-resourced setting, where as well as being able to negotiate time for activities, there is the financial resource to buy provision:

*...we...do more one off, smaller scale competitions, with younger students to maybe equip them with some other skills that are needed later on, when they engage in the bigger competitions. So...we have off timetable enterprise days, that we can resource quite well...*

*...we buy some specialist software for enterprise competitions, and things like that...*

(School Based Educator 2).

As well as the additional discrete and enterprise related activity that supports students' preparation for competitive activities, this educator described a more elite-type school setting *"where competition exists...and students are used to competing, and want the challenge to try to win competitions..."* (School Based Educator 2).

This competitive culture is experienced and supported through *"unlimited"* opportunities to compete:

*...I think the culture is massively important, it is massively important.... There's a huge amount that goes on in science, with science projects, STEM projects, competitions that are set by different scientific bodies, there are languages competitions that take place, spelling bees... and things like that, essay writing competitions, poetry competitions, um, you know, the students are, have got, an almost unlimited number of competitions that they can take part in through the curriculum that have got a competitive element....It's part of what happens...*

(School Based Educator 2).

As a result, at such a school, a competitive spirit exists which Short Form CEE can leverage:

*A lot of the students expect there to be an outcome and a winner. And they want that competition. So... If we do presentations and we haven't announced the winner for five minutes, you can almost guarantee someone will put their hand up and say 'who's the winner?'*

(School Based Educator 2).

As a result of these insights, one can start to construct a more developed picture of the sorts of pre-existing advantageous elements of the context which support students in engaging with Short Form CEE. Furthermore, it becomes more *possible to imaginatively compare* this context - very well resourced, and with extensive competitive provision, experiences and competitive spirit – with *less advantaged contexts* where there is not the same staff time, funding for, or previous experiences of competitive engagement, and to start to think through how these different contexts help contribute to different potential outcomes.

#### **4.3.4 Infrastructural System**

The final category of resources which already exist in the context which Short Form CEE leverages is the resources which come from the home setting and the responsiveness of the provider. In discussing students who did well in one day competitions, one school based educator in a lower resourced setting, described students who arrived equipped to compete in Short form CEE, asserting a strong connection between preparedness for the activity and the student's home background:

*...those things that you have at the starting line...come from preparation in the school or from social setting, or from parental setting.*

(School Based Educator 3).

This comment signposts that success in a one day competition relies, at least in part, on resources which exist beyond the school and institutional realm. Developing this idea further, sometimes the specific qualities of families are discussed in relation to the students' performance:



*...you didn't start on a level playing field...you started on a playing field where students, often whose parents were in some way entrepreneurial, came very well equipped for the event...*

(School Based Educator 3).

This educator further clarified that the entrepreneurial activity that was advantageous was not simply people working for themselves in “*trades*”, but rather higher achieving families:

*It's the ones who already came from the families who have already broken the mould... it's the people from those backgrounds who approach the starting line better equipped who actually take advantage of enterprise education. So, I suspect that these challenges do... reinforce the social imbalance rather than address it...*

(School Based Educator 3).

These out-of-school resources are acknowledged by another provider, who highlights the importance of family influence, saying that “*those kids...[who]...naturally take 100% out of everything*”, may have that “*natural*” spirit in them, or it maybe a “*family, cultural thing*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

One can view these comments as demonstrating how patterns of familial and cultural advantage – resources already existing in the infra-structural system – support the performance of students in a competitive activity. One programme practitioner identifies some of the resources that some families can invest in children, making a connection between how well resourced a family is and the advantageous personal qualities which that confers to a student participating in a competitive activity:

*...[students]...might have parents who take them into lots of extra-curricular activities that have a competition element, like the gymnastics, swimming, horse*

*riding, etcetera, etcetera, and they're kind of taught from a young age to be quite resilient and not to see failure or not winning as a bad thing, but to see it as, you know, a natural part of life....and how to deal and cope with failure...*

(School Based Educator 2).

Thus, as well as some sort of culture of higher expectation at home, students have additional experiences which prepare them for a one day competition. The existence of, and potential problems related to, this un-level playing field is reflected in the following comment from a provider:

*I think with a lot of the providers, you know there's that approach where: we run the competition, we have a winner, but I find quite often, the feedback we have from schools is that we don't want it to feel there's a sense that 'there's one winner', and you know, a hundred losers in the room. So, I think within the schools, there's a bit more of a challenge around that, and how can we make this work for all of the young people and not just the winners.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 6).

This provider described making adaptations to their events and changing criteria so that follow-on events at a national level were accessible to teams who did not 'win' at school/regional level:

*...when there is a final...[we] don't only allow the winner, the winning team to attend, so if the school wants to send a number of teams to the...final, they can.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 6).

Whilst school based educators (as we will see from the following sections), are less generous about the potential impact of one day competitions and challenges, the evidence from this provider illustrates how positive outcomes are, at least in part, dependent on the responsiveness and programme design of the provider. This particular provider identifies positive results for students, including students who might be characterised as less well equipped to compete:

*I would say that the majority will feel proud of themselves, that they've done it and enjoyed the experience... we're very surprised by the impact it's had on those kids who were furthest away from your ideal cohort...and I think part of the reason for that is that, or we believe anyway, is that most of our facilitators are young people themselves, so we don't have, you know I wouldn't be a facilitator on this programme, the young people presenting and facilitating are generally only a few years ahead of those young people as well.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 6).

This different pattern of reporting - that those students “*furthest away from your ideal cohort*” were feeling proud and enjoying the experience – is important to look into further. Whereas school based educators (as we shall see in the next section) discuss negative effects in relation to one-day *in-house* enterprise competitions, the consultant/provider here was talking about an *inter-school* enterprise day example - a final or finals. In this case different students had already competed at school and were now attending a special event. In this example, the students had already ‘won’ at school. Getting to the one-day final was an honour, with some students being made to feel very special about this achievement:

... [the school] *choose to send a team or a number of teams to the national competition, which are generally at an iconic venue so that the students get a sense of occasion, that they enjoy the day, regardless of the outcomes...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 6).

Thus, the specific context of the day (involving students who had already succeeded in a selection process at school level), influences more positive outcomes. In addition, providers also demonstrate that their responsiveness to adapt programmes in light of feedback from schools influences outcomes:

*...it is evolving, and every year, you know, it's tweaked, we tweak it slightly, and the commitment to being as inclusive as possible, being as, both in terms of the schools, in terms of the judges, in terms of the you know looking at how you can design the programme to meet the needs of either a particular cohort of students...we do try and work really closely with the school to make sure it lands right for the kids in that school...*

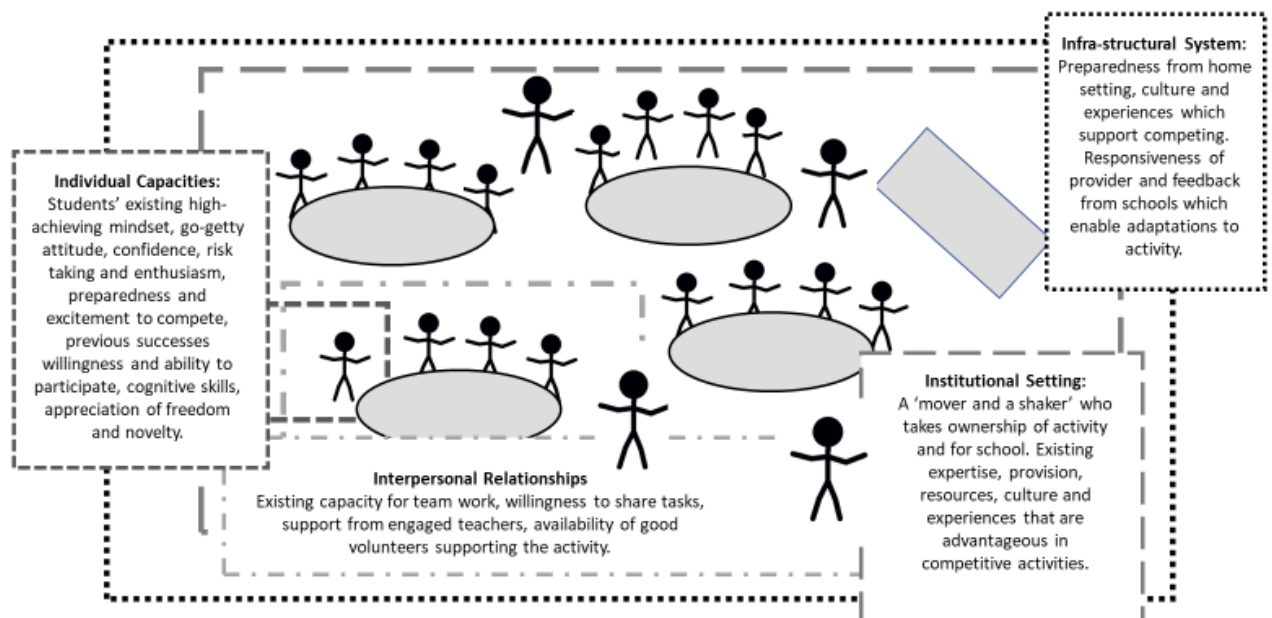
(Consultant Provider Competitive 6).

Thus, positive results from, and improvements to, programmes, rely on schools providing feedback to programme practitioners about how they want students to feel, and the provider being willing to make their criteria and programme meet the needs of students so the programme “*lands right for the kids in that school*”.

The various dimensions emerging from the organisation of evidence according to realistic layers of complexity is summarised in a diagram in the next section.

#### 4.3.5 Summary – What is Short Form CEE Leveraging from the Context?

Figure 4 summarises information relating to the four layers of context to develop the realistic conceptual framework for Competitive Enterprise Education presented earlier in the thesis (in section [1.11.2](#)), and include evidence from programme practitioners relating to what Short Form CEE programmes leverage from the context. As previously discussed, this figure does not aim to provide an ultimate or final answer (Swedberg, 2016), but rather encourages us to consider the myriad of possibilities that might arise in one situation or another. By organising data relating to more positive effects according to the different layers of context, and re-contextualising data from the perspective of searching for evidence regarding existing resources being leveraged, new light is shed on the conditions which support more positive effects of Short Form CEE.



**Figure 4 - What is Short Form CEE Leveraging from the Context?**

The preceding sections have aimed to present evidence and generate insight into existing resources emerging from that evidence, which helps prompt thinking around the question around what Short Form CEE leverages from the environment to help generate more positive effects. Evidence from programme practitioners points to the role of existing mindset, attitude, personal and social resources both in and beyond school which facilitate positive results. As a better understanding of negative effects is also an aim of this thesis, the following sections present evidence regarding for whom CEE *is not* working so well.

## **4.4 Re-Description – For Whom is Short Form CEE Not Working so Well?**

The following sections aim to illuminate more detailed and nuanced understandings of the range of effects (negative and unintended, as well as positive), that may be generated for different students in different contexts participating in Short Form CEE. As discussed in section 4.1, the outcomes of a programme may be positive effects for individuals or there may be unintended and unforeseen outcomes which have not been considered in policy or guidance but for which the data provides evidence. Evidence presented in relation to this question – ‘for whom is Short Form CEE not working so well?’ - tended to be provided when programme practitioners were thinking about negative outcomes, who is not doing so well in activities and the circumstances surrounding these experiences.

### **4.4.1 Individual Capacities**

Programme practitioners provide various examples regarding students ‘for whom short form CEE is not working so well.’ The first category of evidence relates to the nature of one day competitions being compulsory and organised in larger groups. As one consultant provider put it:

*...the one-day in a hall...they're not making that decision for themselves, so therefore they're not as invested in and if they're not as invested in it, they don't get the potential out of it.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

Other programme practitioners confirm that with large numbers of students you have “*the ones who were interested and the ones who are not interested*” (School Based Educator 3).

Another consultant characterises this large group experience for some students as being ‘forced’ into something they are not choosing, or don’t want to do:

*...if you've been forced or conscripted, that's a good word...yes, that's definitely going to impact on your motivation. Because if you're not motivated you're going to have to be convinced to get on board with it to begin with, rather than just taking it in your stride immediately....*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

These comments illuminate that conscription into the activity (rather than, as for Long Form CEE where the activity is voluntary), influences some students reactions and motivation negatively. This is an important insight, for as we saw in Chapter 2, *positive results for long term and voluntary competitions are used to justify short term and compulsory activities.*

Another difference in a shorter activity is that students are not developing an idea for themselves, or starting their own business or social action, but are rather responding to some challenge or simulation which can be achieved in a shorter time. Thus, some students may not have that sense of connection or enjoyment, as one practitioner describes:

*I remember running a particular challenge where this one group just took umbrage to the product we were asking them to develop. You know, we just don't want to do that.*

*‘Ok, well what do you want to do?’ ‘Well, not that, but not this either...’ and I must have thrown three or four different ideas at them, and nothing stuck, nothing would take...they were pretty disruptive as a group and in the end, we had to take them out...*

(Consultant Provider 3).

A school based educator confirmed this scenario, describing a one day pitching competition where students had to ‘sell’ a product to a panel, but students *“really struggled with products that were boring to them”*, the educator elaborated saying *“they struggled with their imagination, trying to promote something they weren’t fully behind”* (School Based Educator 1).

In addition to issues relating to the compulsory nature of the activity and the type of task, students’ personal capacity to access the task is also a factor in terms of what they are able to get out of it, with patterns of disengagement observed at the extremes of student capability:

*...if I were doing something a whole school challenge, where we would have a real mix of abilities across a year group, then I would definitely see kids just disengage...you tend to get two kinds of disengagement. At the very top end, you would get the kids who just finished everything too quickly, because they knew the game...then you would have the group at the other end who didn’t think they had a chance, who were very down on themselves because of their own abilities and disengaged for those sorts of reasons.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3).

Another consultant provider confirmed this scenario, discussing *“lower achieving”* students and how *“no matter how hard they tried they never did as well, they just weren’t as good,*



*and there's nothing you can do about that...*” this provider concluded *“not everyone is good at everything... but that was clear it was de-motivating”* (Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

Sometimes this scenario is identified through how the students label themselves, in that in a competitive enterprise activity certain students would pre-judge the results at the beginning of the day:

*...I definitely had scenarios where we have been running things in a school and it's 'Ah well, we never win because we're the thick kids...so we're not really going to try'.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3).

A provider who runs non-competitive activities noted that students are *“at different levels”*, not just in terms of *“intellectually...in the sense of IQ”*, but also in relation to *“social baggage”* from home and their demographic circumstances can influence everything from vocabulary to resilience (Consultant Provider Non-Competitive 2). Whilst some programme practitioners identify social comparison in relation to the cognitive and meta-cognitive challenge of the task itself (for example, in terms of starting the competition thinking one is comparatively ‘thick’ having never succeeded in a competition before), Consultant Provider Non-Competitive 3 also acknowledges that social comparison may have other dimensions which are indicators that different levels of social status expose students to negative social comparison.

Extending thinking regarding the cognitive capacities required for a one day competition, some programme practitioners identified specific learning needs which made the activity inaccessible. For example, an autistic student *“couldn't cope with the amount of noise”* and went home (Consultant Provider Competitive 1). A school based educator also discussed a student *“on the autistic spectrum”* who didn't respond to competitiveness (School Based

Educator 1). Whilst such students likely have the choice to opt out if they feel overwhelmed, other students without a specific SEN diagnosis would likely have to carry on, or potentially ‘act up’ until they were excluded.

The extent to which these days generate strong emotions and strong reactions was a striking feature of the evidence provided by programme practitioners. This consultant summed up the emotional upset such days can elicit for students:

*...the downside [to a one day competition] is for some kids they are incredibly alienating...they can be very stressful...they can cause a lot of emotional upset...and you know have kids walk out of stuff crying...yeah, I’ve had pretty much, everything you could pick in that sense has happened to me...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3).

Piecing together instances where students are upset from different programme practitioners, one of the ways that such emotions are generated is because of experiences in teams, which we shall see in the next section about inter-personal relationships. In other cases, emotion is generated by the experience of the structure of the activity, with the finale including the public presentation:

*...they often didn’t want to do it, they didn’t want to at all, and they’d stand there with their posters in front of their faces and one person might talk...and, yeah, I remember how I felt at that age, you know, it would have been nerve wracking.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

Following the stress of this public presentation, and the likely emotional effort that has gone into performing in this way, another trigger for emotional upset is the experience of losing:

*Not understanding why they didn't win is the big one, because they don't get told if you just literally go 'well, this team is the best, yay!' that leaves a load of teams going 'well mines as good as that, why didn't I win?' and it's just a load of unanswered questions, and it's just like, well what's the point?...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

In some cases, the emotion is sufficiently strong that students are characterised as being “*very poor losers*” where the feedback on the day is focused on the fact they didn't win, with written comments such as “*we should have won*” or “*angry that we didn't win*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 1). The effects of this experience are that students can be “*disillusioned*” by the experience (Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

The meaningfulness of winning and losing is also observed in a sudden change in atmosphere as soon as a winner is announced:

*...I think as soon as you've announced who won and lost...people might immediately lose interest, and they might not give another moment's consideration to what they've developed throughout the day.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

These observations from programme practitioners indicate that the competitive format of Short Form CEE generates strong emotions for some students – being wracked with nerves, being angry and disillusioned, being stressed, being alienated, losing interest after failing to win. Overall, one school based educator summarised that such patterns were predictable:

*There are not a lot of examples that come to mind, of students who started ill-equipped for enterprise, whatever you mean by that, under-prepared, lacking in confidence, there are not many examples of students who approached*

*enterprise ill equipped and were transforming themselves through those activities.*

(School Based Educator 3).

Taken alongside evidence about the pre-existing mindset, skill set and resources which are beneficial in one day competitions, one might start to re-theorise that Short Form CEE of a day or less and where no formal skill development training takes place (but rather depends on students existing capacities) is more of a ***skill application*** experience than a ***skill development*** opportunity. In addition to the individual capacities of students shaping more negative outcomes, interpersonal relationships also play a role, as we shall see in the next section.

#### **4.4.2 Interpersonal Relationships**

The possible negative influence of interpersonal relationships can be seen in evidence provided by programme practitioners regarding how students feel within a team, how teams interact with each other and how students compare their success in relation to other teams.

Programme practitioners describe how social comparison ***within*** a team may cause a student to feel de-motivated, where students become aware, that no matter how hard they try, they won't be as good as a team mate: “...*they know...that certain people are better at something than they are...[and]...that can be quite de-motivating*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

This provider extended this analysis beyond competitive enterprise activities and to “*any competitive learning situation*”, where “*no matter how hard they tried...they just weren't as good...*”, concluding “*I see the de-motivation; it's happening all the time*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 1). Whilst programme practitioners did not make a specific link

between de-motivation because of social comparison and disruption, situations where negative students created negative effects within a team were discussed:

*If you got one or two negative, more negative students in the group, it kind of pulled the others down, you know and I was talking to them, you know trying to kind of gee them up a little bit... but yeah, it was group dynamics really, yes, it was interesting...*

(School Based Educator 1).

This particular educator connected negativity to a lack of engagement with the task, linking back to the idea that students who are ‘*not into it*’ can create negative effects:

*...with the negativity in the groups, the lack of enthusiasm to promote the product, that kind of peer pressure, that kind of ‘she’s not into it’ ...you know how it is at school...you know it just takes one or two people to start being negative and it kind of rolls down from there doesn’t it.*

(School Based Educator 1).

In addition to students who are ‘*not into*’ a task, there were other characterisations of students which affected team dynamics and created negative effects:

*...sometimes within teams they might think someone’s being bossy... they’re the MD... and they may feel demotivated by that because they’re thinking ‘who are they to tell me what to do?’ or ‘who are they to speak to me like that? They’re not an authority figure, they’re just someone in class...’*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

*...some students don’t have the capacity, do they really, to work well in a group. And some students struggle in a group, you know, with their social skills, you know, that’s*

*one of the issues...you know...you'll get a group together and there's usually someone who domineers...Or someone who doesn't listen to other people...*

(School Based Educator 1).

*...you could have somebody come up with a brilliant idea and he's walked all over by the alpha person in the team, for no reason expect that the other guy just talks more.*

(Consultant Provider Non-Competitive 2).

As a result of these observations, we have a more developed picture of the range of experiences within a team and the different characteristics of students which influence those experiences. We can better imagine the dominators and the alpha students and, at the other end of the spectrum, the students who are listening to, or being directed by, these types.

Whilst some students may react passively to a dominator, the interaction between other students is sometimes more aggressive. One consultant provider who had provided 'hundreds' of one day competitions to school for funded programmes had such experiences: *"I've seen students argue, and get upset, I've never had any students assault each other, I've seen it come close, definitely..."*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3).

These arguments are discussed in relation to decisions about whose idea is taken forward, and programme practitioners are involved in settling high-running emotions and trying to keep students focused on the challenge:

*When it comes to arguments, frequently they were about differences of opinion on where the challenge was going. One student would say 'I want to go this way.' And another student would say 'No, I want to do this.' 'I want to do that' 'Ah, well you're*

*stupid', and all of sudden, you're standing in between the two of them going 'Look guys, it's a bit of fun....just relax a second' or splitting up teams potentially.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3).

The nuanced skills required to work cordially in a group are identified as a specific set of qualities and expertise which non-competitive programme practitioners discuss explicitly. They observe that activities **rely** on functioning teamwork, but **don't teach** the behaviours or interaction routines which students need to participate and interact effectively:

*I don't know the way they are taught, but I feel like it is...competitiveness, isn't it?  
They go in groups, but they don't work as a group, and they're not open to other people's suggestions. They're just thinking of themselves.*

(Consultant Provider Non Competitive 1).

Another non-competitive provider discussed that different students, with different capacities would need to be develop in different ways, with 'wildly competitive' students, benefitting from learning another way:

*If they're wildly competitive, probably a good idea to show them another way. If they have absolutely no other wish to stand up themselves, maybe that's what you should be working on. So, I'm a little bit cautious about saying one thing is right and one thing is not right, it's about looking at the people that you're working with and thinking what gives them the best life chances...*

(Consultant Provider Non Competitive 2).

These comments prompt thinking (and questioning) around 'which skills' are both **required for** and likely to be **developed by** Short Form CEE. Non-competitive practitioners discussed

*specific methods* for example ‘Diamond 9’ a confidential decision making process which facilitated “*quiet ones*” to contribute to which ideas were taken forward (Consultant Provider Non Competitive 1), or “*micro-organising structures and interactions between students*” through cooperative learning techniques (Consultant Provider Non Competitive 2), where specific patterns and routines of speaking and learning enabled equal participation of students. Such specific pedagogies were not generally discussed by providers or school based educators involved in competitive programmes. Rather elements of the process – putting students in teams, choosing roles, addressing the problem, pitching to judges – were highlighted.

Occasionally, a consultant would discuss an alternative to this, for example, providing a specific activity which aimed to develop specific skills:

*We tend to focus more on elements of the overall enterprise picture, if I were to put it that way. We tend to focus more on workshops on individual skills and capabilities that may build in to...a picture of enterprising activity. So for example, one challenge we do quite a lot with students, which isn't a competition, is... 'Bad Ideas' with them... where we will get the guys and girls developing ideas, they'll stick them all up on the wall, and then they will rally pitch run them to judges, and their idea is to pitch it and then if the judge thinks it's a bad idea, they've got to go away and reiterate and redevelop it...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3).

In this scenario, the consultant describes that *every* student has to write on a post it note, *every* student has to move up to speak to a judge, and goes through this process a number of



times. This may be contrasted with the scene of grand finale pitch, where some students may not even speak, and take the role of holding the flip chart/poster.

Thus, in terms of the question: for whom Short Form CEE is not working so well, one segment that is not well served by these types of activity are those students who are not really participating in the activity, either because they are being dominated or because they are “*always relying on other people*” to do the work (Consultant Provider Non Competitive 2).

In a one day competition, as well as evidence regarding dysfunction **within** a team, there were also examples of teams disrupting or upsetting students outside their team:

*I've had some horrible stuff happen whilst the kids are up on stage, seeing how they behaved...One of the times, I remember, there was one group, they were just seeing it as a total joke. They were openly mocking.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

*...you will then always get that group of kids who disrupts everyone else...so they're having a fine old time, and their interactions are good, but their interactions are bothering everybody else and having a negative impact.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

Though we do not know to what extent this affects students, the evidence from programme practitioners qualitatively illuminates yet another variation of programme experience which may influence outcomes. In addition to those being affected by disruptive or cruel behaviour, the final interpersonal influence is in relation to competitive structure of the activity, where a team may feel hard done by or confused by their loss, or have their initial fears confirmed, that not only they wouldn't win, but the 'usual suspects' would be victorious:

*...if you end up, and obviously, going back to that thing about... 'yay, and this team's won and you're all fantastic...bye...' sometimes, you'll hear teams going 'well, if I'd have been with them, I'd have won.' And you'll hear that, 'well their team did really well, because they had so and so, who's good at maths,' you know...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

*...do the same people always win? Which is often the case. Because it often is. It's 'Oh god, it's them again.'*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 4).

One school based educator summed up the risks a competitive format poses, where students' variable performance affects their experience and outcomes:

*...the reality is...that competition engages those that are doing well and disengages those who are falling away...the students start and they're all in the same hall...most of them think 'I've got a chance' and then they can see...other teams moving ahead and the paths diverge. So... I would think that the reality is that competition works for those who are on the more successful side and disengages those who are on the less successful side.*

(School Based Educator 3).

This evidence helps illuminate that some students may feel their inability to win in a competition as some sort of injustice: they didn't have the right teammates, the same people always win, or they simply haven't got a chance compared to the team or teams that surge ahead. This insight is important because in a one day competition, where often large numbers of students participate, a student is *more likely to be a loser* than a winner (given the logistics of an experience with 80 to 300 students participating). The possible negative effects of

losing for some students, given the evidence provided by programme practitioners, appears significantly under-theorised in guidance. This is despite the evidence provided by programme practitioners that those who do well are likely to be existing high achievers, which may be benefiting from some existing social advantage. Therefore, it is also possible that students will be experiencing the corresponding disadvantage, indicated by resigned comments such as ‘Oh god, it’s them again...’ (uttered when the usual, high achievers consistently win). I also notice the use of the phrase “less successful”, rather than the more direct description, which would be loser, and I return to the ripple effects of this discomfort in Chapter 6. As well as these interpersonal issues, there are also institutional themes which programme practitioners discussed.

#### **4.4.3 Institutional Setting**

In terms of ‘for whom is CEE not working so well? In relation to the institutional setting, evidence from programme practitioners relates to institutional unpreparedness and incoherence, the position of teachers and the unsustainability of (some) schools’ programmes.

An institution which does not prepare students, does not ensure students make meaning from an activity or does not create a coherent programme of activity produces negative effects for students in terms of stress and experiencing the activity as ‘a blur’:

*...it’s probably somewhere between 50 and 100, who I’ve ever seen cry.... You know I’ve had some who’ve said ‘You know, I’m not really good at pitching...’ or ‘I don’t want to be videoed,’ or some for whom, if you’re running bigger challenges, definitely... the whole stress of being in those kind of environments, they didn’t want to be. **They weren’t adequately prepared for it.***

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3, emphasis added).

Another practitioner echoes this idea, describing, that with a Short Form activity, students “are just told...go in that room, do something for a day...” with the result that “it’s all just a blur for a lot of kids I think” (Commissioner Manager 1).

This sort of short term, discrete activity, can be unsettling in that students may not know what they’re doing or why they are doing it:

*I’ve seen that all students, in some cases, just don't see the point of it. They don't understand why they are being taken out of school to do an enterprise education competition or any enterprise education Because it doesn't go towards your exam results directly.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 1).

In the context of an enterprise activity planned into the schedule enrichment days which could include content about healthy schools, safeguarding and drugs, one programme practitioner said they asked students what these activities meant to them and whether they liked them:

*I asked them ‘Well, do you like it?’ and they were like ‘No, awful. I prefer my normal lessons. I don’t know what I’m doing.’ And then, they roll these people in... healthy eating for half a day. A one day enterprise competition. It’s like why do it? It has no meaning to the student.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 4).

This programme practitioner linked this situation to the **lack of coherent planning** within a school and instead going through the process of ‘ticking a box’ by doing a discrete activity:

*We're doing it because we're ticking a box, whoever's box that is... we're not doing it because we've actually seriously sat down as a staff and decided what skills we want our students to have, or what enterprise experiences we want them to have.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 4).

This lack of involvement of teachers in planning may create a knock-on effect, where educators do not participate in activity:

*...you know if they [the teacher] just see it as an opportunity to have a day, or, you know a series of days off curriculum where they can catch up with their marking or whatever...it's not going to be the quality of impact...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 6).

Another consultant identified that teachers “*often sit back*” but also observed that when teachers have someone come in and ‘deliver’ that “*they don't really know what their role is, so they don't really actively take part*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 4). This consultant summarised that whole days off timetable are “*quite chaotic*” and no one is sure what the “*so-what?*” is, or “*why are we doing it?*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 4). While another consultant characterised some teachers as “*stood at the back, having a coffee and watching it happen*”, they also conceded that such activities feel “*slightly artificial*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 5).

Alongside the issue that teachers are not engaged in the process, another problem if such activity is not embedded, but remains discrete and reliant on outside providers, is the sustainability of activity:

*...it's not at all embedded, and I think with that, comes the question of sustainability, Because the money goes and there's no funding for that activity and then how can it be continued...?*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 5).

This evidence from programme practitioners signposts that a lack of teacher support or the teacher not knowing what their role is, will limit both the impact of the activity for the student and the sustainability of the programme. These comments also connect to evidence in the previous section (in relation to more positive effects and what is leveraged in the environment) regarding the importance of the role of the teacher in helping create positive effects.

In relation to the teacher, what is also discussed by programme practitioners is the stress that this model can create for them, in terms of times pressures, financial stress and workload stress:

*...in a world where schools, let's get real, schools are driven by GCSE results and attainment progression. The funding is tight and they're less and less likely to be able to afford to do those things, and where teachers who are under pressure, will complain very often about the disruption that's caused by these special enterprise activities which mean that suddenly they've lost two lessons of English or maths or whatever...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 5).

*...going to a one day competition model, off timetable...that's quite distressing in lots of ways...that actually puts a lot of teachers under a lot of pressure, because they've got such a lot on, they don't want to be giving up their time to do a one-off thing...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 4).

*Often if you're buying a competition in, people will do it for you, I won't say it's minimum effort, because I think they're a lot of effort, but then they're very expensive as well.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 4).

This provides an alternative perspective on teacher experiences, where 'for whom' a programme is not working so well also extends to the teacher, who, for example is put under pressure to deliver an activity with low perceived value, or the teacher whose teaching and the progress of their students is disrupted, or an enterprise coordinator whose funding is tight and the cost of 'a day' is expensive but gets a box ticked. Such possibilities provide a better picture of the range of possible challenges educators face in relation to Short Form CEE activities. In the final section of evidence, data related to the infra-structural system are presented.

#### **4.4.4 Infrastructural System**

In terms of 'for whom is CEE not working so well? in relation to the infrastructural system, programme practitioners provided evidence related to the relative advantage and disadvantages that exist for students, school, funders and wider society. In previous sections we gained insights that Short Form CEE leverages advantages and experiences from the home setting, which are difficult for schools to reproduce, meaning that students from

disadvantaged or underprivileged home settings which do not equip them for activities, may feel further disadvantaged:

*...those things that you have at the starting line can come from preparation in the school or from social setting, or from parental setting...[but]...because you're less prepared, you do less well, and I suppose therefore you see that there's somebody there who is going to do better and so you...I can imagine you think 'whatever situation I'm going to come across in life, there's always going to be somebody better than me, so I'm destined always to be second best...*

(School Based Educator 3).

This type of negative effect is quite the opposite of the confidence building and 'can do' attitude outcomes sought for individuals and discussed in the introduction to this thesis. In policy and guidance, positive outcomes for individuals are expected to translate to beneficial social effects such as employment and social mobility. However, the short term nature of activities and difficulty in tracking students means that providers agree that impact is not well understood:

*...I think that...one of the challenges, and obviously there's data challenges as well, is in terms of how you can track the young people. You know, you can't keep a direct relationship with those young people once you've delivered a programme, that's all managed by the school, so there are issues around how you capture data and how you track young people... that make it difficult to really understand the true impact.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 6).



In addition to effects (or lack of knowledge about effects) for students, it is suggested that another result of one day competitions is that they may erode capacity and institutionalise schools into a certain type of provision:

*I think it's negative in terms of the capacity it creates within institutions, because they end up only delivering that kind of activity and what it trains students to think enterprise education and entrepreneurship is....so for me, that is the negative downside.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3).

In addition to the possibility of institutionalised practice, for students (and society more generally), the recommendations to pursue a one day competition may also set up unrealistic and unhelpful expectations, for example overestimating the financial rewards of self-employment and under estimating the rates of failure:

*...unfortunately, this style of enterprise education...Dragon's Den, make a million, it really did not help. Because it was like saying, you know 'You come up with a bright idea, you pitch in and get your funding and suddenly you can buy a Porsche' and that was a really inappropriate thing to be putting in front of youngsters...it's not realistic for a start. They seldom got the story about the failure rate of new ventures, so you know, it's just playing around with it.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 5).

Because such issues are taught in a “*simplistic fashion*” in a one day challenge they are “*not meaningful*” and what such activities achieve is “*very, very limited*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 3). In relation to such short term challenges, one provider commented:

*As I said, I'm giving kids a taste of something, but I'm not even sure it's well understood what they're really getting a taste of. The educational value of all of that activity, I would argue is very low.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3).

Whilst this provider is not sure what 'kids are getting a taste of', non-competitive providers link competitive activities with the competitive cultures more generally:

*I think it...comes back...to your values, what you value in life. And I feel right at the beginning, as a child, if you're just put in a competitive world, and no other world, it's like anything isn't it, you're only given one side of the story. You've not got the whole story, so if it's just competitiveness, and that's how you're taught, that's all you're going to know.*

(Consultant Provider Non-Competitive 1).

This cooperative practitioner makes a link between such values and the world of work and business, but identifies different (cooperative) business models that they aim students to understand:

*I work in very deprived areas, and I've said to a lot of these students, that you know, you could set up a cooperative window cleaning service for example, you could set up a cooperative alternative to Deliveroo. You know, you could actually, don't just sit there thinking I'm not important. There's so many things in your community that you could have money from, and gain money from, if you were just given that opportunity.*

(Consultant Provider Non-Competitive 1).

Such possibilities (regarding cooperative action) were not discussed by competitive programme practitioners, but rather it was sometimes acknowledged that one day competitions may support stereo-types:

*I don't see a scenario where anything in those activities is highly transformative of any particular social issues...And I don't feel that in their current format they do much to challenge any of those stereotypes...because fundamentally they are a Dragon's Den-ey thing, they are pretty masculine in nature. They are, they reinforce many of the stereotypes of who entrepreneurs are, who enterprising people are.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 3).

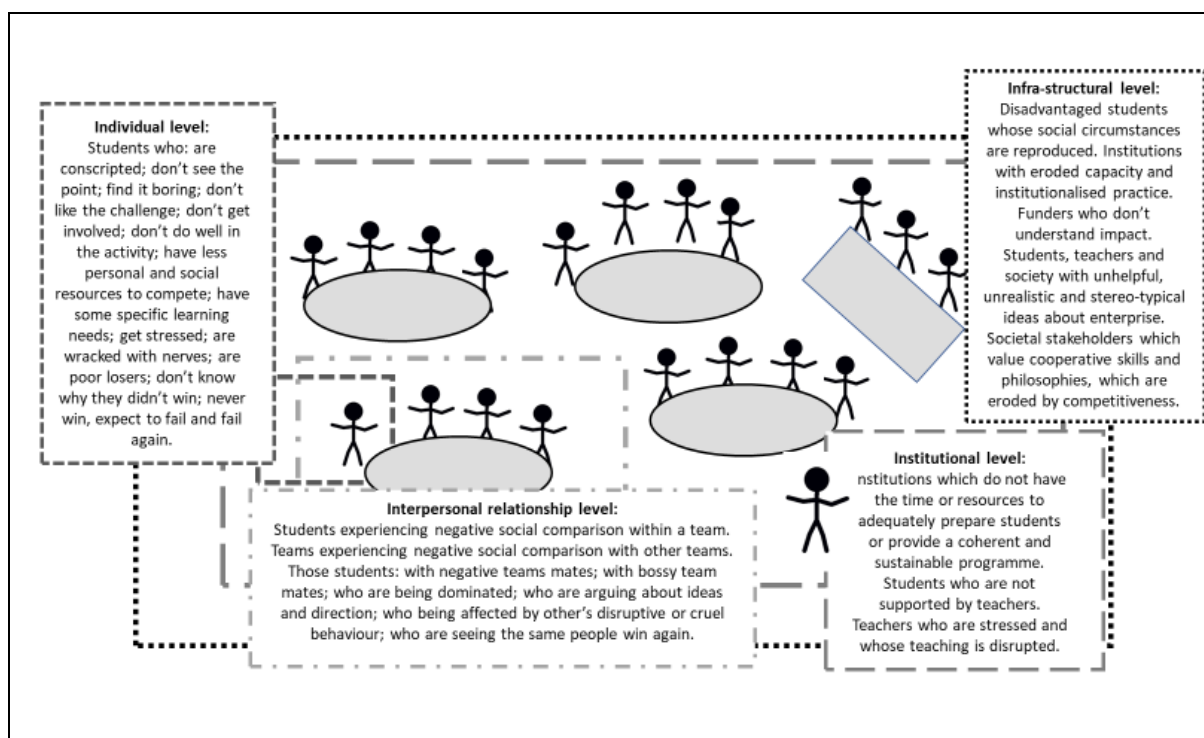
Overall, evidence from programme practitioners in preceding sections is effective in not only illuminating the possible (negative) effects that may be generated within Short Form CEE and the variation of experience for students, but also indicating, unsurprisingly, that a wider, social culture (characterised as more competitive and less cooperative), is at least supported, if not further reinforced, through such activities. As Pawson (2006; 2013), suggests, realistic approaches aim to reveal complexity, and evidence from programme practitioners demonstrates that we cannot **assume** that providing Short Form CEE will develop students' skills and confidence and lead to positive social outcomes when so much variation of experience exists and when students may experience and interpret interventions in different ways.

In the following section a diagram is used to summarise the key themes related to programme practitioners' evidence.

#### 4.4.5 Summary – For Whom is Short Form CEE Not Working so Well?

Figure 5 summarises information relating to the four layers of context to develop the realistic conceptual framework for Competitive Enterprise Education presented earlier in the thesis (in section [1.11.2](#)), to develop a picture of: for whom is Short Form CEE not working so well?

By organising data regarding more negative effects in relation to the different layers of context, and re-contextualising data from the perspective of searching for evidence regarding ‘For whom Short Form CEE is not working so well’, new light is shed on the significant variation in student experience, possible (unintended) outcomes for students, teachers and the school and beyond. Critically, we have a more realistic understanding of the contextual conditions that influence effects – positive and negative –in Short Form CEE.



**Figure 5 - For Whom is Short Form CEE Not Working So Well?**

In the following chapter evidence from programme practitioners regarding Long Form CEE is presented.

## **4.5 Summary of Chapter**

This chapter presented findings related to Short Form Competitive Enterprise Education.

The chapter introduced how findings were structured and then described programmes in practitioners own words. This included illuminating the shorthand used by programme practitioners to describe programmes and the type of content in, and logistical arrangements for, Short Form CEE programmes. The variations which can be made to Short Form CEE are presented, which showed the flexibility and adaptability of the activity, within a template of setting a team based challenge (lasting a day or less), having students publicly present ideas and choosing a winner or winners.

Data was then re-described from a realistic perspective by structuring material around the Four Is (layers of context relating to the individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural), and considering it through a realistic lens. The lens was provided by posing two realistic questions: what is Short Form CEE leveraging from the context to help generate more positive effects, and for whom is Short Form CEE not working so well?

The chapter presented revised diagrams which summarised elements at the individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural layer which illuminated resources pre-existing in the context which are leveraged to help create more positive effects or contextual factors which were linked to more negative effects for individuals, teachers, schools and wider society in Short Form CEE.

The chapter provided a more detailed picture of what is happening in Short Form CEE programmes, and the variation of experiences and outcomes possible.

# 5 Theorising Long Form Competitive Enterprise Education

## 5.1 Structure of Findings

This chapter presents findings in relation to Long Form Competitive Enterprise Education (Long Form CEE). Typically, Long Form CEE consists of programmes such as student mini companies and long term competitions where teams from different schools start up and run enterprises and work towards a public presentation of their work at an event where judges present a prize or prizes.

To develop an understanding of this type of intervention, this findings chapter adopts a similar structure to Chapter 4. It begins in the concrete, that is, with descriptions of what happens in these programmes, in programme practitioners' own words. Then, findings about *more positive effects* and *more negative effects* are organised in relation to the four layers of context (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006). These layers of context or 'Four Is' – individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural - were discussed in Chapter 3 and are important for researchers of complex social programmes to consider. The data organised against the four layers of context is interpreted from the perspective of two realistic questions. In relation to more positive effects, the interpretation of data is guided by thinking through: 'What is Long Form CEE leveraging from the environment to generate more positive effects?'. In relation to more negative effects, interpretation of data is guided by considering 'For whom is Long Form CEE not working so well?' As discussed in section [1.11.1](#), the outcomes of a programme may be positive effects for individuals, such as the skills and knowledge, motivation and confidence that are assumed to be generated in policy and guidance and described in the linear conceptualisation of CEE. However, there may also be unintended and unforeseen outcomes which have not been considered in policy or

guidance but for which the data provides evidence. The ‘effects’ that are spoken about in the findings are implicit within the text, that is, they exist where programme practitioners data can be linked to some positive or negative event, experience or outcome. Description and some interpretation is provided to help build the backbone of a narrative (Pawson, 2021), that better illuminates the influence of different layers of context, and the pre-existing resources in these layers, on what is happening in practice. This approach enables a re-contextualisation or *re-description* of data from a realistic perspective, in order to *see something as something else* (Danermark et al., 2002). This process, which leans on the approach of a realistic thematic analysis (Wiltshire and Ronkainen, 2021), facilitates the emergence of themes which illuminate areas of under-theorisation of these commonly provided programmes, which are discussed in Chapter 6. Now the overall structure of the chapter has been introduced, findings are presented in relation to Long Form CEE.

## **5.2 Description – Long Form CEE in Programme Practitioners Own Words**

In the following section descriptions of interventions are provided to orient us towards what programme practitioners mean when they are talking about Long Form CEE, shorthand that practitioners use when talking about Long Form CEE, and distinguishing features such as the ‘programme arc’, ‘programme support’ and the ‘finale’.

### **5.2.1 Programme Shorthand**

Programme practitioners often use *the name of the programme* to talk about the phenomenon of Long Form CEE. School Based Educators, Consultant Providers and Commissioner Managers tend to mention the same or similar well-known programmes run by organisations such as NGOs, programmes run by local or regional governmental authorities such as

borough or city councils within their localities, or specific programmes run by business organisations or charities within their geographical areas.

Apart from specific programme names, distinctions are sometimes made between an “*in-house*” (School Based Educator 1) Long Form competition, for example, where students from the same school or students from the same multi-academy trust compete against each other vs an “*inter-school*” (School Based Educator 3) Long Form competition, where teams from different schools compete against each other in a process. Whilst a small number of interviewees described longer-term in-curriculum challenges which involve students from the same class (Consultant Provider Competitive 2; Consultant Provider Competitive 5), there was more elaboration of interventions that align with the extra-curricular student ‘mini-company’ format, which is discussed in the following section.

### **5.2.2 Programme Arc**

Descriptions of Long Form CEE tend to involve a programme practitioner describing a particular arc where there would be some launch event for students in schools, school-based teams developing and delivering a business idea, and then the programme ending with some public judgement of outcomes. In terms of launch, this might happen in a school assembly (School Based Educator 4), or through information distributed by relevant staff, for example business studies teachers (Consultant Provider 2). Sometimes, School Based Educators talk about a facilitator coming in to “*kick off*” a programme and offering seed funding and exciting prizes (School Based Educator 4), and sometimes providers speak of promoting self-employment and “*being your own boss*” in a launch (Consultant Provider 2):

*...when I go and do the assemblies... my bog standard way of doing the presentation [to launch the competition] is ‘who’s ever thought of being self-employed?’ and you get about three hands up...and then I start going ‘who wants to be their own boss,*



*who wants to be in charge of their own earning potential, who wants to book their own holidays, and all of a sudden the hands start going up and you're 'right, well that's self-employment' ....so because of the way it is pitched, that this is your chance to do what grown-ups do, and see what it's like.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

A programme may take place over the course of a number of weeks or months. For example, from 8 weeks (Consultant Provider Competitive 4), to almost an academic year (Consultant Provider Competitive 7; School Based Educator 2).

Whilst the focus of a Long Form CEE programme may be starting a business, some programme practitioners described variations of this, including fund raising programmes for charities (School Based Educator 5), and socially focused programmes where enterprises tackle issues in the community (Consultant Provider Competitive 7). In the social variation, the provider emphasises that social action projects based on students' interests is an inclusive way to engage students:

*...it's passion led...their interest can drive the project...so it's not bound by, you know, any sort of particular limitations...students who are very passionate about their projects, their projects come first, they're all relevant to the competition, it's not like they have to work on a project... which fits within a sets of guidelines which is relevant to competition A or competition B... and if you're outside of that, you're not relevant.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 7).

In another variation, a special educational needs teacher used the framework of a competition to run an entirely inclusive enterprise opportunity for students, where developing and

executing enterprising fund-raising ideas was experienced by all students (School Based Educator 5):

*It wasn't really a competition for our students, they just knew that we wanted to raise money...they knew that other companies and some other schools joined in with the challenges...But there was never pressure that I put on the students to do anything better than we were doing. Anything we did was just amazing, and we just saw it as a fantastic opportunity to raise money...whilst practicing all of the skills that we would want to embed in the curriculum anyway.*

(School Based Educator 5).

Another alternative approach was described by a consultant where a curriculum-focused challenge was presented to students, for example challenging physics students to design the sound system for a festival and then a company which is involved in that type of work coming in to evaluate and comment on students' work (Consultant Provider 5), with an element of the evaluation being focused on some skills development:

*...you've got team working skills that are being developed...that's part of the criteria of success, in other words, it's not just academic criteria, otherwise the usual suspects end up doing well...to be picked as the best, if you like the competitive element, you need to have demonstrated good collaborative skills. So, it might be cooperation is part of the criteria...*

(Consultant Provider 5).

Whilst these examples demonstrate different possible experiences (an inclusive philosophy and an approach where a competitive experience is integrated in the curriculum), it was more common for school based educators to discuss programmes where students were working

*outside the curriculum to launch a business* and explicitly *competing against teams in other schools*. These are the types of mini student company activities which have typically been the subject of impact evaluation previously (c.f. Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Oosterbeek 2008, 2010; Athayde, 2009, 2012).

In these types of long term, extra-curricular business-enterprise focused competitions, the common conclusion of a programme is some sort of public judgement. In some programmes there is a live final for the competition, sometimes this is described as a “*glossy event*” (Commissioner Manager 1), an “*awards dinner*” where students put on their “*posh frocks*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2). These events can feel “*very different*”, for example, a special educational needs teacher described an event as “*very posh*” and “*like being at a wedding*”, prompting the educator to say that “*a lot of money*” had been spent on the event that they would prefer to see distributed in some other way than an awards ceremony (School Based Educator 5).

Sometimes, in these types of programmes seed funding is provided. Whilst sums of £25 to £100 is more common (discussed by School Based Educators 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), funding can be much higher, sometimes in the form of a loan, ranging from a couple of hundred pounds, up to £1000 (Consultant Provider Competitive 4). In some schools, a competitive process takes place to decide who gets the seed funding, for example, School Based Educator 4 describes holding a “*Dragon’s Den Day*” to interview 30 teams and then funding the best ideas, those with the “*best business plan*” or teams who might be “*most profitable*” or have “*the best chance of winning*”.

### **5.2.3 Programme Support**

In addition to the framework provided by a programme – the arc of a launch, whatever activity teams pursue and a final involving a public judgement of student teams - there may

be additional resources provided for teams and students. Programmes may provide a business mentor or programme coach to teams. For example, Consultant Provider Competitive 2 described being “*called in*” to schools to provide additional help to students, but also described that some schools offered “*no support*” to students during the process.

Some programmes are described as providing “*minor prizes*” or “*interim prizes*” (School Based Educator 3), part way through a process, for example, rewarding teams who have made particularly good progress or adding specific business development challenges, for example a marketing challenge, as a programme component. The criteria of different competitions also varies. For example, as well as working towards a live final, there can be documentation to submit for some programmes, which may require submitting to a programme website or emailing to a programme email address (Consultant Provider 2, Consultant Provider 4, School Based Educator 4).

In addition to support provided by programmes, some schools provide additional help and guidance to students via *their own* resources. For example, School Based Educator 2, described organising weekly check-ins with students and specific workshops in skills such as marketing, finance and business development. School Based Educator 4 described ongoing support such as weekly drop-in sessions, and additional support if students made it to a final.

In addition, School Based Educators (School Based Educators 2, 3 and 4), described that as much work is conducted outside of school time, practical support and expertise that families provide is important.

#### **5.2.4 Finale as Milestone**

Some competition providers remarked that the final public presentation of teams’ efforts should be thought of as a milestone in a longer journey, rather than a finale.

In one socially focused programme, the provider explained:

*...the really, really important thing is that [the presentation and judging] is a book mark in the sense that it's a timing point, it's a milestone, but it's not a climax...the projects continue, the teams continue, some people might leave because they...go into the sixth form or whatever, but the project continues, and a large number of people in that project continue....that's really why we insist that there's students from multiple age groups in each project, it brings a diversity of views and inputs as well, but we really, really make sure that the competition is not the climax in the way it is a climax when literally...nothing happens after the competition event...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 7).

Consultant Provider Competitive 2 also expressed that, in a business-enterprise focused competition, that the finale did not need to mean the end of student involvement in enterprise:

*"...they've got a business they could keep making money from, so it's not just like it goes 'boom, over, end.'"* That competitive programmes support continued engagement may be seen in evidence about students or teams returning to compete for second or third years.

School Based Educator 4, Consultant Provider Competitive 2 and Commissioner Manager 1 all talked about either individual students or teams of students who entered a competition more than once.

Now that we have some descriptions of Long Form CEE, in the following section findings are presented regarding more positive effects and what is being leveraged in the context to achieve them.

## **5.3 Re-Description – What is Long Form CEE Leveraging from the Context?**

As discussed in Chapter 3, researchers interested in understanding how positive and negative effects are generated through interventions should pay attention to four layers of context (Four Is) which exist in social programmes - Individual capacities, Interpersonal relationships, Institutional Settings, and the Infra-structural system (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006). As discussed in section [5.1](#), the outcomes of a programme may be positive effects for individuals, but there may also be unintended and unforeseen outcomes which have not been considered in policy or guidance but for which the data provides evidence. In the following sections the presentation of data regarding more positive and more negative effects are organised in relation to these layers and data is interpreted from the perspective of two realistic questions: first, ‘What existing resources is Long Form CEE leveraging in the environment to help generate positive results? And second, ‘For Whom is Long Form CEE not working so well?’.

### **5.3.1 Individual Capacities**

The first category of resources which already exist in the context which Long Form CEE leverages are individual, that is they reflect the students’ existing mindset, attitudes and capabilities. Regarding this, programme practitioners acknowledge how Long Form CEE benefits from students self-selecting into the process. They tended to identify students with a particular interest in enterprise, those with an existing hobby or craft which could be exploited for the competition, those who were high achieving and hard-working (often girls), those who experienced early success in the competition and/or who had enjoyed previous competitive success, as the types of students who were volunteering and doing well in Long Form CEE.

In comparing the impact of longer term competitions with one day competitions, self-selection was identified as crucial:

*I think that [the long term competition] is more impactful than the one day. And the reason I believe it's more impactful is that it's 100% extra-curricular and optional...if you're going to be self-employed, you've got to love your business.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

School Based Educator 3 echoed this sentiment, saying that long term competitions were better at broadening horizons and helping students develop and understand their skills “because they tend to involve students who are particularly interested in enterprise...” demonstrating how the programmes rely on some pre-existing interest. A commissioner manager reinforces this, discussing the idea that a long term competition is a way of distilling down students who are interested:

*...it was about distilling the participants down to ones who were more likely or had more of an appetite to do this sort of thing, rather than the other type of activity [one day competitions] which is just done to kids...*

(Commissioner Manager 1)

As well as inferring the potentially coercive quality of Short Form, compulsory activities which are just ‘done to’ students, this practitioner goes on to talk about a longer term competition reaching those students with the **necessary traits** to perform:

*...I suppose we were distilling down people who maybe had more of those entrepreneurial traits. But I appreciate for the Year 7s, that is it was launched in*

*assembly, obviously all the Y7s would love to do it, this is a great idea, yeah? An hour later, most of the teams would have collapsed...*

(Commissioner Manager 1)

This description demonstrates the idea that **existing skills** (as well as existing interest) are important in relation to what Long Form CEE leverages from the environment, and that whilst younger students (Y7s) are interested, they are characterised as not necessarily having the capabilities to hold together a team.

More evidence about personal capacities was provided in relation to **who does well** in competitions, with high achieving girls, sometimes from specific social groups, being mentioned by programme practitioners:

*...we have been dominated by bright, academic, white middle class girls... It's always been predominantly girls. No matter how much you try and push it to the boys.*

(School Based Educator 4).

*I would say the schools programme, in terms of 'on stage' ...reminded me exactly of [our higher education competition], where we had 20 teams represented by their team leader on stage, and 19 were female and one was male...that was mirrored in schools programme, you know that's definitely what I recall...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 7).

In the next section about interpersonal relationships, we will see evidence about advantages girls have in terms of friendship groups. But regarding individual level advantages, characterisations tended to focus on girls as having two advantages: being more **high**



**achieving** and having existing, **relevant creative hobbies** which they could exploit for a competition.

School Based Educator 4 described the pattern of volunteers at their school:

*It's predominately girls... we've got a lot of quite artistic and creative students....*

*They're [the girls are] into climate change, so they're the ones going out on the climate change marches, and they've just presented to school about how we should do things. They're the ones who represent our student voice.... [they're] ...really high achieving....*

*I think because girls in general work harder than boys at this age in school...it's the bright academic girls who will put themselves forward for things, and the bright academic boys don't, it's the naughtier boys who tend to want to be involved with the...and so something that isn't a particularly good business idea. So, I think it's the idea of doing stuff outside of school perhaps, and the idea of making things and being creative, I just think it appeals more to girls.*

(School Based Educator 4).

These comments illuminate a number of different qualities girls are characterised as having, such as a high achieving mindset, helpful behaviours such as willingness to work hard, experiences of taking part in other school enrichment activities such as student voice and climate organising, and the pre-existence of a creative or crafty hobby or ability which can be utilised for competition purposes. This last point is considered in the following sections, but it shows how **competition criteria may support the involvement** of certain types of students over others, and is something discussed by another programme practitioner:

*...quite often, the majority of [competition] businesses, are crafty based products that they make themselves...and they tend to be in things that the kids enjoy, so if they like sewing, or they like wood work or baking or whatever... so their product is something that they enjoy, they see the results quick when they start making money....those that do well...they have the option of dropping out if they're not enjoying it, if they think, 'well, actually, no I haven't got enough time for this', there's no come back if they drop out... that's fine...*

(Consultant Provider 2).

Here we see that in addition to having an existing skill or hobby to exploit, we can also distinguish another, potentially variable, element of experience: 'doing well', which is characterised as *seeing results quickly* and making money. So, we can better imagine a student with a craft-based hobby, who exploits this for the competition, and who also gets a good reaction to the product and is therefore spurred to continue. The process of this experience, which illuminates the importance of early success, is articulated by a Commissioner Manager:

*...for whatever reason [the student/team] stepped up to the mark to have a go, and...like anything, it's like kids with sport, right 'I'll go and have a go at swimming' and then you're like 'Oh, I've won that' and then for a while that may motivate you to carry on doing it, and then if you get those accolades, that perceived success, whatever's valuable for you, praise at home or praise from your peers or you know, local recognition...then you're more likely to do things, I would suggest.*

(Commissioner Manager 1).

One consultant describes the influence of early success as fundamental to who stays in a competitive process. An element of this ‘success’ is ***making money***, but this is supported by students ***putting in effort***, which can also be contingent on the amount of time they have to put in:

*What I do think is the pattern, is who stays in...the ones that make money fast stay in, so the ones that put effort in at the start, and don't have other pulls on their time, stay in...I'd also say, the ones at schools with more support are more likely to stay in.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

As well as contextual factors at an individual layer, this comment indicates the importance of institutional setting, and wider social factors such as the time (to which we will return later) a student can commit outside of school. This idea of students needing to ***put in their own time*** is reinforced by a school based educator (from a well-resourced setting), who describes the amount of work that students invest in enterprise competitions:

*I think before I moved [from a low-resource school], I did feel, it felt like it wasn't a level playing field because the competition always seemed so good, and it just felt like, how can you be that good when you're the same age, the same group of students.... But since I've worked [in a well-resourced setting] I've started to realise... the students are so driven, that they'll spend time on it to make sure that it's right and they've got such high standards and expectations for themselves, that they're not happy with things unless it's exactly how they want it to be....one of our teams that did well...they were working on their business from like 9 til midnight, two or three times a week, and I think sometimes people don't understand some of the sacrifices that people are actually making in these kinds of schools to take part in everything... the amount of stuff that these students do is phenomenal really, and I think in a lot of*

*ways, that makes it harder for them, because they don't give things up to take on an enterprise project, they just add it to what they're already doing and a lot of these students will be doing 70, 80 hours a week of school work, competition work, extra-curricular activity...they just work a lot, lot harder...*

(School Based Educator 2).

This comment demonstrates the extent of work which needs to happen to progress in a competition and, in addition, how much of this work ***happens outside of school time***.

Thus, whilst having an existing hobby, skill or interest, and the existing mindset to develop that, can “*ignite a competitive instinct amongst some students*” and a competition can give them “*a framework to work with, to explore that idea with a bit more support and structure*” (School Based Educator 2), positive outcomes are also conditioned by the ***time and skill*** to pursue this opportunity.

The quality of competitiveness can be viewed as an outcome of a competition, as explained by School Based Educator 2:

*I think it is one of the outcomes... it does ignite a competitive instinct amongst some students... It ignites something in students that obviously relish a challenge and...are quite creative and like seeing ideas through from start to finish. But it works best in students that have got a real passion for what they're doing...that fits in with something that they've got a real interest in and real engagement with. So, the students it probably works best with have already got that interest in something from outside of school, or things that they're working on, and it's probably giving the more of a framework to work with...*

*...to explore that idea with a bit more support and structure...*

(School Based Educator 2).

This comprehensive description articulates a positive perspective on competitiveness, where it ignites further resources in students through the challenge of a competition. Another educator indicated that there can be excessive competitiveness: *“I think how competitive some of them are, almost to the point of being aggressive, aggressively competitive.”* Whilst we will return to this in the next section in relation to interpersonal relationships, in regard to the competitive process, in terms of winning and losing, ***competitiveness is seen as an advantage***, where ***the desire to win*** can protect individuals from negative impacts of not winning in a competition:

*I think they were disappointed [when they didn't win] ... [but] ....they just bounce back actually, because they said they were going to do something slightly different for the competition next year, so they've already said that they're going to do something slightly different, and so it's not knocked their confidence, they've used it as a learning curve.*

(School Based Educator 4).

From the evidence provided by programme practitioners then, we can see there are a number of helpful elements in the context which Long Form CEE leverages to generate positive results. First, as programmes tend to be voluntary, self-selecting students participate who have an appetite to be involved and relish a challenge. These students are characterised as having qualities and behaviours, such as being high achieving, working hard and having an existing hobby or skill to exploit. Those who experience early success and make money quickly stay in the process; their competitive spirit has been ignited and they have the time,

support and skills to thrive. Even if they don't win, their competitive spirit protects them from feelings of failure by focusing them more on 'what they would do better next time.' Now we will look at the next layer of context, interpersonal relationships.

### 5.3.2 Interpersonal Relationships

The second layer of context to be considered is interpersonal relationships, that is the relationships supporting the intervention, between participants, staff and other stakeholders. Programme practitioners describe the advantages girls have in competitions, related to their *friendship groups* and *ability to communicate* with each other, and how this supports their participation in competitions:

*Girls are keen to sort of, you know they might have more of a sort of close knit community of friends who might think 'oh, let's have a go... let's make a bit of jewellery...let's make a bit of this...it's about more groups of people participating in some school or educational programme... groups of friends you are more likely to get a group of girls who will say oh come on let's go for this, than a group of lads.*

(Commissioner Manager 1)

Describing girls as “*more mature*” than boys, this programme practitioner illuminated the *social bonds* which support girls' programme experience:

*Friendship groups who talk to each other. Rather than lads, at that age, they get a ball and have a kick around and without stereo typing too much, girls are in their bedrooms chatting about things...and boys are more like 'yeah, alright.'*

(Commissioner Manager 1)

We can better imagine how having an existing friendship group, and the tendency to communicate more frequently and meaningfully enables the participation of girls in the team-based structure of an enterprise competition. A school based educator who said that their school entries were dominated by “*middle class white girls*” described other qualities that successful teams shared, including the emergence of a “*natural leader*”, the willingness to “*split up their roles*” and the ability to “*make decisions*” and “*all agree things*” and have a “*clear direction of travel*” (School Based Educator 4). In this particular school, these qualities were necessary to get through a selection process where candidate teams took part in Dragon’s Den day to decide which teams got seed funding:

*...they do it at home you see, so we’re not party to it. We say, go away, come up with your team, come up with your roles and come up with your product and present on this date.*

(School Based Educator 4)

Thus, a friendship group with existing stronger communication and the capacity for team work is useful not just in supporting the initial impulse to volunteer for a competition, but the prospect of progressing if a school has a ***filtering process*** for teams to move through.

Underscoring the benefits of self-selection more broadly, School Based Educator 4, said that they would ***never*** allocate students to teams: “*I want students to choose their teammates, people who they can work with*”, highlighting that participation is conditioned by an ***existing ability to work together***, rather than something that will simply be developed through the process.

Another important quality highlighted in relation to teams is their competitiveness. School Based Educator 4 described teams “*so keen to win*” that they were “*just so, so hyped up and*

*competitive*". Whilst the educator felt they needed to tell such teams *"You need to calm down because you might not win"*, this competitiveness supported teams to be resilient when they failed to win in an enterprise competition and move from feeling disappointed to using their experience as a *"learning curve"*:

*...just them looking back at what they've done, and them saying the reason why we didn't win was perhaps because we needed to do this, and so we'll do this next year and we'll work on it over the summer because there was another team who'd done a similar thing that that team had done, and I thought ours were better, but they ranked higher in the awards, so they were cross and saying 'but we've done this', and I was saying 'yes, but they've done that, and maybe that's what you need to do for next year...' So I think that they, they're quite resilient in that respect and they know what they need to do to improve.*

(School Based Educator 4)

In addition to the existing competitiveness of teams, the ***competitiveness of supporting adults***, such as teachers and/or business advisors or mentors, is discussed as important. School Based Educator 2 identified the *"human capital built up in teachers"*, for example *"how well do they know the competitions, and the requirements of the competitions"*, as important factors in team and school performance, to the extent that it is obvious when a school loses a member of staff with such experience and expertise:

*I think staff, the quality of staff that are involved is key. I think you can almost see that schools go through cycles in competitive enterprise education depended on staffing, and you can in some ways tell when a good staff member leaves a school because, you know, the teams don't turn up at competitions anymore and don't perform as*



*well...and I can definitely think of two or three members of staff who have moved and enterprise provision at that school has just nose-dived.*

(School Based Educator 2)

In discussing staff quality, this educator identified their own competitiveness as a factor in the successful performance of a student team:

*I'd like to think that I've got a good feel for competitions and what's being looked for...I think that definitely comes with experience...I think partly, I think part of the reason is that I'm quite competitive as well. I think I like to see my teams succeed, so I'll keep trying to drive them on, and keep trying to push them forward, so even though I'll see them once a week, I'll always be asking them, 'what's going on, what have you been doing? What have you still got to do? Do you need to do this by this date?' so always trying to give them support, advice and guidance on where they need to be by the next point... I think that's when enterprise education from a competitive element works best in teams, and they succeed the most.*

(School Based Educator 2)

Thus, a competitive teacher, motivated by their own desire to win, can help a team progress by embedding a system of goal setting and accountability that helps keep teams on track and focused on progressing.

This motivation and the supporting of progress through a competition may also be provided by a business mentor, for example, School Based Educator 1, from a less well-resourced school, identified the competitiveness of their sponsoring company as important in a team's progress in one competition:

*...we were paired up with [one company], but other schools had other employers. But [our company] were quite competitive about it because they wanted us to do well. Because we were up against other [companies from the same sector], so I think it was quite...quite good.*

(School Based Educator 1).

Overall, this relationship between teams and a supportive adult is important so that teams “*know that there’s somebody there that they can bounce ideas off*” (School Based Educator 4), someone who can help with “*worries or concerns or they’re having a bit of a wobble*” (School Based Educator 4), or to “*help students move through those dark and difficult places [so] there’s less likelihood of them giving up*” (School Based Educator 2).

Thus, while business mentors might be provided by a programme, and could hypothetically be trained and developed to support teams throughout a programme, the quality, expertise and competitive inclinations of staff within a school is something pre-existing in the context which may be more difficult to influence but is identified as advantageous in supporting teams to stay in and progress in a competition. The resources that institutional settings invest in competitions can also vary greatly, as we will see in the next section.

### **5.3.3 Institutional Setting**

The third layer of context to be considered is the institutional setting, that is the character of a place, the culture and ethos. In terms of the character of an institutional setting, programme practitioners which describe positive outcomes for competitions tend to be distinctive in the support they provide students.

School Based Educator 4 is from a school with a diverse catchment, but which could be characterised as neither very well resourced nor very challenged. School participation in an

enterprise competition is supported by senior leadership and staff, and the programme is described as “so fantastic for the school”, meaning that “*the whole staffing body supports it, the head is very, very behind it*” which results in the co-ordinating educator getting “*time away from lessons to be involved*” (School Based Educator 4). ***The resources this school is able to provide for students is significant:***

*...they get a lot of support from the get-go. They have weekly drop in sessions. They have weekly meetings... a room is booked out and they're all in there with a person who's come in each week to do an aspect of their work and help them work on their business, and then people come in to work on their final report with them...*

(School Based Educator 4)

While some of these visitors are people from the competition programme, School Based Educator 4 still has to spend time arranging for students to “*come off timetable*”, which creates additional time (in the school day) for teams to work on their business. In addition, “*other friends of the school who have got their own business*” come in and run sessions on topics such as social media, marketing and finance, which are over and above what the competition provides, showing how this school enhances its support for students with resources beyond the programme (School Based Educator 4).

In a more ***well-resourced school***, a School Based Educator describes the school-level support that is offered, including a staff mentor for each team who provides support and guidance, weekly meetings on specific topics such as specific business areas and links the ability to provide this to the advantageous resources in the school setting:

*...we've got a smaller teaching load, so we teach fewer hours and we've got smaller class sizes, so obviously, we've got...less pressure, less stress, less need to stay up to*

*work late in the evenings, so you've got more time to give during those lunch time and after school support slots. And you don't feel like it's impacting on the quality of your life to give up time at lunch time, it doesn't mean you're going to be working til midnight instead of eleven o'clock, and I think that staff are more willing to give up their time because of that...*

(School Based Educator 2)

Having worked in different settings (well-resourced and significantly less well-resourced settings), this educator was able to compare how such different settings influenced the level of support staff are able to provide:

*...where I worked previously [in a school with less resources] it would be, if you were doing extra-curricular stuff, without being paid, out of the goodness of your heart, it was possibly... you were in a minority, possibly, whereas now, if you don't contribute to some form of extra-curricular activity, then you are definitely in the minority, because there's an expectation that as a member of staff...you do it, but you've also got the, you also feel like you've got the time, the support and the, you know, the ability to do it, to a standard that you're happy with as well...*

(School Based Educator 2)

Therefore, teams supported by School Based Educator 2, are not just supported by an experienced, competitive teacher (as described in the previous section), but also, one who works in a setting where there are **sufficient resources** that the additional time and effort to be involved, and compete effectively, can be facilitated. In addition, at this school, School Based Educator 2 says that participation in a competition is **supported by wider school**

**commitments** to enterprise education, with a “*coherent enterprise pathway*” where students take part in useful preparatory activities from Year 7 upwards:

*...students in every year group get to take part in some enterprise related activity...either enterprise clubs where students work on problems in a more non-competitive environment, but we do also encourage students to take part in competitive competitions. And we also enter them in many other challenges and competitions and put students in for other bespoke competitions as they come, such as challenges provided by universities, or businesses or other organisations...*

(School Based Educator 2)

This educator acknowledges the **role of material resources** in this provision, saying that being “*better resourced financially*” means that the school can provide more “*one-off*” and “*smaller scale*” competitions for younger students, which “*equip them with...skills that are needed later on in bigger competitions*” (School Based Educator 2). In addition to these material advantages, a culture of competitiveness is supported by “*the almost unlimited number of competitions that take place through the curriculum*” where students take part in scientific competitions, essay writing competitions, spelling bees, STEM projects and such like, leading this educator to conclude that this school culture is a crucial supporting factor in the capacities of students and quality of work they produce:

*I think the culture is massively important, it is massively important. In my old place [a lower-resourced setting] the culture was nowhere near as hard working...we had cohorts of students where we'd have a cluster of students who had incredibly high standards and could work together to produce outstanding work, but it wasn't consistent, it wasn't consistent year after year, it very much depended on the cohort of students you got, and whether you could have a critical mass of like 4, 5, 6 students*

*who could really drive things forward, whereas [here, in the well-resourced setting] you're pretty much guaranteed that you've got that every year...*

(School Based Educator 2)

The level of support provided in different settings *is* important in generating effects in competitions; as one consultant provider identifies its influence on a most basic outcome, ***competition retention***:

*...the ones at schools with more support are more likely to stay in. So, if they go to [names a more well-resourced school], who every week, have a...session, or...pull...kids out of class once a week to attend a session that has an adult, be that a teacher or a volunteer... they tend to have a higher retention rate in their schools...than the ones where they go 'well, we'll support you in entering, but all we're going to do is email you the stuff that comes out, and that's it... you...you don't get as many staying in there.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2)

This school-level support “*varies massively*”, and this consultant says “*...that is not something, as an organising type person, that I can control*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2), and yet: we now have a clearer view that this is a contextual factor that influences who is more likely to stay in a competition. In addition to the varying school-level resources and support, the pattern of variation also extends beyond school, to the infra-structural system, as we see in the following section.

### 5.3.4 Infrastructural System

The fourth layer of context to be considered is the infra-structural system, which includes the public, community and political support and resources around the programme. In terms of support and resources outside of school which are leveraged in the generation of more positive effects, programme practitioners describe the family, and the influence of family culture alongside the practical and material help parents provide as important.

This School Based Educator generalised about what type of student tends to volunteer, linking participation to ***high achieving family background***:

[volunteers are] *really high achieving...and I think a lot of that comes from home... [they're from] very high achieving families, professional backgrounds, very driven and very keen to do well, so I think there's a lot of support from home there.*

(School Based Educator 4)

Another school based educator links parental support and engagement to performance in the competition, identifying practical ways - such as taking an active interest and being able to take students to trade fairs – in which ***parents provide a competitive advantage*** for students:

*...we're also well-resourced in terms of parental engagement, which is, you know, really important in longer term enterprise competitions. So, we've got lots of parents who run their own businesses, or are high up in businesses, and they take an active interest in what the children are doing...they'll be talking to them about 'what are you doing at the moment? What are the next steps for your business? Have you thoughts about doing this?' and they'll be running them around for the competitions as well so if they identify trade fairs that they want to go to in their own time, they'll be taking them there, spending the day with them... those are **all the little extras**, that you know*

*possibly give you an advantage in a national competition, to say that you've one outside of school and have sold, you know, effectively to strangers, that's seems to be something that's very important in enterprise competitions...*

(School Based Educator 2)

This comment also signposts another element of the infra-structural system that is important in the generation of effects – the criteria of a competition. School Based Educator 2 describes the “*all the little extras*” such as selling at a trade fair, because “*this seems to be important in competitions.*”

Therefore, we can more clearly see from this evidence that student success in a competition where criteria or judging favours selling to the public outside of school ***leverages the support of parents*** who ***have the time, money and opportunity*** to take students to selling opportunities. Another educator talks about the importance of this, saying that parental support is important at selling events organised by school, where supportive parents are “*bringing their child with their stuff, turning up to help them carry it in, set up their stalls...*” (School Based Educator 4).

As well as this practical support, ***the culture from home*** is also important. We heard from School Based Educator 2, in the previous chapter, that students in a well-resourced school benefit from extra-curricular activities provided by the home, such as gymnastics, swimming and horse riding, where students learn to be resilient and cope with failure. In Long Form CEE, this support and culture from home is important ***in the results it influences***, but it is difficult to “*transplant*”:

*...I think the culture bit from home is almost impossible to change... most competitive enterprise takes place at home, you know you might get an hour a week at school with*



*a group of students, but they'll be doing 10, 15 hours a week outside of school on it themselves, with no supervision from school, so I think a lot of the drive comes from, you know, can come from parents, which instil in the students, that drive and that expectation that they should be striving to perform at the best level that they can...*

(School Based Educator 2)

In this comment we see that over and above the additional resources a school provides, there is another layer of advantageous support that students have at home: parents with drive, who instil that drive and attitude in students:

*...there's just that expectation that when you take part in something, you do it to the very best of your abilities, and I think that that's ingrained in every student, that no matter what you do, you should give it your very, very best shot...*

(School Based Educator 2)

In Long Form CEE where the bulk of the work happens at home, as well as “drive”, entrepreneurial parents, and competitive experience and high expectations are also useful:

*...having access to parents that are business owners is a huge advantage...for students. Probably being in the kind of environment where competition exists...and students are used to competing and want the challenge to try to win competitions and achieve regional or national acclaim, is quite important. And I think it's almost, without students being arrogant, there's almost an expectation that students do perform at that level...*

(School Based Educator 2)

Other educators talked about the benefit of having parents in business, including School Based Educator 3, who distinguished between parents in a trade, and parents in a professional business who are “*well up the social hierarchy*”, and School Based Educator 4, who in a similar vein, identified high achieving business professionals as helpful.

Such advantageous family circumstances are obviously beyond the scope of programme planning, but school based educators provide evidence that these background factors influence *who volunteers* for the programme, *who stays in* the programme and *related experiences* that are advantageous in competitive situations:

*...students who come from families that are well up in the social hierarchy, and who are exposed to situations from quite a young age where they had to talk to people they're not totally familiar with... and they're in unfamiliar situations, and they enter competitions of different kinds, the horse riding competitions...so... the social circles within which they exist... I do believe, because so many of the parents are entrepreneurial, either owning their own businesses, or being in senior positions at other peoples' businesses, that those kinds of skills rub off on the students...*

(School Based Educator 3)

Here we see the educator linking students home setting with the context of the wider social hierarchy and the advantages this provides students (skills, business expertise, other competitive experiences and wider milieu of socialising and experiencing unfamiliar situations) and that these advantages are useful in competitions.

In addition, these social differences may be more or less amplified by the competition, with one provider discussing a more elite competition, and noticing a pattern of competition performance success:

*An interesting slant on this would be a comprehensive vs public school divide, because if you look at [an elite enterprise competition], I've been lucky enough to go to a few of those, you know, the finals of that. You know, it's private schools. They do it in that prep time they have on an afternoon they have between four and six before their parents come and get them, but you know, you know very few comprehensive truly comprehensive schools seem to really excel, really well at the high level.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 4).

School Based Educator 2 shares an interesting evaluation while comparing the experience of entering enterprise competitions in lower resourced and challenged settings and the experience of entering them in a very well-resourced setting. Referring to competition outcomes for lower resourced schools, they said:

*...I don't think it automatically means they [students from lower resourced settings] can't compete or can't succeed, but I feel like it takes an exceptional student to do really well.... Whereas I feel like at the moment [in a very well-resourced setting] I've probably got some very good students, who are not exceptional, who do very well....*

(School Based Educator 2)

Here the educator is talking about the likely success of schools and students in the same competition but from different social backgrounds and identifying how advantageous backgrounds influence results. It is harder for some (less well-resourced students) to succeed, even if **they are** exceptional.

This educator reflects that when they worked in a less well-resourced school they felt the playing field wasn't level, but now they are in a very well-resourced school, their thinking has changed:

*...I think the level playing field is one that I'd disagree with. I think they've got...I think obviously students have got access to more resources, more support. But I also think they've got more pressure, a lot more pressure from home, a lot more pressure from school, they're given a far bigger workload in terms of homework, and I think they've got far more extra-curricular going on, which puts a huge amount of pressure on their time, and I think they have to make a lot of, you know, sacrifices in their personal life to take part in these competitive projects, which I think is the thing which people outside of that kind of environment don't see and don't realise.*

(School Based Educator 2)

This *re-evaluation of the relative influence of resources* is interesting and will be returned to in Chapter 6, when findings are discussed.

Educators do point out that competition providers have it within their power to make a competition more or less accessible or more or less inclusive for different types of schools and social circumstances:

*...where the prizes are much, much more evenly spread...[some competitions] could learn a lesson from this [and] that the people who are involved in the judging...seem to be involved in the programme right from the outset, they don't just turn up on the day and judge... they're involved throughout the process, and because they're involved throughout the process, I think they have a better understanding that although a team may not be the best overall...*

(School Based Educator 3)

School Based Educator 3 says that providers must “*do their utmost to ensure that every student comes out feeling that they have **achieved something** out of it*”, as this feeling

“enthuses students to carry on”. However, business and businesses, which provide support and sponsorship for competitions, are considered to be “keen to push a competition agenda”, because “competition is part of business”:

*I suppose businesses are trying to equip students with the skills that they need to succeed in this changing world...there are going to be winners and losers in business and in life, and they're really looking to push students into that context and give them that competitive instinct. I think also partly because maybe businesses feel like schools have become less competitive in how they operate, some aspects of their life, so maybe possibly, yes, maybe competition with sports and things like that are less, less striving to have winners in primary school and trying to have a more inclusive way that schools go about things without necessarily labelling some students as, I hate the word...I don't like the word...but losers.*

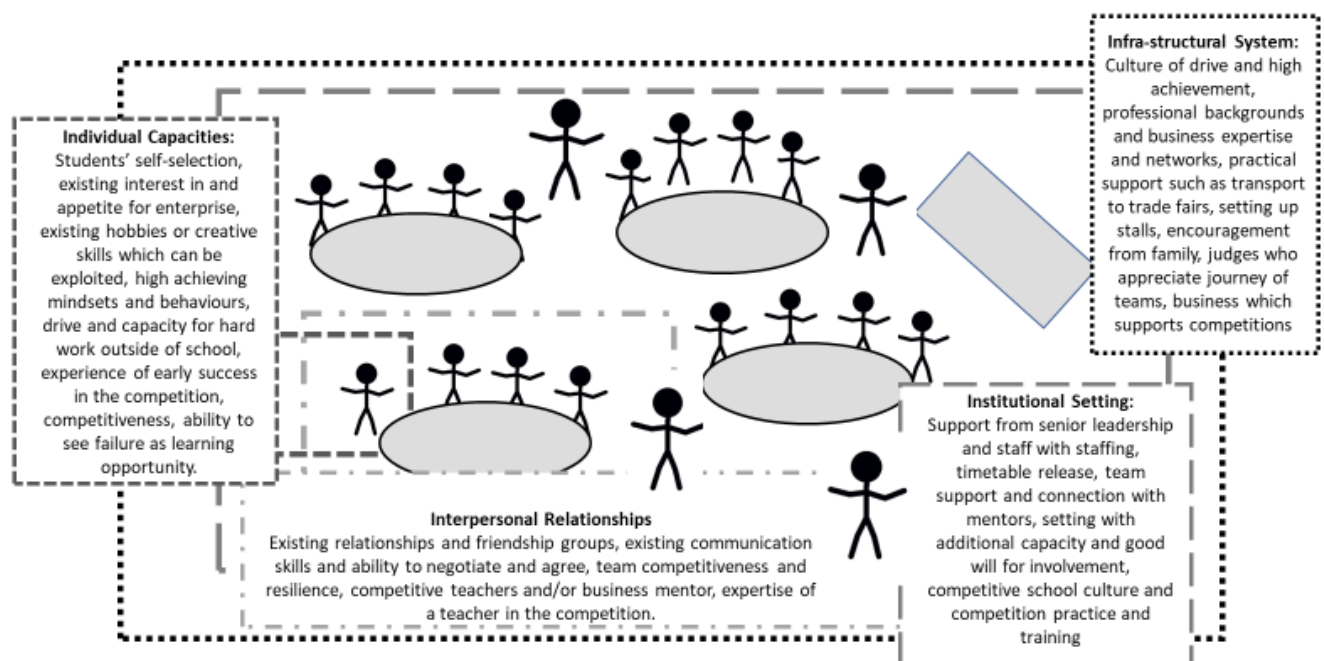
(School Based Educator 2)

In terms of infra-structural support, Long Form CEE providers and schools which benefit from support and/or funding, are leveraging businesses desire to promote a culture of competition and competitiveness.

Overall, we can see from evidence provided by programme practitioners that support beyond the institutional setting, in the infra-structural system, influences who volunteers and stays in a competition, who expects to perform well and who tends to perform well, especially in more elite competitions, in addition to wider cultural aspects such as a desire for competition and competitiveness in business. The main elements emerging from the organisation of evidence according to realistic layers of context is summarised in a diagram in the next section.

### 5.3.5 Summary – What is Long Form CEE Leveraging from the Context?

Figure 6 summarises information relating to the four layers of context to develop the realistic conceptual framework for Competitive Enterprise Education presented earlier in the thesis (in section 1.11.2), and include evidence from programme practitioners relating to what Long Form CEE programmes leverage from the context. As previously discussed, this figure does not aim to provide an ultimate or final answer (Swedberg, 2016), but rather encourages us to consider the myriad of possibilities that might arise in one situation or another. By organising data relating to more positive effects according to the different layers of context, and re-contextualising data from the perspective of searching for evidence regarding existing resources being leveraged, new light is shed on the conditions which support more positive effects of Long Form CEE.



**Figure 6 - What is Long Form CEE Leveraging from the Context?**

The preceding sections developed insight into existing resources which contribute to generating more positive results in Long Form CEE. As better understanding of negative results is also an aim of this thesis, in the following sections I present evidence regarding for whom Long Form CEE *is not* working so well.

## **5.4 Re-Description – For Whom is Long Form CEE Not Working so Well?**

The following sections aim to illuminate and expand understandings of the range of effects (negative, not just positive effects) that may be generated for different students in different contexts participating in Long Form CEE. As discussed in section 5.1, the outcomes of a programme may be positive effects for individuals or there may also be unintended and unforeseen outcomes which have not been considered in policy or guidance but for which the data provides evidence. Evidence presented in relation to this question – ‘For whom is Long Form CEE not working so well?’ - tended to be provided when programme practitioners were thinking about negative outcomes such as non-volunteers and drop outs and the difficulties of competing with differing resources.

### **5.4.1 Individual Capacities**

The first layer of context to be considered is individual capacities, that is the motivations and capabilities of students. Programme practitioners provide evidence showing that individual capacities can influence who volunteers for a competition, who is considered as competition worthy, who stays in a competition and the sorts of negative outcomes that might result from competing unsuccessfully in Long Form CEE.

Just as self-selection was identified as crucial in predicting more positive effects, **mandatory participation** was identified in relation to more negative effects. This consultant provider states that they “*always*” advise against mandatory participation, for example, if a business teacher was going to make it part of a course, they would advise them not to:

*...there isn't a single school that has run it mandatory anymore. They did, and they failed, and if a school says to me 'Oh, I think I'm going to run this with my business studies students' I always advise them against it, because they don't all want to do it, and...if you're going to be self-employed, you've got to love your business. So, if you don't want to do this, all it does is turn you off self-employment, to be honest, and that's not what it's designed for.*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2)

The consultant says that if students haven't volunteered, they “*are not as invested*” and if a student is not invested then “*they don't get the potential out of it*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2). Thus, a competition is not working so well for students whose participation is mandatory.

In relation to who volunteers, a competition does not work so well for **students who fear failure**. This school based educator is from a very well-resourced context, where competition is part of the institutional setting and where students often have home experience which supports competing, but some students don't fit this profile:

*...obviously there are a few students who...don't...particularly enjoy, you know a competition and wouldn't necessarily put themselves forward for a competition, I think usually it comes from a fear of failure, or a fear of not succeeding and what that*



*would do to their standing, with the other students and possibly with their parents, as well.*

(School Based Educator 2).

While such students may not put themselves forward for competitions through a fear of failure and a fear of letting others down, other types of students may volunteer for competitions, but their **low value ideas** mean that they are not considered as competition material. For example, boys are variously characterised as “*lazy*”, “*not engaged*”, and “*not having good ideas*” (Commissioner Manager 1, School Based Educator 4). Boys are discussed as volunteering for enterprise competitions but not proposing sufficiently high calibre ideas to progress:

*A lot of boys had ideas but they were not good ideas...whereas the girls were much more creative...The boys ideas were ‘make a quick buck without doing anything’...wash a car, buy some pop from Tesco and re-sell it on at a profit...whereas the girls were much more creative, let’s create a product, let’s make it, let’s set up an Instagram page, let’s sell.*

(School Based Educator 4)

We can see from this comment that good ideas are characterised as more product based (and linked with girls) and low-value ideas are more service based or re-selling cheap products (and linked with boys). Sometimes, “*a cultural*” issue is identified, with School Based Educator 4, from a diverse school, saying that the pattern of boys volunteering tended to be Yemeni or Pakistani heritage. More generally, this educator said that boys are “*fired up*” to be involved, but appear to **lack the creative-product making** inclinations required for the competition:

*I always...show them pictures of previous winners... what people have made in the past, you know the prizes are amazing. So, they're all interested and they all really get fired up about it. But when they realise they've actually got to make something and present it, they're not as interested then. It's all about quick rewards and quick returns for boys. If it's not immediate, they're not bothered. That seems to be my experience.*

(School Based Educator 4).

The explanation here for boys' lack of interest seems to be focused on boys requiring quicker rewards, but the educator also goes on to explain that boys who do manage to retain themselves in and progress in the competition can also ***lack the diligence*** required for competition success:

*...we did have a team...an all boy team, but they didn't do their final report... they didn't update things on the website, or their Instagram, which they were supposed to do and which the girls, the girls were diligent at doing, the boys didn't do that. They'd come and sell at the fair, because I've put on loads of events for them, they were happy to do that, but they didn't want to do the written work.*

(School Based Educator 4)

We can see from the evidence provided by this educator that it is possible that boys who either want to undertake entrepreneurial activity ***are excluded*** from a competition because their ideas do not fit with sufficiently creative product-based competition criteria, or, that they may participate in a competition, but are less likely to succeed in the competitive process because of their lack of commitment to the non-practical work (writing reports, updating websites and/or social media). This educator makes a wider point that this pattern extends

beyond enterprise competitions: *“it’s the same with anything we launch”* they say, *“it’s the girls who engage far more”*, using the example of a careers fair, the educator said the boys were engaged with things they *“could make, and do, and look at and touch”* (for example, as provided by the army), but the boys *“didn’t want to be actively talking to anyone about anything”* (School Based Educator 4).

Thus, enterprise competitions which rely on high levels of communication, both verbal and written, as part of the competitive process, may not work so well for boys who do not have the capacities, and inclination, to play by these rules or meet such criteria in an enterprise competition.

For students who have volunteered for a competition, staying in the process requires resilience, so students who are ***not resilient*** or ***hard-working*** will be ***more likely to quit*** when they meet difficulties. Quitting is connected to students ***pre-existing lack of resilience***:

*...you could almost think...resilient students are resilient anyway, and will carry on irrespective... and non-resilient students are always going to quit at the first hurdle.*

(School Based Educator 2)

Thus, non-resilient students will struggle to overcome difficulties, but this educator also makes a connection between the types of students who give up and the ***students’***

***background:***

*...students [from less advantaged backgrounds] were a lot quicker to give up if they encountered difficulties...I feel like they needed a lot of extra support from staff and business mentors to keep going when things became difficult...*

(School Based Educator 2)

Developing this explanation, while some of this was discussed as being caused by individual capacities, in addition, such students also had different ***social circumstances*** which could ***influence drop out***:

*...there is a bit of an unwillingness among students to go as far, and goes as far above and beyond... and there are a lot of genuine reasons for that, they might be caring for brothers and sisters, you know, there might be cultural reasons as well, so students having to devote a lot of time to their religion, which might mean they don't have as much time for other things, it might be that they've extra responsibilities, like caring for relatives, it's definitely a financial aspect to it as well, because if they want money they've got to go out and get a part time job, because their parents will not be giving them anything.*

(School Based Educator 2)

This educator also connected less advantaged students with a particular ***attitudinal perspective***, whether that be lack of aspiration or long term thinking, which is implicated in them not sticking at a challenging process:

*...I think part of it is maybe a lack of aspiration [in a less advantaged setting] and long term thinking...and maybe being quite myopic in how they approach things, and thinking 'well, this is difficult now so I'll give up, I won't think about the long term benefits of doing it, I'll just stop doing it now because it's hard now...'*

(School Based Educator 2)

One consultant provider discussed students from a challenged school who managed to ***persist in a competition*** but ***were not good enough to 'win'*** in terms of achieving either interim or final prizes. This consultant said that an enterprise competition becomes “*really, very*

*personal*” to students as “*it is their own idea and it’s their own time*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2). This consultant described a team from a more “*challenged*” school, and the negative effects when that team kept missing out on being recognised in prize giving:

*...there’s... interim challenges to try and keep them engaged...every single one, they were literally one or two teams below...they thought they’d done well...because they know, they get to see what did win... So, they would know that they were close... so if they out and out asked, if they said ‘were we close?’ then you’d say, ‘yeah, you were’, and I think that then became like ‘we’re not good enough’...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2)

This comment illuminates overlap between the different layers of context influencing effects in Long Form CEE because the consultant’s evidence relates to the feelings of students, as well as their experience as a team in a competitive process and students’ wider social circumstances. We can imagine students from a challenged school, who have managed to persevere in a competition, despite whatever deficits they may have attitudinally and socially, but these students, in this school also have the additional layer of negative social comparison to manage. The competition structure (which could also be discussed under infra-structural support), has interim prizes to ‘engage’ students, but an unintended consequence (of not winning such prizes), for these students in this setting, was the generation of feelings of ***not being good enough to win*** one of these prizes. This consultant further elaborated:

*...[it was]...like a real personal ‘we’re not good enough,’ you know ‘no matter how hard we try, we’re not good enough’...and I think also, combined with the fact that they go to a school classed as ‘not good enough’...because again, it was a challenged school, where they have a lot of other issues, that then reinforced that stereotype of ‘kids that go to this school don’t achieve,’ even though, what they... I really struggled*

*to get across to them...just how much they had achieved, because they had, they'd done amazing, but because they were always pipped, and pipped by a kid from the [better school]...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2)

In this comment, the word pipped is used twice. *To be pipped* means to be defeated by someone by a small amount. So, while the first use of the word reinforces that the students (from a challenged school), had achieved so much and 'done amazing', the second pipped is used in relation to the different social circumstances under which students were competing. That is, that *they were defeated, even if by only a small amount, by students with greater social advantage*, which the programme practitioner highlights as a demoralising experience.

In summary, from this evidence provided by programme practitioners, we are starting to build some knowledge about for whom Long Form CEE is not working so well. Students who have not volunteered for the process because of a fear of failure, for boys who want quick rewards, for boys who lack the cognitive wherewithal and attention to detail to complete written tasks, or submit final reports, and for boys from minority heritage who are enthusiastic to take part but whose ideas will not take them far in relation to competition criteria are not so well served by such programmes. More generally, because of the effort required in a competition, students who lack the ability to work hard, in their own time and who lack the resilience to move through difficulties are more likely to drop out (and this is acknowledged as patterned by wider social circumstances). In addition, Long Form CEE is time consuming, so it will not work so well for students who already have commitments such as caring or part time work outside of school, and this is patterned by social circumstances. As we have heard, students from well-resourced schools are willing to commit more (additional) time, whilst students from lower resourced settings are less likely to have the

long term thinking to add in the time commitment to what they already do. Long Form CEE is not working so well for students from a lower resourced setting or challenged schools, who compete against better schools and are not able to succeed at winning prizes despite an outstanding performance and then end up feeling like they are ‘not good enough’.

#### 5.4.2 Interpersonal Relationships

The next layer of context to be considered is interpersonal relationships, that is the relationships supporting the intervention, between participants, staff and other stakeholders. Programme practitioners provide evidence about a number of different ways that Long Form CEE does not work so well for: those students in *dysfunctional teams*; for students supported by *unsympathetic mentors* or *not having sufficient support*; for teams (and teachers) who *don’t understand why they haven’t won* a prize, and for teachers who feel that their students are *disadvantaged* in a competition process.

In terms of team dynamics, there are many things that can go wrong, from teams “floundering” as a result of “lack of direction” (School Based Educator 4), to *teams disintegrating* shortly after volunteering (Commissioner Manager 1):

...[in a competition, you are]... *going to get those things. You know, oh crikey, going to drop out... or oh, he’s not really my friend any more... or, ah...so he’s a lazy bugger, and whatever it is...so the group process, the forming, storming, is definitely something that they will have learned about, but I wouldn’t be surprised that 10 o’clock in the morning when [the competition] is launched... you know two hours later... half the teams have fragmented...*

(Commissioner Manager 1)

Just as the evidence in the last section alerted us to students who may not volunteer (due to fear of failure), this comment alerts us to the teams that ***start the process but don't complete it***. Commissioner Manager 1 characterised these ***early dropouts*** as a fragmentation, in particular when teams are introduced to that thing called “*hard work*”.

Another educator assesses that dropouts may happen when struggling teams self-select out, and dropouts can also be strategic, when a team assesses it is not going to win as a result of the feedback mechanism through interim prizes:

*...the groups that have problems with each other...they might possibly stumble along, or... they'll just not carry on, it is a little bit self-selecting in that respect. We still have fallings out...we still have one or two bailings out, yes, we have teams that don't complete, and sometimes it's, sometimes it is because of the competitive nature... so if there are interim competitions sometimes in competitions, and if a group of students who perceive themselves as being a very good team, don't win a prize, they can question whether it's worth their time anymore, because they've got so much pressure on their time, some of them are very ruthless about how they approach things if they don't feel they get the win, or something out of it, then they'll just put their time somewhere else where they feel that they'll get more back.*

(School Based Educator 2)

In this comment we learn that struggling teams drop out, but also that students who expect to win, but don't, can be “*ruthless*” and choose to allocate their time elsewhere. While in the last section, the ***failure to win*** interim prizes in a lower resourced school was a source of personal let down and dented self-esteem for students, the educator from a well-resourced school say team dropouts are a “*rational human decision...from an economics point of view...*” (School Based Educator 2). Therefore, whilst the competition is not retaining a team,



this decision is not wholly negative, but rather illuminates another consequence of what can happen to a team if it assesses it is ***not succeeding at winning*** in a process.

In relation to ***teams falling out***, one consultant says they always advise teams to get “*partnership agreements*” because “...*you are going to argue...*”. Indeed, this consultant said that “*every single year*” the competition sees the “*breakdown of many friendships*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

While providing supportive relationships to teams was identified as a crucial enabler of staying in a competition (and is discussed more in relation to institutional setting in a moment), ***unsympathetic support*** can be unhelpful for teams in lower resourced settings. Discussing how programme support “*has been cut back*”, which impacts “*on schools in less affluent areas*” because “*teams aren’t supported enough to get into the latter stages of a competition*”, this school based educator identified that supporting teams in such settings took a certain or additional skill set:

*...[those] from less affluent backgrounds, who haven’t got that support at home, they need good quality, good quality advisers, not just good quality advisers, but advisers that are used to working with students of that kind of background...I think there’s sometimes a danger that you get business advisers involved, they’re coming from a, you know they’ve had a relatively privileged upbringing, they’ve been to good schools, they’ve not necessarily been to a school where it’s difficult, where they might have caring responsibilities at home, there’s lots of pressure that they don’t understand...*

(School Based Educator 2)

This comment shows that it is not simply that a mentor relationship is provided for teams (and, especially for teams from less affluent areas), but that this relationship is characterised by the ability of the mentor to understand the specific circumstances of a team and provide support in relation to that context. An unsympathetic mentor from a more privileged background working with a less privileged student with pressures and obligations outside of school may struggle to relate to each other. As well as *how teams relate to each other* and how teams relate to a mentor, there is also the issue of how teams from different schools relate to each other and their success (or not) in a competition. Teams may feel “*stung*” (Consultant Provider 2), “*cheated*” (School Based Educator 1) and “*really, really demoralised*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2), when they *compare themselves* to the eventual winners of an enterprise competition.

*Not understanding why a team won*, or didn’t win, alongside the level of effort teams have invested in a Long Form competition means “*the negative is stronger*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2), and students will talk to each other, meaning that when the competition is launched in school the next year it is a struggle to recruit. A school based educator also describes this, explaining that disappointed students return from an inter-school final complaining “*We didn’t win anything*” and that a well-resourced school won all the prizes, and “*...what’s the point when you’re up against a school like that...*” (School Based Educator 3). One result of this situation would be “*word getting round the school, and next year it was much harder to encourage [participation] in that kind of competition...*” (School Based Educator 3).

For teachers (as well as teams) in lower resourced settings, the experience of being judged also has effects, in terms of a teacher’s feelings towards the competition:

*If you lose in [a competition]...you come away feeling that almost 'what's the point?' you put a lot of effort into this and really, we have been judged to be unsuccessful, I hesitate to use the word, a failure, but our business idea has been judged to have no merit.*

(School Based Educator 3)

One educator said, while working at a lower resource setting, they “*gave up*” with one competition because they felt they had ***no chance of winning*** (School Based Educator 2). As well as a teacher withdrawing from a competition because they feel their students/team have no chance of winning, a school based educator may also express feelings of “*being cheated*” (School Based Educator 1), if a well-resourced school is able to ***field more teams*** and therefore have ***increased chances of winning***:

*I said that I didn't want to be part of it [a particular competition]....because as I said, [names a well-resourced school] had about 3 teams... I had one team and it pretty much halved my budget that year to do this competition. So, it meant quite a lot to me that we were doing it, because that's a lot of money that we spent. I just went away feeling a bit disappointed...*

(School Based Educator 1)

This educator described discussing their feelings with the provider and negotiating a fee waiver in order to be able to take part in the process again, but the teacher was also clear that they did not want to pay to be part of competitions *in which they had no chance of success*. Elaborating further, this next comment shows the importance of a teams' performance in relation to others, and the recognition of those around them:

*...you know afterwards, I felt really cheated...on behalf of my students. And I didn't really want to do it again to be honest... Because, I'd invested a lots of time, and students had invested a lot of time... I was just so proud of them....this was before we knew the result...it was negative from my point of view, because they hadn't succeeded at winning. But then they also hadn't succeeded in getting recognition...I mean we got an email afterwards, but it needed more.*

(School Based Educator 1).

So, we can see from the preceding comments that teams' ***failure to win*** in competitions, and/or ***failure to be recognised*** - and which encompasses assessments related to the relative affluence and advantage between winning and losing students, teams and schools - influences both students and teacher inclinations toward the competition. The social context of the school also influences the amount of support provided, which in turn patterns 'for whom' such competitions are not working so well, as we shall see in the following section.

### **5.4.3 Institutional Setting**

The third layer of context to be considered is the institutional setting, that is the character of a place, the culture and ethos. In terms of the character of an institutional setting, settings where Long Form CEE is not working so well, tend to be those settings where students *do not have the social "polish"* to compete in pitch presentations, and schools which are socially and materially disadvantaged, thus do not, *or cannot*, provide the support required in Long Form CEE.

An important point one school based educator makes is that certain types of institutional settings ***lack the advantages*** that students from affluent and well-resourced settings have:

...[some competitions are]...*possibly skewed a little bit more towards, you know, certain types of schools, 20 per cent of the competition is on the presentation, you know, students from more affluent areas are more confident, and have multiple opportunities to speak in front of people, so you know, they naturally better at presenting, and that's not a slur at students from other back grounds...but their presentation skills are nowhere near as polished, because they've just not had the experience and the opportunity to really refine it....*

(School Based Educator 2)

While this educator says it is not impossible for students from “*other backgrounds*” to compete “...*it's just going to take a lot more time, a lot more support, a lot more effort...*”, however this (more necessary) support is required from an institutional context where staff are already working “*unbelievable long hours*” and therefore, it is “*much, much more difficult to achieve...*” (School Based Educator 2). This educator evaluates that this is why for some competitions the teams in the **national finals** are “*heavily skewed*” towards “*private schools, grammar schools, top performing state schools*”, this educator said: “...*it's very, very unusual to see a school in a deprived area make one of those finals*” (School Based Educator 2). The educator also made a link to the material costs, as some competitions are “*expensive to take part in*” (School Based Educator 2). Another educator confirms this, and the effect that limited budget means that a less well-resourced school cannot field as many teams:

*...you know the cost for schools is a big barrier. I just felt like, they [a well-resourced school] had two or three teams and they could afford two or three teams...If I'd have had a few more teams I might have had a better chance of winning...*

(School Based Educator 1)

In addition to “*looking for things* [enterprise provision] *that are free*” (School Based Educator 1), this educator also discussed the issue of Long Form CEE being for “*small, select groups*” which “*isn’t a big impact across the school*”, and, therefore not likely to be seen as value for money in a low-resource school with a limited budget. **Money** is raised as an issue for a low resource school, in the amount of budget it requires, and also, that having more money enables well-resourced schools to field more teams:

*...at a very material level [money is] what’s needed, to enable participation...and to enable fairer participation. If you think about that [competition] I could afford one team...so they [a well-resourced school] had three teams...we couldn’t afford that, you know, so already we’re at a disadvantage. They’ve got two more chances of winning.*

(School Based Educator 1)

One school-based educator discussed that the introduction of a participation fee meant that one competition “*went off the school offer*” as there were **no resources** for it (School Based Educator 3). This educator also described working in a school where there was no longer an enterprise co-ordinator role, no time allocation for enterprise and overall, the profile of enterprise had “diminished” (School Based Educator 3).

As well as schools having students from less affluent backgrounds and with less personal polish, and the school having less resources to fund such activities, and the more challenged circumstances such as time-stressed staff, the issue of **school culture** is also raised. One consultant discussed a school which launched a competition but **failed to provide support** students required to progress. These students were “*inspired to be part of it*” but the school didn’t follow up with support, meaning every team dropped out. The consultant said:

*...the... school was...a really challenged school...culturally...there isn't that strive...they're trying to bring up aspiration...because there just isn't any. It is a very challenged school. So, a kid who is on to get 4s is classed as high achieving...*

(Consultant Provider Competitive 2)

These comments provide a possible explanation as to why less affluent schools do not go all the way in competitions, just as students drop out when they face difficulties. A challenged school, where students achieving grade 4 are considered high achieving, will have many other (statutory) pulls on its time in order to try and support students to pass national examinations. While the school (and students inspired to volunteer), aim to take part and are initially enthusiastic about taking part, the institutional setting ***cannot provide the support*** required and if that ***support does not come from any other sources*** (such as home), then the ***students drop out***. While the deficiency here is characterised as a lack of “*strive*” in the school, the consultant *is* describing a challenged school in a deprived area, and ***this evaluation, focused on culture rather than material resources***, will be returned to in the discussion. In addition to the variation in school setting and culture, there is also variation in the infra-structural systems which surround the programme, as we see in the following section.

#### **5.4.4 Infrastructural System**

The fourth and final layer of context to be considered is the infra-structural system, which includes the public, community and political support and resources around the programme.

In terms of ‘for whom’ Long Form CEE is not working so well, programme practitioners discussed factors including: students with and from families with ***less material resource***, networks and expertise; providers and schools operating in a ***funding environment***

*characterised by cuts*; commissioners who are *not sure of the impact* of competitions, businesses which are using their resources for less impactful activity, and society more generally, for which *existing disadvantage* and social hierarchy *is reproduced*.

Programme practitioners describe support from home and from parents as an issue when discussing more negative outcomes of Long Form CEE. For example, one educator discussing *a team which dropped out* and was yet to pay back their initial seed funding, said this team “*were noticeably the ones whose parents I never saw at any events*” and that though the team had a good idea, they struggled to execute it (School Based Educator 4). As well as general support such as taking teams to events, a *lack of specific expertise within the family home* is identified as challenging for some students:

*I know that [one competition] has changed its judging criteria a little bit, and there's a lot more on analytics, data analytics...and I suppose that could unfairly penalise students who haven't got computers at home or got parents who are IT savvy...*

(School Based Educator 2)

As well as specific expertise, some students will come from a home background which *lack the confidence and self-esteem* that are useful in competitions:

*I think a lot of that [feeling disadvantaged]...is partly down to esteem and aspirations of those students, a lot of those students might coming from families who haven't a lot people at home who work, or people at home who've got businesses, or no access to networks of people that, you know they can seek advice or support from outside of school.*

(School Based Educator 2)



Again, a programme practitioner is making a link between how a student feels and their ***social circumstances***. Coming from families with less social resources, such as networks and families with businesses, influences variation in the experience of the student in the competition. Families may “*want to support, but not have the knowledge*”, in addition, they may not have the money to support the progression of their child, for example, by “*putting them in the car*” and taking them to where they need to be (Consultant Provider Competitive 2). A programme practitioner describes how the ***variation in material resources*** of different communities becomes more ***obvious*** at the public presentation of a ***competition finale***. Speaking about the experience of working in a low resource school this school based educator said that a pre-existing feeling of being disadvantaged was reinforced in competition activities:

*...we'd turn up to competitions and the other students would be there in immaculate business wear, where we'd have students who wouldn't be able to afford that kind of clothing, so they'd be walking into competitions automatically feeling that they are second best...*

(School Based Educator 2)

This comment shows how actual material resources (and lack thereof), feed into feelings, through the experience of ***negatively comparing*** oneself to the materially better-equipped competition. Another school based educator, who described chatting to students from a well-resourced school at a competition event, highlighted how social disadvantage played out through the variation in communication skills when competing against better equipped peers:

*I talked to those children and they were very well spoken...and that's going to come across really well in a presentation, where as **ours were just normal kids**...how do you compete against that?*

(School Based Educator 1)

As we have already heard, “*normal*” students can, and do, compete in Long Form CEE, but the experience of disappointment and demoralisation because of ***feeling unable to succeed at winning against better equipped peers*** may deter students entering in the future, or result in the school giving up on the competition.

As well as the resources from the family setting, funding cuts in the infra-structural system also effect participation and progression in Long Form CEE. School Based Educator 4 discusses a school which previously entered but staff cutbacks meant they did not field a team in an enterprise competition in which they had previously competed. And a Commissioner Manager discussed this pattern more broadly, with fewer disadvantaged schools taking part (in the context of shrinking investment and staff cuts in the school sector):

*...we've seen far fewer schools from more disadvantaged areas...and it's generally...schools from **more affluent areas that have entered** [a competition]. When we look at things like the social occupation codes for those areas... it's more than likely that the young people accessing [the competition] are from those areas where they're more likely to have someone at home, therefore not just relying on school, they have someone at home, who can help to give that support to help with the development of their ideas, and their thinking and those conversations.*

(Commissioner Manager 2)

Therefore, in a context of reduced provision and support from either a provider, and/or the lack of additional support provided by a school (or from home), a student (or teacher) who realises the amount of work and guidance required to progress may be ***put off volunteering*** to take part, or may be one of the ***early bail-outs*** as they realise they don't have the resources to participate or progress.

From a student perspective, Commissioner Manager 2 says that this extends to even having “*the confidence to ask for support if they don't...fully understand the resources*”, and as programme practitioners make a link between capability, confidence ***and background***, less advantaged students may not understand the resources, but not have had the upbringing which supports them with the confidence to ask for help at the first hurdle. While these sorts of potential problems are discussed, it is also observed that evaluation methods of activities are weak, meaning that a Commissioner Manager can feel unsure about who can access Long Form CEE, for whom it works well (or not), or the possible positive or negative effects of the activity being competitively structured:

*...looking at the winners...it's a fair few years that we've had a school that I'd class as deprived win the competition. But that may well be because of the lack of involvement from those schools. There's been very little in way of proper analysis. No documenting of information. We have no idea realistically, of knowing, whether or not we've got the reach right, whether or not, what the impact is, from the winners' side of things, what the impact of things is from the losers' side of things...*

(Commissioner Manager 2)

This perspective is also expressed by a Consultant Provider, who identifies that a weakness of evaluation methods tends to be the short gap between activity and assessment, and also assessment being focused on “*asking young people 'do they think they've gained these*

*skills’*”, with questionnaires framed around certain skills and outcomes, essentially, around “*what you would expect to see*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 6).

As such, we can see both a provider and a commissioner questioning the impact of activities, so, in terms of ‘For whom’ (or for what), Long Form CEE is not working so well,’ beyond certain teams and schools, it is also not working so well for public policy stakeholders who have limited confidence in its positive effects, and also, simultaneously, acknowledge, that there are assumptions that such programmes ‘work’. One consultant said that “*assumptions*” about “*what works*” mean that there’s an approach where “*we run the competition, we have a winner...*”, with “*received wisdom*” that doing it that way translates into skills, motivation and social outcomes such as getting a job or starting a business, but that this was “*anecdotal*” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2).

A lack of clarity about for whom (and how) Long Form CEE work (or don’t), can feed into another infra-structural dimension – support provided by business. A Commissioner Manager said:

*...when you look at the way in which businesses are currently involved with [our competition], it is for the sponsorship of the glossy event. It’s not for providing [funding] for the team, it’s not going into school to mentor the young people while they’re working through the business development model. It’s paying for an event to happen, a cash prize... They’ve got cash and people have seen that as an easy way for them to be able to contribute.*

(Commissioner Manager 2).

This commissioner manager explains that businesses have “*not been asked to contribute in a different way*”, thus, in the traditional role, as sponsor, and potentially sometimes as a judge,

one might also start to imagine how Long Form CEE does not work too well for the interests of business if their main goal (as is often advertised by programmes and partners) is to transform the skills of young people, rather than create opportunities where *students and schools with existing advantages gain more advantages*. While an enterprise competition might give students experience of a “*traditional business model*”, it is not helping young people be aware of “*the variety of different models and different ways of working*” (Commissioner Manager 2). For example, this commissioner questioned the balance toward a “*commercial, profit driven enterprise competition*” versus how many young people were “*inspired to think about social action and social enterprise*” (Commissioner Manager 2). Thus, a traditional enterprise competition, which is more about “*helping young people do ‘survival of the fittest’*”, may not be working so well for a school, community or society wanting a more inclusive ethos (Commissioner Manager 2).

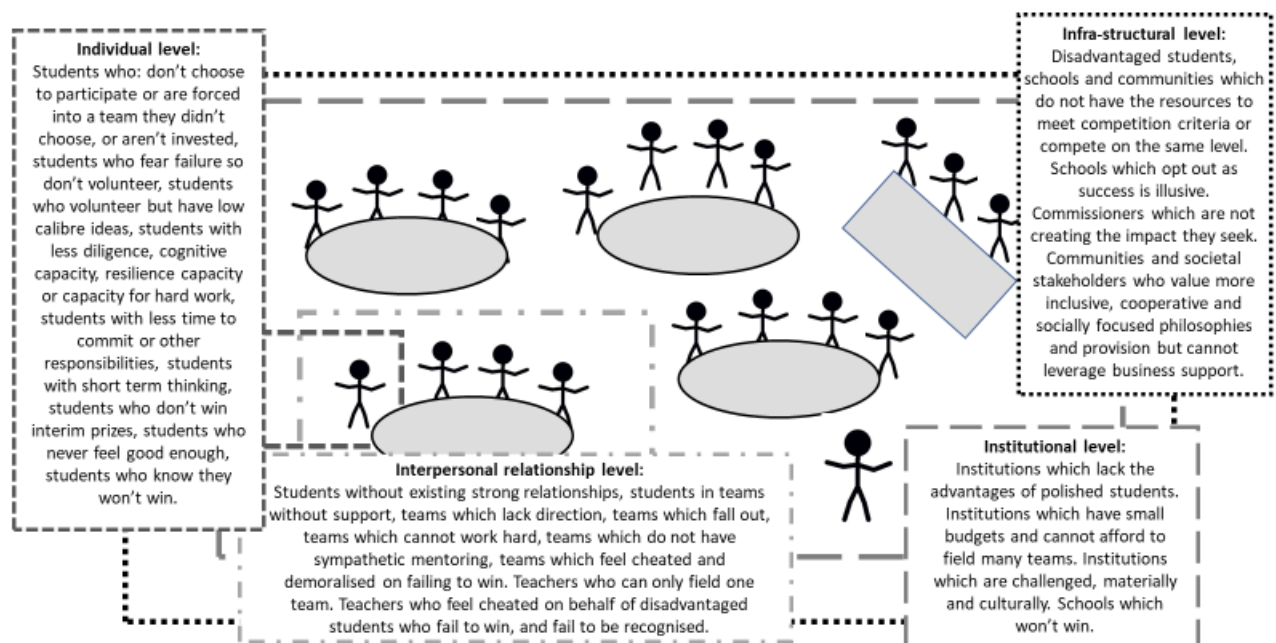
Potentially this means that traditional enterprise competitions, because of the various resources, expertise, qualities of the students and additional extra-curricular support that is required, *concentrates the involvement* of better equipped students, from better resourced schools and families, while more inclusive practice or socially focused provision which might benefit less advantaged students does not get the same attention because these types of approaches are *not favoured* by business.

While traditional, business-focused enterprise competitions *leverage the desire of business* to support, other organisations that are non-competitive or more inclusive or socially focused appear not able to leverage the same interest (in that programme practitioners more common experience of EE is CEE). This *limits the palette* of philosophies and approaches to enterprise provision, and limits the imagination of programme practitioners and students, who struggle to imagine an activity without a competition, or a day without a finale, or what an alternative model might look like.

The main themes emerging from the organisation of evidence according to realistic layers of context is summarised in a diagram in the next section.

#### 5.4.5 Summary – For Whom is Long Form CEE Not Working so Well?

Figure 7 revises contextual elements of the generic framework for Competitive Enterprise Education presented earlier in the thesis to specifically include evidence from programme practitioners relating to Long Form CEE. By organising data relating to more negative results according to the different layers of context, and interpreting data from the realistic perspective of considering ‘For whom CEE is not working so well’, new light is on the significant variation in student experience, possible (unintended) outcomes for students, teachers and the school and beyond. Critically, we have a more realistic understanding of the contextual conditions that influence effects – positive and negative –in Long Form CEE.



**Figure 7 - For Whom is Long Form CEE Not Working So Well?**

In the following chapter, a discussion of these findings is presented.

## 5.5 Summary of Chapter

This chapter presented findings related to Long Form Competitive Enterprise Education.

The chapter introduced how findings were structured and then described programmes in practitioners own words. This included illuminating the shorthand used by programme practitioners to describe programmes and the typically described programme arc, where a programme (often involving launching a company or mini enterprise), would be launched in school, teams recruited and then supported (or not) towards a final public presentation of outcomes.

Data was then re-described from a realistic perspective by structuring material around the Four Is (layers of context relating to the individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural), and considering it through a realistic lens. The lens was provided by posing two realistic questions: what is Long Form CEE leveraging in the context to help generate more positive effects, and for whom is Long Form CEE programmes not working so well.

The chapter presented figures which revised and summarised elements at the individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural layer which illuminated resources pre-existing in the context which are leveraged to help create more positive effects or contextual factors which were linked to more negative effects for individuals, teachers, schools and wider society in Long Form CEE.

The chapter provided a more detailed picture of what is happening in Long Form CEE programmes, and the variation of experiences and outcomes possible.

## 6 Theorising CEE

In this chapter I will remind the reader about the journey of this thesis and consider the findings in relation to the research objectives. I will develop a discussion which theorises – *thinks through* – the effects of Short Form and Long Form Competitive Enterprise Education (CEE) and the insight gained from revealing the different contexts into which these programmes are inserted. The relationship between these types of programmes and the wider social effects they can create is discussed.

### 6.1 Introduction

In this thesis I have aimed to define and explore effects generated through a familiar and taken-for-granted family of interventions – Short Form CEE (such as one day competitions and Dragon’s Den challenges), and Long Form CEE (such as student mini companies and long term enterprise competitions). I was motivated to use the perspective of Realist Evaluation (RE), to gain a deeper understanding about how positive and negative effects can be generated for participants *because* of different contextual conditions, and to consider what the effects beyond the individual might be. In addition, because of my practical and professional experience in Enterprise Education (EE), where school guidance presents competitive activities as *what works*, I wished to apply the RE perspective, which specifically aims to extend thinking towards *what works for whom and why*.

In order to fulfil the overall aim of the thesis proposed in section [1.1](#) to deepen understanding regarding these taken-for-granted and widely prescribed programmes – I interviewed 16 programme practitioners who had experience of enterprise education experiences what were competitive, and, to support counter-factual thinking, a small number of practitioners who



were involved in skill development activity but adopted cooperative approaches. I worked with the data in various ways, coding against conceptual frameworks, developing summaries, organising data against the four layers of context and interpreting more positive data and more negative data from the perspective of two realistic questions. In relation to more positive data I asked what the activity was leveraging from the context, and in relation to more negative data I asked, for whom is the activity not working so well. first question

The summarising diagrams in the findings chapters (Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7), reveal various and interacting contextual factors which CEE programmes leverage to help create more positive effects, and also influence for whom such programmes are not working so well.

In the following sections I discuss the research objectives in relation to the findings and the ‘evidence base’ that was presented in Chapter 2. I use the methodological lens of RE, and *think from this perspective*, to develop a deeper understanding of the reality of CEE interventions. Using this lens has enabled me to develop a particular way of looking at and thinking about CEE. From this perspective I can better theorise *for whom* an activity may ‘work’ better for (or not). In this discussion I will present how I see these interventions, synthesising insights from the data set as a whole, exploring how the more common Short Form challenge may influence participation in Long Form voluntary competitions and propose conceptual abstractions that enable us to see and consider CEE in new ways.

## **6.2 Research Objective 1 – To Explore and Question Assumptions about ‘What Works’ in CEE**

As we learned in Chapter 2 (a literature review of the school-focused guidance document *Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works?*), a number of assumptions were built into the presentation of the ‘evidence base’ used to justify competitive activities in EE (see section [2.6](#)). These assumptions were: that it was possible to use positive evidence from one type of intervention (Serious Games) to justify ‘Business Games and Competitions’ more broadly; that positive results from voluntary/Long Form competitions could justify compulsory/one- day competitions, and that studies which did not explore the nature or effects of competing or which used measurement approaches which washed out context and variation, were robust and rigorous approaches to evaluate programmes. In relation to Short Form CEE (one-day competitions or Dragon’s Den challenges) no specific impact studies were offered in *Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works?* (BGECWW), revealing an evidence gap in the guidance.

In terms of unsettling assumptions regarding *what works* by using Realist Evaluation (RE), as a perspective from which to collect, organise and interpret data, the application of this approach generates insights which should challenge the taken-for-granted status of competitions in EE, both Short Form and Long Form. These insights include a more developed understanding of the sorts of unobservable differences, contextual influences and varied programme experiences which influence positive and negative effects, and the importance of winning, and failing to win, to students and teachers. These elements are discussed in the following sections.

### 6.2.1 Using Positive Results from Serious Games Literature

In Chapter 2 (section [2.6.1](#)), I raised a question about whether the premise that Serious Games, which are said to present a safe (digital) environment for learning, where students can take risks and fail with support (Hanson et al., 2017, p.4; Fox, Pittaway and Uzuegbunam, 2018), could be transferred unproblematically to a face-to-face one-day competition or Long Form competition. This assumption may be examined in relation to the most common type of activity, Short Form CEE – the one-day competition or Dragon’s Den day.

Short Form CEE can produce a range of strong emotions and potential for inter-personal dysfunction. Students might feel bored or not see the point of an activity, they might not like the challenge or might not want to get involved, they might have less resources to compete or specific learning needs, they might present individually as stressed or nerve wracked. At the team level, there could be power struggles over decisions, arguments, cruelty, aggressiveness, walk-outs and tears. This range and intensity of experiences is not captured or reflected in BGECWW or the literature used within. Therefore, it is *not* appropriate to assume that positive results from (digital) Serious Games literature, used throughout the document to justify prescriptions for Business Games and Enterprise Competitions, transfer unproblematically to face-to-face programmes. Indeed, in relation to the one-day competition, the more that is learned about the variance between individual starting points, the less ‘safe’ the environment could be considered: yes, some students turn up for the day ready and enthusiastic to compete, but some students turn up on the back foot, with less personal and social resources to do well. It is programme practitioners’ evidence about ‘who succeeds’ or ‘who gets the most’ out of a one-day competition, that is most compelling in this regard. There was a tendency to acknowledge that there are those students who turn up to the ‘starting line’ equipped to compete, with the attitude and social and cognitive capacity to work well with others and engage quickly in tasks. These students have pre-existing personal

qualities that are advantageous, such as being ‘go-getty’ and initiative taking. But, we can also see from the evidence provided by programme practitioners that students also arrive with the experience of previous successes and failures. The students at the ‘low end’ of the spectrum are sometimes characterised as disengaged as they self-assess that ‘we never win because we’re the thick kids...’. At the other/high end of the spectrum, there are some students characterised as high achieving, who are ready to take more from the activity.

However, these varying starting points of students in one day competitions, and the reality that they bring the experience of previous successes and failures (that is, previous failures *to win* in competitive activities), are not apparent in the evidence base presented in BGECWW. Instead, it is assumed that if “good practice guidance is followed”, that competitive activities will develop skills and knowledge (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 1) and foster a can-do attitude (Young, 2014). The findings of this PhD study provide a fuller picture, which illuminates the possibilities for intense and negative emotion at individual level and the potential for team dysfunction.

Overall, this demonstrates that the assumption that Short Form CEE presents a safe environment for learning, where students can take risks and fail, needs to be re-thought. For some students (and some teams), such activities are not ‘safe’ and do not take place in an environment where they can learn and take risks, but rather occur in a context which they might enter with a history of previous failures, struggle with a task, their team or themselves, watch their better equipped peers surpass them and then have the experience of failing to win (again). These possibilities are not articulated in BGECWW, or the literature contained within, not least because there is *not one* impact study referenced which investigates *one-day face-to-face* competitions in schools.

A striking element in relation to findings presented in relation to Short Form CEE is the importance of the *pre-existing* qualities of the student who thrives and succeeds in these arrangements. This confirms the potential limitations acknowledged by authors of impact *measurement* studies, that unobservable characteristics which are difficult to control for may be contributing to programme results (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2009 & 2012; Huber et al., 2012). The approach of gathering evidence from programme practitioners and considering this evidence from the perspective of RE, confirms this for Short Form CEE. As one programme practitioner assessed, with a one-day competition, you could almost predict, at the beginning of the day who would do well... and those who do well, are the students who are already equipped to do well. This means that while authors of BGECWW assert that these activities can “encourage the development of...abilities, skills and knowledge...” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. vi), we can also see that the experience of the activity is also influenced by *pre-existing* skills, and indeed by *pre-existing* experiences (previous successes of winning, or achievement, or failing to win or achieve). As programme practitioners identified that a flaw with a Short Form competition is the lack of time to create positive meaning, and given the potential for intense emotion and the statistical likelihood of students ‘failing to win’, such an activity is not equivalent to the ‘safe learning environment’ that is discussed as existing in regard to digital Serious Games (Hanson, 2017).

As no impact study for Short Form, face-to-face competitions is presented in BGECWW, this contribution is important and novel. While, given the descriptions of the physical and visceral nature of students working alongside each other and in teams, such an activity will certainly present the opportunity for students to take (or feel) risk, it is not clear that students are supported to develop a positive attitude to failure. Indeed, characterisations of sore losers, poor losers, the disappointed and demoralised instead provide evidence that Short Form CEE needs to be re-engineered to account and mitigate these possibilities by integrating reflection

more comprehensively. Hanson et al. (2017), discuss feedback as one of the ‘lessons for practice’ in BGECWW, with a single reference to a ‘What Works in Careers and Enterprise?’ publication printed the year before (Hooley, 2016). BGECWW states: “Ideally, participants should receive feedback after every round of play to help them to reflect on their learning. Such feedback can take the form of participants observing, discussing and understanding the performance of the various teams. They can then move on to explain their performance by reflecting on individual decisions they made and consequences for the team’s performance. Such discussions provide good opportunities for mentors and coaches to work with their teams and for the teacher or tutor to link the game both to wider learning objectives and the world of work” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 17). The evidence from programme practitioners confirms the importance of this. Indeed, without well thought out processes for reflection, one possible result is students making their own meaning from ‘failing to win’ at the activity. The stories of students being angry and resentful at not winning, of throwing their papers across the table, and walking out with their heads down... this does not sound like an effective activity for developing the confidence and ‘can do’ spirit sought in the grey literature that is used to justify activities in BGECWW. Thus, the assumptions in BGECWW that it is the “*experiential nature* of such activities” which engage and encourage the development of skills (Hanson et al., 2017, p. vi), is also questionable, as we can see from evidence from programme practitioners that an experience *may be negative* as well as positive. An experiential design alone does not necessarily lead to the development of abilities, skills and knowledge, but rather programme designers must design for positive meaning to be made for each and every student, if the goal is to fulfil ‘enterprise for all’ (Young, 2014). In the next section assumptions regarding Long Form CEE are considered in view of the findings presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

### **6.2.2 Using Positive Results from Voluntary Long Form Competitions**

In Chapter 2 (section [2.6.2](#)), I raised a question about assuming positive results from Long Form Voluntary competitions transferred to different activities. In BGECWW, positive results from long term, voluntary competitions (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2009 & 2012; Huber, 2012), are used to make justifications for ‘Business Games and Enterprise Competitions’ in general. In addition, as ‘Enterprise Competitions’ are also justified using references from Serious Games, there is also the implication that they too offer a safe environment for learning and failure (Hanson et al., 2017; Fox et al., 2018).

Thinking through the findings regarding Long Form CEE (long term competitions and student mini-company competitions), what is striking is the vastly different institutional and social backdrops for different students and teams. Evidence presented in this study shows that there are some educators in very well-resourced settings who describe an abundance of resources which support participation and achievement in competitions. These resources include: students with aspiration, drive, skills or hobbies which they could re-orient towards a competition, schools where teachers had, or created, capacity to support students with additional/specific provision, as well as families who themselves were driven, motivated and practically supportive. In contrast, there were other educators in much less well-resourced settings, who shared situations where there was a scarcity of resources. This included: students lacking confidence, self-esteem and work ethic, schools where teachers and budgets were over-stretched, and where families had less capacity and financial resource to support activities.

In the development of my initial Realistic Conceptualisation of CEE (presented in section [1.11.2](#)), resources exist as a ‘factor’ which influences outcomes. However, considering the evidence from programme practitioners has developed my thinking. Resources are not simply

a factor which influences outcomes, but rather they are a crucial part of the context into which a programme is inserted. Thus, in considering the assumption that Long Form CEE presents a ‘safe’ environment where students can take risks and fail, we have more information that the situation should not, even in a voluntary activity, be assumed to be a safe environment to fail for all students, but that this will be influenced by their starting points. Some programme practitioners assessed that students who go the distance in competitions but fail to win ‘know what they’re getting in to’ and/or are so hyper competitive that they can take failure as a ‘learning curve’ and use the experience as learning for next time. We also have evidence that the very act of volunteering to participate (and retaining oneself) in a competition is supported by a variety of pre-existing qualities and advantageous social circumstances, in school or home or both. This confirms that authors of impact studies (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2009 & 2012; Huber et al., 2012), **who suggest** that initial differences and **unobservable characteristics** between students *may* be contributing to programme results ***are supported***. The findings also bring into focus that in Long Form CEE students with different resources - those with lots of personal capability, school support and social and family capital versus students from challenged schools and communities where everyone from teachers, families to the student themselves have less resources – compete in the same activity.

As a result, it is legitimate to propose, from a programme design point of view, that for some students, from some schools and from some backgrounds that **these activities are less safe** than others, **because they enter a competitive arena with less personal and social resources to compete**. This can be seen in evidence from programme practitioners about students from disadvantaged backgrounds always feeling as though they are second best and that better equipped schools will (and do) win. In this competitive situation, students (and teachers) confront their inadequacies, whether that is that their clothes are not immaculate business



wear, or their accents and presentations are not as polished, or that they are ‘just’ normal and feel they cannot compete with the excellence of the better resourced schools and students which they face. This confirms that measurement studies *are* missing important contextual information which helps build a more comprehensive picture of what is happening in Long Form CEE, and demonstrates the usefulness of RE, which intentionally looks for contextual evidence.

Regarding the assumption that positive results from *voluntary* Long Form programmes, can be used to justify compulsory longer term competitions, Oosterbeek et al. (2008, 2010), proposed that compulsory participation in a student mini company experience was a potential negative influence. This study confirms these authors *are right*. Programme practitioners interviewed in this study say one of the *conditions* for positive results *is that students volunteer*. Indeed, a programme practitioner went as far as to say that they actively advise schools against making a long-term competition compulsory. However, what we also have from the findings presented in Chapter 5 is a clearer picture that *students who do* volunteer (and stay in the process) are characterised as having some other *pre-existing resources* (individual, inter-personal, institutional *and* infra-structural), which are advantageous. Thus, it is not only important that one volunteers, but it is also important to *recognise the existing resources that support a student to volunteer*.

In regard to the influence of compulsory Long Form CEE, this study also provides evidence that can prompt alternative ways of thinking about how effects are generated. In this study teachers for students with special educational needs provided evidence about how they ran a long-term enterprise competition through the curriculum for their students. Yet activities were designed and delivered in such an inclusive way that students ‘didn’t know they were in a competition’ and *all* students were supported to ‘do amazing things.’ This demonstrates that it may not be the act of running a *compulsory mini company* in itself which generates

negative results. Indeed, the SEN teacher described how the process connected students to their community, raised the profile of the school and enabled students to ‘do something amazing’. Thus, as Oosterbeek et al. suggest, it may be that students “might not like” the programme, and what they might **not like** is not that it is a compulsory mini-company programme but that it is a compulsory mini enterprise *competition*.

How can this thinking be justified? Evidence from programme practitioners signposts that some students (and teachers) do not like feeling as though they are competing on an unfair playing field, and becoming aware of their personal and social inadequacies. Therefore, evidence from programme practitioners modifies Oosterbeek et al’s theory about students not liking the student mini-company programme *because it was compulsory*, and more clearly signposts that students might not have liked the student mini-company programme because it was a *compulsory competition, in which we can now see that they compete on an unfair playing field*. This possibility is not articulated by Oosterbeek et al (or the other measurement focused studies). Yet, now, as a result of this study, we have evidence regarding a ***compulsory and non-competitive*** mini company experience being described **positively**, versus a ***voluntary but competitive*** mini company experiences **described negatively** where students feel demoralised, teachers feel cheated and, as we now know, where many students don’t have the confidence to even volunteer.

This new evidence signals a need to re-think assumptions regarding this type of activity when the competitive structure itself can act as a filter which excludes some students, and where an unlevel playing field highlights and reproduces wider social inequalities for students and teachers through the experience of competing against better equipped schools and students. It highlights the possibility of *unequal competition as an impediment to personal development* in the context of enterprise education.

### 6.2.3 Using Literature which Obscures the Nature and Effects of Competing

In Chapter 2 (section [2.6.3](#)), it was discussed that literature used in BGECWW obscured the nature and effects of competing. Authors of impact studies simply describe intended outcomes through their programme names – Young Enterprise, Junior Achievement, Student mini-companies (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2009 & 2012; Oosterbeek, 2008, 2010). In one study used in BGECWW, Huber et al. (2012) discuss the positive (statistical) effects of winning in their section on ‘heterogenous results’. These heterogenous results - where researchers found a *significantly positive* effect for pro-activity, self-efficacy and intention to start a business for children that were the members of the *winning team* – are explained by proposing that the students who won may have *put in more effort*.

As a result of the approach taken in this study we now have additional evidence from programme practitioners which challenges this view. Yes, students are characterised as working hard (or not) to different degrees, but hard working and ‘go-getty’ students who thrive in competitions are also characterised as having *more support from home and other advantageous social circumstances*. The importance of contextual resources in conditioning experiences and outcomes in CEE is clear and better illuminates the extent to which these existing resources have been under-theorised in explanations of effects thus far.

There appears to be something else interesting going on here. Researchers (Huber et al., 2012), explain the success of winners in relation to their efforts: *winners put in more effort*. This belief tendency was also seen in *this PhD study*, where even though programme practitioners discussed disadvantaged students’ (reduced) capacity to compete in relation to their social circumstances (having to manage part time work or caring responsibilities, coming from trade families or a less affluent community), these students could also be viewed simultaneously as myopic and short term-ist, and *just not willing to work as hard*. At

the same time, students who were discussed as thriving in competitive situations (who had many social advantages in terms of additional support at school and family resources which provide practical, cultural and financial capital), were discussed as being focused and hard-working and able to make the right sacrifices. I will return to what makes this explanatory tendency possible further in this chapter, but suffice to say, the approach of using an RE perspective does help unsettle the assumption base for competitions in two ways. Firstly, it surfaces the contextual resources that are at play in *participation and achievement* in these activities, and secondly it also reveals *conflicting explanations for student success*. Though we can see, by the organisation of findings according to the four layers of context (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006), that social context *does* influence more positive and more negative effects, we can see simultaneously, in the evidence from programme practitioners, that these *different social contexts do not influence the ultimate explanations of success*. I return to this point when discussing the ripple effects of Competitive Enterprise Education.

For now, the key point is to return to Huber et al's (2012), finding that the pro-activity, self-efficacy and intention to start a business are significantly boosted for those on the winning team. Should this not lead us to ask – **what about those students who fail to win?** As a result of the evidence provided by programme practitioners about the intense and potentially negative experience of competing and failing to win, we might move beyond the point of our assumptions being unsettled and towards more fully theorising what is going on in these types of activities.

If the broad policy aim of EE, as discussed in Chapter 1 (section [1.11.1](#)), is to inspire, motivate, build confidence, increase interest in business and start up *for all* (Young, 2014), then the tactic of providing large scale, Short Form CEE (one day competitions and Dragon's Den challenges are identified as the most common activity in schools), will result in *significant numbers of conscripted students failing to win*, with the potential side-effect of

resentment, confusion and/or disillusionment. It is not unsurprising then, that when a Long Form competition (such as a mini student company programme where students and schools compete against each other), is offered, many students who are presented with the opportunity *don't even volunteer* (and this is an activity for much smaller groups of volunteers, potentially one to three teams per year). It is now clearer that a particular type of student with certain qualities, experiences and resources will tend to step up and stay in a programme. Some students might be excited to volunteer, but if they don't have the right conditions (personal skills and capacity for hard work, existing strong relationships, support from school, advantageous family background), they are characterised as more likely to drop out. Or indeed, they might try to volunteer but their ideas will not meet competition criteria; it ***is not enough that students want to try to be entrepreneurial***, if they plan to make money baby sitting or selling hot dogs and freezy pops, then they may be rejected, despite a wish to participate, because such ideas do not do well in the competition.

In BGECWW, ***we don't read about drop-outs, rejects, or students who fail to volunteer.***

But, with the approach taken in this PhD study, we can see that CEE programmes create effects by *the very nature* of the competitive structure resulting in only some students self-selecting, being accepted into and having the capacities to stay in CEE programmes.

Therefore, they do not facilitate meeting a policy goal of enterprise *for all*.

From the findings of this PhD study, we are also starting to build a sufficiently developed picture where we can start to consider the links between losing in formative Short Form CEE experiences (one day competitions/Dragon's Den challenges) and the likelihood (or not) of feeling enthusiastic to volunteer for a Long Form CEE programme, when such an opportunity is presented.

#### 6.2.4 Using Measurement Focused Studies Which Wash Out Context

In Chapter 2 (section [2.6.4](#)), one of the problems discussed with the literature in BGECWW was that impact studies focused on measurement raised more questions than they answered, because, as Huber et al. (2012), say, they present results “on average”, and this frustrates being able to discuss differences that exist between students or what may cause different outcomes. Indeed, Huber et al. (2012, p.22) conclude their study is “almost silent about the precise driving force behind the results”. The aim of this study was to take a different approach to exploring effects – instead of measuring impact and expressing effects in average effect sizes, this study has involved interviewing people close to these programmes: school coordinators, teachers, providers, commissioners and managers, and exploring what is working (or not) in regard to these programmes. While measurement and statistical control aims to create unbiased and robust results (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2009 & 2012; Huber, 2012), we can see from the findings in this PhD study that previous research has missed out crucial contextual elements which influence programme outcomes and the wide variance which exists in programmes. Again, this confirms the findings of Huber et al. (2012) that a limitation with measurement approaches may be initial and unobservable differences that are difficult to control for in their study design. The organisation of data into four layers of context reveals ***how much is unarticulated in measurement focused studies***. There is a wide range of different (pre-existing), contextual elements that influence more positive and negative effects. Students have different skills, resources, attitudes and previous experiences which influence outcomes. Teams have different dynamics and outcomes which influence programme experience. Schools have different institutional contexts which influence the preparedness and support of students, and students come from families and communities which have different resources which amplify (positively or negatively), their personal performance in a one-day competition and provide competitive advantage in longer

term competitions. The way in which this study illuminates these initial differences demonstrates the usefulness of using RE to investigate programmes. In Chapter 1 (section [1.9](#)), I proposed that RE could extend and complement to measurement studies because of its specific focus on extending thinking about programme effectiveness beyond ‘what works’ and towards ‘what works for whom and why’. The goal that RE authors promote, that greater insight can be developed through realist approaches (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2006; 2013; Wong et al., 2017; Emmel et al., 2018), is confirmed in this study. Evidence from programme practitioners presented in Chapters 4 and 5 develops a fuller and deeper picture regarding what is actually going on in Competitive Enterprise Education for different students, different schools and different communities. The process of thinking through CEE activities from the perspective of RE has moved on my thinking from the initial conceptual framework presented at the beginning of this thesis. Realist work aims to help build theories about for whom, and why programmes ‘work’ (or don’t), and in the following section I discuss the development of my ideas in this regard.

### **6.3 Research Objective 2 – To Explore Positive and Negative Effects of CEE**

In Chapter 2 (section [2.6.3](#)), it was observed that in BGECWW and the literature contained within, there was a common lack of interest in negative results. For example, when students’ entrepreneurial intentions decrease, this is articulated as a benefit (Hanson et al., 2017; Oosterbeek et al., 2008), as students have achieved more realistic expectations and won’t pursue entrepreneurship when they don’t have the skills to do so. I have proposed that to better understand impact, research approaches need to take an interest in unintended and negative consequences, not just measure or discuss positive effects. Using RE enabled this to be pursued explicitly, as at its core, it is an approach which *assumes a range of effects* and is

interested in learning for whom a programme works well (*or not*), and why. In this study, my thinking around this was developed by interpreting data from two realist informed questions. Firstly, in relation to more positive outcomes, I adopted the advice of Jagosh (2017), which is to better understand what pre-existing resources a programme *leverages* from its context. Secondly, in relation to more negative outcomes, I thought about data from the perspective of ‘for whom is CEE not working so well’ and organised data as such. The outcomes of this approach were presented in diagrams which listed various elements at the four layers of context which influenced more positive or more negative effects. I revisit these in the following sections and discuss these findings in relation to the RE perspective to theorise potential implications and to provide abstractions. Abstraction is a key explanatory tool (Pawson, 2000), as it helps to develop understanding about an event as an instance of a more general class of happenings. Abstractions are developed to help think through more positive and more negative effects in both Short Form and Long Form CEE.

### **6.3.1 Short Form CEE**

In Chapter 4, findings illuminated the different contextual conditions which were associated with more positive and more negative effects.

In relation to more positive results, that is students who did well and/or enjoyed such activities, the following sorts of contextual conditions would be described by programme practitioners. Students would be described as having ‘go-getty’ attitudes, confidence, risk-taking and enthusiasm, a preparedness and excitement to compete with previous successes under their belt. On the other hand, there were students who were unhappy because the activity was compulsory, who didn’t see the point of the activity or found it boring, who have less personal and social resources to compete and previous experiences of failing to win. Some students are stressed and nerve wracked, some are poor losers, or don’t know why they



don't win, or never win, or expect to fail and have that expectation confirmed. Other influences were the experiences within a team, which ranged from working well and being able to agree a direction and delegation of tasks to promoting dysfunction, tensions, conflict, power struggles and marginalised voices, and the support (or not) of mentors and teachers. These capacities may be enhanced by being in an institution where activities and culture supported competitiveness and where home and social background reinforced the culture, skills and experiences which support competing.

Returning to the RE approach which influences this discussion, Pawson discusses the importance of mapping participants' behaviour state in a programme to understand the different pathways of subjects in a programme (Pawson, 2013). Considering the evidence summarised in Chapter 4 (findings about Short Form CEE), one gets a clearer view of different pathways of subjects, and I summarise some key evidence below which helps *to abstract* behaviour states of different programme participants.

#### **6.3.1.1 More Positive Results – Equipped at the Starting Line**

In thinking through evidence around the question, 'for whom do these activities work well...' there was a tendency to identify a type of student who turned up more equipped to compete. This type of personality was 'go-getty' and 'initiative taking,' able to take on and complete tasks and already having the confidence to present. Table 7 abstracts a more positive pathway for such a student, illustrating the role *existing* capabilities play in the experience of those taking part in a Short Form CEE activity.

Evidence from programme practitioners in relation to Short Form CEE	Abstracted behaviour state
<p>“The one-day competition in school is great for those who do well, but they do well because they came in equipped to do well. You could almost predict at the start of the day who was going to do well at the end of it, despite all the effort you put in.” School based educator 3.</p> <p>“...the higher achievers just have a mindset that is just a bit more ‘go-getty’ and initiative taking. What they were able to do and how that compared to people around them... in class, and in enterprise in particular, you are so close to people, it's very clear very quickly.” (Consultant/Provider 1).</p> <p>“...those things that you have at the starting line can come from preparation in the school or from social setting, or from parental setting.” (School based educator 3).</p>	<p><b><i>Equipped at the starting line</i></b> (prepared with attitude and resources, already motivated, and/or favourably comparing self with peers)</p>
<p>“...they are being active participants rather than passive... they are engaging with the materials, talking to the people around them... not going on their phones. Staying on task I call it.” (Consultant/Provider 1).</p> <p>“I think it’s something that young people can relate to because it’s something they’ve seen on the television, and it’s exciting, and they work in groups, which young people like to do...and it’s also testing them, it’s taking them out of their comfort zone, and that’s good, because quite often many students are a bit nervous about talking in front of people they’ve not met.” (School based educator 1).</p> <p>“...their mentor talks them through it...saying ‘you’re good at this, you should consider this...’ so they’re... feeding the confidence, which then inspires them to look further... “ Consultant/Provider 2.</p>	<p><b><i>Engaged</i></b> (excited by challenge, working on tasks, functioning with teammates, accessing support, performing in activities).</p>
<p>“I think, for only a minority, does it actually boost their self-confidence, their self-esteem, their belief that enterprise skills are an important collection of skills to help them in later life. And only for a small minority does it have any impact on their future career aspirations, their career opportunities.” (School Based Educator 3).</p>	<p><b><i>Accomplished</i></b> (boosted confidence/self-esteem, new information inspiration).</p>

***Table 7 - A More Positive Pathway in Short Form CEE***

It is important to note that the abstracted pathway presented in Table 7 relates to programme practitioners speaking about the ‘in-house’ one day competition model, the situation where students from the same school/same year compete against each other in teams, in a large group, potentially in the school hall. This study provides insight regarding the realist goal of determining more about ‘*what needs to be in place*’ for some outcome to happen (Danermark et al., 2002). We can better see the existing personal qualities of the student, the functionality of a team, the support of staff or mentors, and doing well on the day enable the feelings of boosted confidence and self-esteem. While a school-based educator struggled to think of

examples of ‘ill prepared’ students thriving on such a day, it is of interest that a consultant/provider (delivering one day competitions which fed into a national competition), had more than the ‘occasional’ example of positive outcomes. They discussed positive impact for ‘kids furthest from the ideal cohort’ benefitting from a one-day competition, but what was significant regarding that evidence, was a fundamental contextual difference. While the table about a more negative pathway describes a subject in a *compulsory* one-day competition, the provider describing positive outcomes for students who are ‘far from the ideal cohort’ is where students are participating in a final of finals. Essentially, in the latter example, students had already experienced the achievement of being selected by school to attend a national event. Getting to the one-day final was an honour in itself, with some students being made to feel very special about their success, with the event located at an ‘iconic venue’ and students experiencing a ‘great sense of occasion’. Thus, this introduces some element of selection bias that was previously discussed as contributing to positive outcomes. These students were already the ones who had the resources and qualities and/or were feeling special about their achievement. In realist terms, these were elements that *needed to be in place* (Danermark et al., 2002), for the positive effects, rather than the experience *alone* generating these elements.

#### **6.3.1.2 More Negative Results – Arriving on the Back Foot**

In thinking through evidence around the theme of ‘for whom these activities do not work so well,’ there was recognition that some students arrived to compete with less resources than their peers and that this could also interact with previous unsuccessful experiences of competing. Table 8 presents a more negative pathway for such a student.

Evidence from programme practitioners	Abstracted behaviour state
<p>"I definitely had scenarios where we have been running things in a school and it's 'Ah well, we never win because we're the thick kids...so we're not really going to try.' And you know we have kids walk out of stuff crying..." (Consultant/ Provider 3).</p>	<p><b>Pessimistic</b> (resigned to result because of past experience, verbalising failures and expectations of losing).</p>
<p>"If you got one or two negative, more negative students in the group, it kind of pulled the others down...it was group dynamics really..." (School based educator 1).</p> <p>"...one group just took umbrage to the product we were asking them to develop. You know, we just don't want to do that...I must have thrown three or four different ideas at them, and nothing stuck...in the end, we had to take them out..." (Consultant/Provider 6).</p> <p>"...getting up in front of your year group and speaking is absolutely terrifying, and unless you are that one really confident one, or that one really gobby kid, I don't think you get the best out of them." Consultant/Provider 2).</p> <p>"When it comes to arguments, frequently they were about differences of opinion on where the challenge was going. (Consultant/Provider 3).</p> <p>"...some students struggle in a group, you know, with their social skills, you know, that's one of the issues...that you'll get a group together and there's usually someone who dominates..." (School Based Educator 1).</p>	<p><b>Struggling</b> (presenting variously as negative, bored, stressed, anxious, argumentative, disengaged, angry, dominated).</p>
<p>"Those who don't expect to win have their fears confirmed" (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>"...we did a whole day, I can still remember. They came up, and threw all their work on the table, and said 'what was the point in that?' And it was because they'd put a lot of work in all of the day...And then when they presented back and didn't win anything, they didn't like it. And, that's always lived with me. And I felt, that must never happen again." (Consultant/Provider Non-Competitive 1)</p> <p>"...there is that issue at the end that some people will be very poor losers, and on feedback on the enterprise days I've done, students just being so angry and is disillusioned by it. And also, there's the element judging, what is it fair or not?" (Consultant Provider 1).</p> <p>"...I'm not sure what the opposite of pride is, maybe... it is 'knocking your self-confidence.' I've seen students who have had their self-confidence knocked..." (School Based Educator 3).</p>	<p><b>Disillusioned</b> (previous unsuccessful experiences are reinforced; confidence is knocked)</p>

**Table 8 - A More Negative Pathway in Short Form CEE**

This pathway illuminates the interplay between past experience and present activity. When thinking about these types of students, one programme practitioner described that for some students, no matter how hard they tried they never did as well – *they just weren't as good* – and that this was (unsurprisingly, given the chance to think it through), was demotivating. At an individual level then, we can start to construct a pathway where a student arrives at a one-day competition with previous experiences of failing to win and comparing themselves

unfavourably to their peers and that this experience plays out again. Students start the day saying ‘we never win...we’re the thick kids...’ and they are proved right (in terms of *repeating the failure to win* in a competitive activity).

Although impact measurement studies used in BGECWW are about longer term competitions and BGECWW does not provide any impact studies for one day, face-to-face competitions to compare these results to, the results in this PhD study add new and novel understanding to ‘the evidence base’ as it is presented in BGECWW. As well as illuminating more positive and negative pathways of subject, a surprising element of the findings was the insight gained from programme practitioners about the *difficulty of challenging the focus on winning*. This is where students expect a winner, where having a winner is described as a habit and where students struggle to understand how to behave in cooperative activities. I discuss this, and other implications in the following section.

### **6.3.1.3 Implications**

Whether it is in the policy contained within the introduction to this thesis, or the grey literature included in BGECWW, the stated aspirations of EE are centred around the development of skills and confidence for all individuals and nurturing an interest in business. These aspirations for individuals are also nested within broader and increasingly more socially focused concerns about developing entrepreneurs and citizens who will have the empathy and ethics to create social and environmental value (Hytti, Berglund and Verduijn, 2020; Loi et al., 2021). While Short Form CEE such as one day competition/Dragon’s Den challenges are rolled up with other activities and assumed to have positive individual and social effects (Hanson et al., 2017), we now have a fuller picture of the existing advantageous resources (cognitive capacity, functioning team work, supportive mentor or teacher on the day, previous positive experience of, and excitement to compete and preparedness from a

high achieving family and social background and extra-curricular experiences), which condition positive experiences and effects. In addition, while negative effects for individuals may be around dented confidence, demotivation and disillusionment, these activities, structured as they are competitively, also amplify a broader individualistic and competitive culture which, according to cooperative programme practitioners, limits students' willingness or capacity to cooperate.

This more realistic view of CEE helps us see how activities do not magically result in positive outcomes, but that a range of outcomes are generated by the experience (and previous, accumulated experiences) on the programme itself. Just as Huber et al. (2012) identified the measurable benefits of winning, the negative impacts of losing are surfaced through the realist theorising in this thesis. This insight requires that the argument made in BGECWW that diminished entrepreneurial intention can be presented as a beneficial side effect of EE, needs re-thinking. Alternative theories for negative results are required. As Oosterbeek et al. (2008, 2010), suggest, diminished intentions may be a sign that students did not like the programme. As a result of this PhD study, we can more clearly see that for some students, this may have included the experience of arriving at competitive activities with previous and/or accumulated experiences of failing to win, feeling unable to compete, failing to win in the process again, and repeating this experience during every Short Form CEE activity in which they participate. In the following section, the implications of thesis findings for Long Form CEE are considered.

### **6.3.2 Long Form CEE**

In Chapter 5, findings illuminated the very different contextual conditions which were associated with more positive and more negative effects in Long Form CEE (for example, long term competitions and student mini companies). In relation to more positive outcomes,

the characteristics of the student and their context influenced the most basic of effects – who volunteered for a competition – and further influenced who stayed in, who achieved and who was able to bounce back from failure. Considering the evidence in Chapter 5, one gets a clearer view of the spectrum of resources that exist (or don't) in the context, and which support (or don't) a student to feel equipped to put themselves forward, which influences the capacity to stay in a programme and the background resources which help facilitate a positive experience. While measurement studies are silent regarding the driving force behind results (Huber et al., 2012), a key goal of RE is to build explanatory thinking about what is happening in a particular programme. It is important to identify crucial contextual conditions which influence outcomes in a programme (Jagosh et al., 2015; Jagosh 2019, 2020), and thus, in the following section, evidence - *and abstractions* - about patterns regarding context are discussed.

As identified at the end of the literature review and in the methodology chapter, there was no way of knowing at the beginning of the research process what form abstractions presented here would take. In the development of my initial framework (presented in Chapters 1 and 2), resources existed as a 'factor' which influenced outcomes. However, considering the evidence from programme practitioners has enabled a re-theorising of such resources as being a crucial part of the context into which a programme is inserted. Taking account of context through the four layers proposed by Pawson has enabled a clearer view that CEE programmes are inserted in situations where there is already an abundance of resources at individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural levels, or conversely, a scarcity of such resources (and, of course, an array of contexts in between these two positions). These pre-existing resources in the context influence very basic effects related to the competitive structure of activities regarding: who volunteers for programmes, who stays the distance, who achieves in the programme and who bounces back from failure. This realistic analysis reveals

new insight regarding ‘For whom’ programmes work better, in the sense of ‘For whom’ a competitive structure of activities is more appealing and possible.

To help fulfil the realist goal of abstracting some conditions or processes that are crucial or useful in theorising Long Form CEE programmes, the concept of scarcity helps generate insight and foresight into how interventions can play out. Scarcity has been defined as “having less than you feel you need” (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013, p 4). Conceptually, scarcity extends over many possible dimensions of life, such as not having enough time, money, food, social bonds, and, practically speaking, it is “unpleasant”; scarcity leads to “dissatisfaction and struggle” (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013, p 12). Conversely, when one is not in a situation of scarcity – when one has an abundance of time, money and social bonds, one has more cognitive ‘bandwidth’. This is linked to two broad and related components of mental function: cognitive capacity refers to abilities to retain information, engage in logical reasoning and solve problems without any specific learning or experience; and executive control refers to planning, attention, initiating actions and inhibiting impulses (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013).

I first learned about scarcity whilst listening to BBC Radio 4. I was at the point in my data collection where I had interviewed school-based educators from less well-resourced schools, and also heard about the difficulties challenged schools faced which limited their participation in CEE activities. At the time I was finding it difficult to recruit an interview participant from a challenged school. Although I had been able to make contact with someone, they had to keep cancelling the interview because crises at school meant their time was needed elsewhere. I had also interviewed an educator from a very well-resourced school, who had explained the impressive amount of resources which were coalesced to support teams entering enterprise competitions. Then I heard scarcity discussed in relation to how *stress and over-stretch influences decision making* (Thomas-Smith, 2020). As Pawson



suggests (2013), conceptual nuggets can arise from anywhere. The usefulness of conceptual abstraction is in whether it offers an insightful way of thinking about a programme (and for whom it works, or not, and why), that is transportable and re-useable in different contexts (Pawson, 2013; Jagosh, 2019). These words – scarcity and abundance – capture some essence of the extremes of the school contexts I was learning about from programme practitioners, and provide the conceptual abstraction that is sought in a realist study. I elaborate on them further in the following sections.

### **6.3.2.1 More Positive Effects – Contexts of Abundance**

This PhD study better illuminates how more positive effects in Long Form CEE are related to contexts where there are existing advantageous resources, enhanced by support at school and home. For example, students who volunteer for Long Form CEE may have an existing interest in and appetite for enterprise, and potentially existing hobbies or creative skills which could be exploited in the competition. They tend to be characterised as having high achieving mindsets and behaviours, and the drive and capacity for hard work outside of school. In the programme itself, those who stayed in were more likely to have experienced early success, but also have a certain competitiveness which would take them through the process and enable them to see any failure to win as a learning opportunity which could feed through to future (potential) success. Existing relationships and friendship groups were seen as a condition for volunteering and remaining in the process, as well as the amount of support provided in a school. The amount of support provided by schools in a long term competition is crucial, resources available to a school also influences how many teams may participate in a competition, and what selling opportunities are available to students. Outside of this, home and social background is considered essential, as most of the work needed for a long term competition *takes place outside of school*, so students need time, support and resources to enable them to stay the distance and achieve in the process.

Table 9 summarises these resources to illuminate the existing resources and advantageous contexts (related to the four layers of context), which support students to volunteer and progress through Long Form CEE. These results underscore the nature of the conditions which support positive outcomes, after all, these are not resources that a programme provides, but are pre-existing resources which students, schools, families and communities already have, or are able to access or create during the experience. Again, this confirms potential limitations expressed by measurement-study authors (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2009, Athayde, 2012, Huber et al., 2012), about the possibility that self-selection bias influences effects. The conditions summarised in Table 9 re indicative of initial differences and unobservable characteristics which these authors acknowledge as a limitation to their research and provide considerable insight into the accumulation of advantages that support students, and schools, to compete.

As a result of the realist evaluation approach taken in this PhD study, we can now better imagine a high achieving and creative student with a hobby to exploit, benefiting from a strong friendship group, attending a well-resourced school which offers significant support and embedded within a community with high expectations and with a supportive, professional and driven family. In this scenario there are already lots of resources, pre-existing in the four layers of context studied here, which support participation and achievement. And when a competitive programme is inserted into that particular context, it leverages those existing resources to help generate positive results. These advantages can affect the most basic of outcomes such as who volunteers and who stays in the process.

This challenges an assumption expressed through the framing of BGECWW *as being able* to specify ‘what works’ in Business Games and Competitions. Authors in BGECWW propose that ‘so long as the guidance is followed’ such activities will be effective in generating the positive outcomes stated in the impact section of the document.

**Table 9 - Advantageous Contexts in Long Form CEE**

Evidence from programme practitioners	Contexts of Abundance
<p>“...the students are so driven, that they’ll spend time on it to make sure that it’s right and they’ve got such high standards and expectations for themselves...” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“...[they] have the confidence to try things...common sense, confidence... wanting to work with other people, just having that, in them I suppose...” (School Based Educator 4).</p> <p>“It’s predominately girls... we’ve got a lot of quite artistic and creative students.” (School Based Educator 4).</p> <p>“...the ones that make money fast stay in, so the ones that put effort in at the start, and don’t have other pulls on their time, stay in...” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2).</p> <p>“...it’s like kids with sport, right ‘I’ll go and have a go at swimming’ and then you’re like ‘Oh, I’ve won that’...then...that may motivate you to carry on...then if you get those accolades, that...success...praise at home...praise from your peers or...local recognition...you’re more likely to do things...” (Commissioner Manager 1).</p>	<p><b>Individuals</b> with lots of drive, motivation to achieve, existing skills and/or hobbies which they can exploit for the competition, the capacity for effort and hard work and the experience of making money early in the programme, feeling, or having experience of achievement and success.</p>
<p>“Girls...have more of a sort of close knit community of friends who might think ‘oh, let’s have a go... let’s make a bit of jewellery...let’s make a bit of this...’ (Commissioner Manager 1).</p> <p>“[they were] so keen to win...and at the event itself, just so, so hyped up and competitive...they just bounce back [from failure to win]....” (School Based Educator 4).</p> <p>“...they’ve had to give each other jobs within the group... they’ve had to put themselves into different roles... in terms of how they work together, superb...because I think we’re very, they get a lot of support from the get-go.” (School Based Educator 4).</p> <p>“I’m quite competitive as well...I like to see my teams succeed...I’ll keep trying to drive them on...keep trying to push them forward... [even though]...I’ll always be asking them, ‘what’s going on, what have you been doing? What have you still got to do? Do you need to do this by this date?’” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“...we were paired up with [one company], but other schools had other employers. But [our company] were quite competitive about it, because they wanted us to do well. Because we were up against other [companies from the same sector], so I think it was quite...quite good.” (School Based Educator 1).</p>	<p>Existing <b>strong relationships</b> between students, communication skills and competitiveness of students, ability to work in a team, human capital of staff, skills and competitiveness of staff and/or business mentors.</p>
<p>“...[we’ve got] four staff mentors now...so each week there will be a meeting...we’ll have individual meetings with each team... [a] team will also have that member of staff as someone that they can contact for support and guidance.” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“...we’ve got a smaller teaching load...smaller class sizes...less pressure, less stress, less need to stay up to work late in the evenings, so...more time to give during those lunch time and after school support slots.” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“...[we are] ... better resourced financially...it means...we can possibly do more one off, smaller scale competitions, with younger students to...equip them with some other skills that are needed...in the bigger competitions...” (School Based Educator 4).</p> <p>“...the whole staffing body supports it entirely the head is very, very behind it all, he’s willing to give me time away from lessons to be involved...” (School Based Educator 4).</p> <p>“...the ones at schools with more support are more likely to stay in.” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2).</p>	<p><b>Institutions</b> where lots of support can be provided, utilising the existence of spare capacity in the school setting where there is time and goodwill to support, or that resource is created by supportive leadership which re-directs existing resources.</p>
<p>“...[they’re from] very high achieving families, professional backgrounds, very driven and very keen to do well... there’s a lot of support from home there.” (School Based Educator 4).</p> <p>“...the bulk of the work is going to take place out of school...having access to parents that are business owners is a huge advantage...for students.” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“... home support has been...superb, very positive...every time we have a selling event, bringing their child with their stuff, turning up to help them carry it in, set up their stalls.” (School Based Educator 4).</p> <p>“...parents who take them into lots of extra-curricular activities that have a competition element, like the gymnastics, swimming, horse riding...” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“...we’ve got lots of parents who...are high up in businesses...they take an active interest...talking to them...running them around...to trade fairs...those are all the little extras, that [give]...an advantage...to say that you have...sold...to strangers, that’s seems to be something that’s very important in enterprise competitions...” (School Based Educator 2).</p>	<p><b>Infra-structural systems</b> with lots of support from parents from high achieving and business backgrounds where there is a culture, resources and practical help which is advantageous in competitions.</p>

However, by organising evidence from programme practitioners according to the four layers of context, we gain insight and clarity about *the pre-existing conditions* that support (or, as in the next section, hinder), positive (or negative) effects.

The value of this study is that, by organising and considering data relating to four layers of context, we are also better able to see the connections between the students' individual need for achievement, the institutional resources and the high achieving family culture and extracurricular experiences these students may be involved in. Evidence from programme practitioners illustrates that teams who progress in CEE programmes tend to have additional support in place, provided by the school, including additional sessions with teachers and/or mentors, specific business-related development and the benefits of wider school provision which supports student preparedness. This additional support *is not provided as part of the programme* architecture (Jagosh, 2019), but rather is organised by school or pre-existing in school provision and curricula or pre-existing in the social background of students, and yet is discussed in relation to how positive effects are generated. This type of variation in how students experience the programme in relation to additional school and home support is not reflected in impact measurement studies used to justify competitive approaches, yet it could help explain causes of positive effects (or lack thereof, for unsupported students).

Evidence from programme practitioners also illustrates that CEE programmes leverage the benefits and legacies of various infra-structural support, pre-existing in the context. This includes practical support on the programmes from parents (such as business-related expertise and the capacity to set up stalls and take students to trade fairs), which creates competitive advantages for teams. In addition, out of school activities and general home culture are said to influence positive results, students from families who are themselves professional, driven and involved in competitive activities at home are identified as those who volunteer, stay the distance, and achieve. Gender was mentioned in relation to individual

characterisations – bright academic girls – and interpersonal resources - girls having ready-to-go friendship groups – which were useful for volunteering and staying in the process. The influence of gender is not explicitly discussed in BGECWW, thus the data in this study adds further qualitative insight regarding the importance of friendships and social capital in relation to Long Form CEE. In BGECWW, the work of Riese (2014), is referred to in relation to this, but this PhD study adds additional insight about the perceived advantage that girls have in this regard.

### **6.3.2.2 More Negative Results – Contexts of Scarcity**

Evidence regarding more negative effects of CEE programmes tended to be elicited in response to questions such as: ‘who struggles in these programmes?’, ‘are there any unintended effects?’, ‘in regard to unintended or negative effects, how are they happening?’, ‘for whom does CEE not work so well?’. Collated evidence from programme practitioners illustrates that there are some students who volunteer for the programme but are rejected (do not get seed funding, get told to come back with better ideas), or drop out (do not have the existing cognitive, non-cognitive or practical resources to stay in the programme). Thus, the evidence collated in Table 10 demonstrates that contextual conditions influence the most basic programme effects, such as who volunteers for the programme, who is accepted or rejected and who drops out.

These most basic of outcomes, in terms of who is able or facilitated to participate in CEE are not theorised in BGECWW, or in the impact measurement studies contained within. Instead, the focus is on measuring some competencies or attitudes of individuals who participate and complete and take part in pre-test/post-test surveys. Evidence summarised in Table 10 implicates a lack of strong relationships, strong work ethic and support from educators, mentors or parents, in teams quickly falling apart, struggling and dropping out. As well as the

quantity of support on offer being raised as important, the issue of tension between mentors from more privileged backgrounds interacting with less affluent student mentees is also highlighted as another programme variation students may experience. Although the need for strong relationships has been identified as important for positive outcomes (Riese, 2013), another possibility is revealed, where good friends experience success, but a relationship is damaged when business concerns override relationships. Furthermore, disparities in institutional settings create additional disadvantage for schools which are already characterised as ‘challenged’. CEE programmes are considered expensive for a school with a small and over-stretched budget. There are fewer resources to support the activity in school and such schools can field fewer teams, limiting probabilities of winning awards. In addition to the impact of pre-existing financial disadvantage, some schools (and students) are characterised as being at a cultural disadvantage, lacking the aspiration, confidence and ‘polish’ to properly compete in such programmes. Such schools are spoken of as less successful, dropping out or not selecting to participate in the first place. Impact measurement studies used to justify competitive prescriptions do not theorise the influence of different settings, but rather, the assumption in a measurement study is that it is that the programme can be inserted into different contexts and achieve similar results. This assumption is made explicit in BGECWW, where authors state that *so long as good practice guidance is followed*, such programmes are effective. The evidence generated in this PhD study challenges this assumption. Instead, programme practitioners illustrate how disparities in infra-structural support reproduce inequalities, so that students with less social capital such as family resources and schools with less networks and resources for DIY-programming opportunities, tend to achieve less in programmes (if they take part at all).

**Table 10 – Disadvantageous Contexts in Long Form CEE**

Evidence from programme practitioners	Contexts of Scarcity
<p>“A lot of boys had ideas, but they were not good ideas...[boys]...didn’t see the process through...they didn’t write their final report. they didn’t update...the website, or... Instagram, the girls were diligent... the boys didn’t do that..” (School Based Educator 4).</p> <p>“...students [from less advantaged backgrounds] were a lot quicker to give up if they encountered difficulties...[they need]... a lot extra support from staff and business mentors to keep going when things became difficult...” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“...there is... an unwillingness among students to go as far...there are a lot of genuine reasons... they might be caring...[have] cultural reasons...[have] extra responsibilities...[have] a part-time job, because their parents will not be giving them anything.” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“...I think part of it is maybe a lack of aspiration [in a less advantaged setting] and long term thinking...maybe being quite myopic in how they approach things...thinking ‘well, this is difficult now so I’ll give up, I won’t think about the long term benefits of doing it, I’ll just stop doing it now because it’s hard now...” (School Based Educator 2).</p>	<p><b>Individuals</b> (especially boys), with poor quality ideas who won’t get selected to the process, and/or those who don’t have the existing skills, resilience and various capacities required to complete the considerable work involved, students who are from schools and communities with less resources to compete.</p>
<p>“...they’ve got to make decisions and they’ve got to all agree things and they got to have a clear direction of travel [or]...they start to flounder...” (School Based Educator 4).</p> <p>“...the groups that have problems...they might possibly stumble along, or...they’ll just not carry on, it is a little bit self-selecting in that respect.” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“[one team] every single time they just missed, they were just pipped every single time...and the only feedback we could give them was ‘well unfortunately they did that extra sentence, or that team was just that bit different,’ ...and they were really, really demoralised...it’s just like ‘well, what’s the point?’ (Consultant Provider 2).</p> <p>“...[when] support in some programmes has been cut back a bit [it]...definitely impacts on schools in the less affluent areas...their teams aren’t supported enough to get into the latter stages of competitions...” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“... it was negative...because they hadn’t succeeded at winning. But then they also hadn’t succeeded in getting recognition.” (School Based Educator 1)</p> <p>“...you get business advisers...[from a] relatively privileged upbringing...they’ve not necessarily been to a school where it’s difficult... there’s lots of pressure that they don’t understand...” (School Based Educator 2).</p>	<p>Teams which don’t have the <b>interpersonal</b> skills and qualities necessary for the process, teams which fail to win, and are from a context where failure to win or achieve sufficient recognition is demoralising, teams (and teachers and schools), which need support and don’t get it, or which get support, but this support is unsympathetic in some way.</p>
<p>“...they could afford two or three teams. If I’d have had a few more teams I might have had a better chance of winning...” (School Based Educator 1).</p> <p>“...this is where resourcing comes in... [enterprise] was just an extra role I took on... [school] no longer has an enterprise coordinator, no longer provides finance for that role, no longer provides a time allocation for that role... I’m very conscious... the whole profile of enterprise education...has diminished...” (School Based Educator 3).</p> <p>“...[more affluent students] are more confident... students from other backgrounds...their presentation skills are nowhere near as polished...” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“... when we’ve gone to [elite] competitions...it’s very unusual to see a school in a deprived area make one of those finals...” School Based Educator 2).</p>	<p><b>Institutions</b> where there aren’t the financial and institutional resources to support a competition, where the student cohort doesn’t have an advantageous social background and as a result there is less participation or progression in a competition.</p>
<p>“... the less resourced schools just didn’t enter...if budgets are getting cut...we need to be saying [to well-resourced] ‘you’re sorted, we can’t support you’...we need to go and support [challenged schools]...” (Consultant Provider Competitive 2).</p> <p>“...judging criteria...could unfairly penalise students who haven’t got computers at home or got parents who are IT savvy...” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“...we’d turn up to competitions...other students would be there in immaculate business wear, where we’d have students...walking into competitions automatically feeling that they are second best...” (School Based Educator 2).</p> <p>“I think a lot of that [feeling disadvantaged] ...is partly down to esteem and aspirations of those students, a lot of those students might come from families who haven’t got people at home who work, or people at home who’ve got businesses, or no access to networks of people... they can seek advice from outside of school.” (School Based Educator 2).</p>	<p><b>Infra-structural systems</b> where school don’t have the resources to enter competitions and/or where judging criteria penalises students/schools with less resources and where existing social and financial disadvantage generates a sense of inadequacy and/or where students feel they don’t have the resources to compete.</p>

One striking element of the evidence was the extent to which boys were characterised as less likely to participate in Long Form CEE. Overall, boys tended to be characterised as having less of everything: less hard working, less maturity, less appropriate quality ideas, less capacity for communication and team work, and less diligence to complete and submit tasks required for success in a competition process. Furthermore ethnic minority and migrants boys were sometimes characterised as keen to take part but offering low quality ideas and therefore rejected from the process (which extends Athayde's concerns, discussed in section [2.8.5](#), about the effects of a programme on black pupils). These important individual contextual differences are not identified in BGECWW but offer new insight into who does not make the grade in terms of getting selected into a competitive process. The other important theme regarding 'for whom' such programmes do not work so well is in the characterisation of individuals successes.

It was possible for programme practitioners to simultaneously recognise the more challenging background of some students (whether that be characterised by social and/or economic disadvantage reflected in additional caring or work responsibilities), and yet explain success (or lack thereof), at the personal level (for example, lack of aspiration, unwillingness to go as far, less capacity to keep going when things were difficult). I will return to the conditions for these explanations of success in the last section of this chapter regarding the social effects of CEE. In considering the implications of the results I return to the abstract concept of scarcity that is useful for theorising explanations for the evidence provided by programme practitioners.

### **6.3.2.3 Implications**

What are the implications for CEE programmes when we have a greater appreciation that such activities are inserted in environments that can be characterised as contexts of scarcity



and contexts of abundance. Scarcity has been defined as “*having less than you feel you need*” (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013, p 4). Scarcity is “*unpleasant*”, leads to “*dissatisfaction and struggle*” (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013, p 12) and negatively impacts on cognitive ‘bandwidth’. Scarcity is said to “*capture the mind*”, that is, to operate unconsciously, whether the mind’s owner wishes it or not, influencing what we notice, how we weigh choices, how we deliberate and how we behave (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013, p 12 – 13).

Theorising using the concept of scarcity enables a more nuanced consideration regarding evidence in relation to both students’ lack of skills and work ethic necessary for CEE and the lack of expectation and aspiration on the part of schools. Both ***students and teachers in contexts of scarcity are under strain***. Students may have caring responsibilities, need to undertake part time work to get money and also come from families which are focused on survival and managing rather than flourishing and striving. In addition, schools which these students attend may have fewer available or willing staff, low budgets and less coordination capacity, further compounding the students’ lack of resources.

The impacts of scarcity include counter-productive fixations on worrying and stressful phenomena, short term orientation, and ***an actual reduction in cognitive capacity***, where people in contexts of scarcity have less cognitive bandwidth than those with more resources (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013). This is important, because characterisations of individuals who succeed in CEE tend to focus on qualities such as being driven, motivated and hard working. Theorising from the perspective of scarcity alerts us to the idea that behaviours that fall under the umbrella of personality or talent, such as skill, motivation and work ethic, are also predicated by cognitive capacity and executive control, which in turn can be limited by a “*heavily taxed*” bandwidth (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013, p 65).

This possibility offers alternative explanations to accounts where diminished skills or intentions are put down to more realistic expectations of entrepreneurship, students simply ‘not liking’ the programme, or there being no explanation offered (c.f. Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Oosterbeek et al., 2008, 2010; Huber et al., 2012). Instead, if we now know that “*scarcity directly reduces bandwidth*” (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013, p. 47), we have a new perspective on students who look lazy or unskilled, or with no motivation, insufficient education or who didn’t put enough effort in. In contexts of scarcity, these students (and teachers, and communities) can perhaps be thought of as heavily taxed and as not having the bandwidth to volunteer, stay in or complete a CEE programme, or there being insufficient resources to support such programmes in the school or in the community operating in a context of scarcity. This would also help to explain why programme practitioners advised that resources be directed to more challenged schools, and why more challenged schools participate less in programmes.

Overall, one implication of this PhD study is that the findings confirm warnings from Athayde (2012), about the heterogeneity of results possible in long term programmes. She criticised the complacent and uncritical discourse and policy of EE and warned that one-size-fits-all programmes should not be wielded blindly. Whilst Athayde’s paper is referenced in BGECWW, the warning she provides is not. This PhD study illuminates that it should be made clearer to practitioners that one-size-fits all programmes can have unintended and negative results of the most basic kind, limiting which students volunteer for programmes, who gets accepted and who completes.

I now turn to the final research objective, to consider whether CEE may change the context itself over time.

## **6.4 Research Objective 3 - to consider whether CEE may change the context itself over time.**

In relation to the third and final objective of this PhD thesis I will use the concept of ripple effects to discuss two, interconnected issues. In RE, Jagosh et al. (2015) propose that the ‘ripple effect’ concept can be used to think through – theorise and abstract - the wider, social effects which a programme can cause, whereby the implementation of a programme over time *influences the context into which it is inserted* (Jagosh et al., 2015; Jagosh, 2019, 2020). In terms of such effects, two interconnected issues which are important to discuss are *the significant under-theorisation of pre-existing resources* which are advantageous in CEE, and how *this under-theorisation feeds into particular explanations of success*.

### **6.4.1 Ripple Effects of CEE**

In relation to ‘for whom’ CEE worked well, educators in more well-resourced settings described situations where there was an abundance of resources: students with aspiration, drive, skills or hobbies which they could re-orient towards a competition, schools where teachers had or created capacity to support students with additional/specific provision, as well as families who themselves were driven, motivated and practically supportive. In contrast, educators in less well-resourced settings, shared situations where there was a scarcity of resources: students lacking confidence, self-esteem and work ethic, schools where teachers and budgets were over-stretched, and where families had less capacity and financial resource to support activities. It was noticeable that there was some discomfort with the language and reality of winning and losing, with various programme practitioners making comments such as *not liking the word loser* (School Based Educator 2), or trying to find alternative words, such as *less successful* (School Based Educator 3), and also recognising that students (and

educators) had strong feelings about competition and the experience of winning and losing (School Based Educator 1, School Based Educator 4).

However, we can also see, as referenced earlier in this chapter, that researchers (Huber et al., 2012), and some programme practitioners explained the success of winners in terms of their efforts *rather* than their advantageous backgrounds. Students who do well in CEE programmes tended to be characterised as individuals having certain qualities, such as drive, motivation and work ethic (School Based Educator 2; School Based Educator 4). Such characterisations were even made by a school-based educator who had worked in a low resource environment and *previously* felt that competitions were unequal (School Based Educator 2). However, after working in a well-resourced setting, the explanations for competition success changed and the educator said that the “level playing field” argument was now something they disagreed with, and instead considered the hard work and dedication of the students to be the defining factor in success. This type of explanation was mirrored by a programme practitioner who provided competitions to schools, who discussed the challenging social circumstances of schools and their lack of resources, but also discussed such schools having a lack of strive.

An important element of RE is aiming to provide abstractions for phenomena, so that explanations have some portability between contexts, as well as considering *how the programme itself might change the context over time* (Jagosh et al., 2015). ***Elaborating ‘ripple effects’*** (Jagosh et al., 2015), ***is a realistic way to think through ‘what’ a programme works for*** (as discussed in Chapter 1, section [1.10](#)), in terms of considering how a programme may influence the context itself over time. As discussed in section [3.12](#), some ripple effects may be obvious, such as CEE programmes at least supporting, if not reinforcing competitive cultures. This is not surprising. But it is also hard to untangle the effects of CEE from the effects of the myriad other competitive activities in which children and young

people participate. What was more surprising was, in thinking through programme practitioners' evidence, is that what simultaneously exists is an *acknowledgement and descriptions of unequal social circumstances*, and yet explanations of success that relate to *students' attitudes and efforts, or the culture of the school*. In a personal communication discussing the connections between enterprise and entrepreneurship education and inequality, Diego-Rodriguez (2019), highlighted the work of Mijs, a sociologist whose work has explored the differing ways that unequal outcomes are explained, and in particular, the concept of *meritocratic explanations of success*. Explanations of success which revolve around individual talent are called "meritocratic", that is: that success is: "*decided by hard work and effort alone*" (Mijs, 2018, p.2). We can see through this study that both researchers and programme practitioners forward such explanations, for example that the success of winning teams or the achievements of students are down to the efforts and hard work and striving nature of individuals, teams, schools and families. However, we can also see - through the process of purposefully collating evidence regarding the institutional and infrastructural layers of context in which those students operate - that *successful students also tend to benefit from advantageous circumstances*, whether that be additional help at school, and/or a supportive and socially advantaged home life. If these pre-existing advantages are not recognised (by researchers, programme practitioners and policy makers), and the advantageous contextual conditions are not thought through, then the potential that the programme relies on these additional, contextual resources is under-theorised. In addition, on the flipside, *the exclusionary potential of the programme* - related to who feels able or inspired to volunteer (or not), who is able to progress (or not), who achieves (or not) and who bounces back from failure (or not) - *is also under-theorised*. Over time, this *lack of appreciation regarding the influence of pre-existing resources* CEE leverages to generate more positive outcomes may *feed into more meritocratic explanations of success*: some

students and schools are characterised as lacking the essential qualities for success, whilst some are characterised as justly deserving their rewards. Indeed, *focusing on the just deserving of rewards may be a coping mechanism* or enable programme practitioners *to make sense* of competitions outcomes; let us further think through this possibility.

Meritocratic explanations of success in education are connected with the reproduction of inequality, (Mijs, 2018). A meritocratic explanation of success *appears to provide* the principle of a just allocation of reward, that is “*whoever performs the best justly deserves the highest reward*” (Mijs, 2015, p.17), yet the other side of this same coin is that meritocratic explanations also legitimise societal inequalities as justly deserved when misfortune and under achievement “*is understood as personal failure*” (Mijs, 2015, p. 14). I link this to programme practitioners’ explanations for competition success. The existence of winners and losers, and unequal outcomes of competitions, prompts comments and strong feelings (regarding students being demoralised, feeling cheated, the importance of resources in relation to success and failure), when a programme practitioner is discussing students from *lower resourced school* failing to win (School Based Educator 1; School Based Educator 3). But a programme practitioner, School Based Educator 2, from a well-resourced setting (despite having experience of operating in a low resource setting and previously thinking the playing field was *not* level), said that their thoughts about competition success had developed (after working in a well-resourced setting). They now prioritised the students’ hard work and effort in explaining their success (as opposed to prioritising the considerable individual, school and family resources that students benefited from).

Mijs evaluates inequality as “*the manure of the elephant in the room*” (Mijs, 2018, p.2), that is, inequality is the constant reminder that something doesn’t smell right. Yet he also notes that people perceive the smell differently, while some find it unbearable, some manage to cope or even appreciate it. In this process, he says that the different experiences of inequality,

and our overall evaluation thereof, is *how we make sense of unequal situations* and success and failure. Schools – and the programmes provided in them, such as CEE in this case – are described by Mijs (2018) as being ‘Inferential Spaces’, where students and teachers make inferences about unequal outcomes. School Based Educators operating in differently resourced environments *are trying to make sense of unequal situations*. Under-theorising the influence resources play in explanations for success may help educators ***manage, cope or even appreciate inequality*** (as hard working, diligent students are being justly rewarded in meritocratic explanations of success). From a realist perspective, ***these explanations become part of the context***, and the implications of researchers and programme practitioners’ explanations of success are considered in the final section of this chapter.

#### **6.4.1 Explanations of success and failure in the legitimisation of inequality**

Schools (and the programmes delivered in schools) are socialising institutions (Mijs, 2018), that is, they shape how children and young adults come to learn about society and their place in it. They are ‘Inferential Spaces’ where people in that space (be those students or teachers) are making inferences about unequal outcomes. People are drawing on lessons from past experiences and information about the world, both of which are biased and limited by their background, social networks and environments they have been exposed to.

We can observe that both research and programme practitioners are involved in making inferences about explanations for success. Those who perform the best have been variously characterised as those who put more effort in, worked harder, have not given up and been resilient. Those who failed to volunteer, retain themselves in the process or failed to succeed in the competition are those who have been variously characterised as short sighted, lazy, lacking diligence, and who too easily give up.

To recap – as stated in the introduction to this section, *meritocratic explanations of success are connected with the reproduction of inequality*, in that a meritocratic explanation of success appears to provide the principle of a just allocation of reward, that is “*whoever performs the best justly deserves the highest reward*” (Mijs, 2015, p.17), yet the flipside of this same coin is that meritocratic explanations also legitimise societal inequalities as justly deserved when misfortune and under achievement “*is understood as personal failure*” (Mijs, 2015, p. 14).

Let us apply this thinking to CEE, and how Short and Long Form programmes may interact to reproduce inequalities. Short Form CEE, or one day competitions or Dragon’s Dens, are the most familiar activity within schools (McLarty et al., 2010; Mann et al., 2017). Students competing in these activities arrive more or less able to compete in these activities according to their personal and social circumstances, and this may be reinforced by their previous experiences of succeeding or failing to win in competitive activities. Individuals and teams have different experiences on the day, ranging from being able to access the activity and achieve progress with their team-mates, to struggling with the activity, experiencing negative social comparison and feeling demoralised and disillusioned. As Short Form CEE is the most familiar activity in schools, this experience may be repeated a number of times through the school career of a student. At some point the school or a provider may launch a Long Form competition. This may be promoted as having a fabulous prize and/or being a prestigious opportunity, and/or one that is valuable for students to experience. As a result of the exciting prize and social value, many students may volunteer, but it will quickly become clear that they don’t have the right team, the right idea or the right skills to compete. Students who stay in the process will be from different individual and social backgrounds, and in the process of competing they may come face to face with this difference, which may manifest in how students speak, how they dress, the extent to which they have excelled in their business and

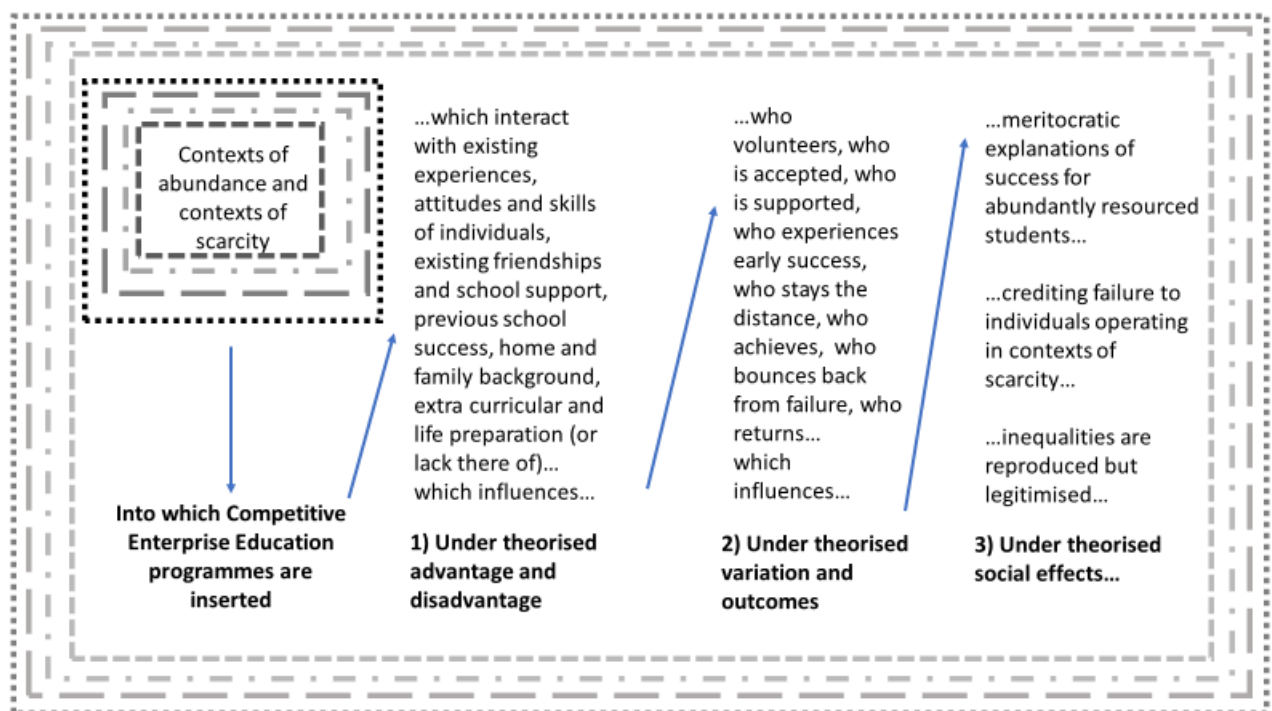


how they perform their pitches. However, the reality that some students are competing with an abundance of resources at individual, interpersonal, institutional and infra-structural levels, or conversely, a scarcity of such resources (and, of course, an array of contexts in between these two positions), is not something which is discussed in programme materials or policy guidance. This inequality does create discomfort for those in and around the programme, as can be seen in programme practitioners' *problems with using the word 'loser' and using phrases such as 'less successful'*. When students and schools from advantageous backgrounds go on to win, and conversely, students and schools from challenged backgrounds *fail to win*, programme practitioners may cope, manage or appreciate the inequality of this situation by developing meritocratic explanations of success, where the success of abundantly resourced students is justified because of their individual qualities and hard work. The role of context is under-theorised, and the potential advantage and disadvantage that individuals, teams and schools operate under is also under-theorised. Thus, ***the exclusionary potential of both types of activities is obscured***, despite the role existing advantage plays in the generation of more positive or more negative effects.

***This influences the context itself.*** Explaining success in individual and meritocratic terms ***is made possible when the importance of context is under-theorised***. The result is that abundantly resourced students gain individual credit for their successes, while disadvantaged students are personally responsible for their failure to achieve. This process, and the inferences which are made about who succeeds and fails in a competitive process *influences the context by legitimising inequalities in school spaces*.

Figure 8 provides a simplified and abstracted representation of the ripple effects of CEE, as I am thinking about them at the end of this study. The figure is inspired by the representation of ripple effects in Jagosh et al. (2015), which draws attention to how a programme can influence the context over time. Figure 8 draws attention to different contexts into which

CEE programmes are inserted, and how programmes react with existing resources which influence participation, experiences and outcomes, but that these advantages and disadvantages and variations in experience are under-theorised. This under-theorisation means that unequal outcomes can be justified through meritocratic explanations for success, and these explanations become part of the context and help legitimise inequalities by explaining success and failure at the level of individual effort and school culture, rather than recognising the role contexts of abundance and scarcity play in influencing outcomes.



**Figure 8 - Theorising CEE Ripple Effects**

As previously discussed, a theorising diagram exists to prompt thinking rather than providing an ultimate or final answer (Swedberg, 2016). Figure 8 aims to draw attention to *the existing context into which CEE programmes are inserted* (the smaller set of permeable lines representing the Four Is), as well as the changed context that programmes influence (the Four Is which wrap the edges). This second set of lines is more faint to indicate that these effects -

the way the programmes influence the context - are not necessarily obvious or even observable, yet ripple effects will be created. The figure may prompt deeper thought regarding how CEE creates effects not simply for individuals, teachers and schools, but also how it can influence the context itself over time.

Now the findings have been discussed in relation to the research objectives and the ripple effects of CEE considered, I provide a summary of this chapter and then present the conclusion to this thesis.

## **6.5 Summary of Chapter**

This chapter re-capped on the journey of the thesis and then considered the research findings, presented in Chapters 4 and 5, in relation to the research objectives and ‘the evidence base’ as it was presented in Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works? The chapter addressed Short Form CEE and Long Form CEE separately, and described how the results addressed the research objectives, specifically, unsettling assumptions about ‘what works’ in such programmes, exploring both positive and negative effects and shedding light on the potential social effects of CEE. Insight gained from this approach includes a better understanding of the role that existing skills and qualities of students play in success in Short Form CEE and, regarding Long Form CEE, the different contexts - of abundance and scarcity - into which programmes are inserted. This underscores how resources pre-existing in the context, can be leveraged to create more positive results. It also reveals contextual disadvantage which highlights ‘for whom’ such programmes are not working so well. In terms of how CEE may influence the context itself over time, the phenomenon contained within both research and evidence from programme practitioners – where contextual advantage and disadvantage is not taken into account in ultimate explanations of success – illuminated how EE stakeholders may make sense of unequal outcomes through meritocratic

explanations of success. This influences the context by contributing to the legitimising of inequality through the lack of appreciation for contextual conditions and the use of meritocratic explanations of success to justify unequal outcomes.

In the concluding chapter of this thesis (Chapter 7) I will highlight the potential limitations of the study, contribution to knowledge and practice, and opportunities for future research.

## 7 Conclusion

In this chapter I will provide a conclusion to this thesis. This will involve providing an overview of the thesis, the goals and objectives and the approach taken before acknowledging the potential limitations of the study, contribution to knowledge, implications for policy and practice, and opportunities for further research. I end the chapter by offering reflections on the PhD experience.

### 7.1 Overview

This thesis has involved theorising the concept of Competitive Enterprise Education (CEE) and developing a better understanding of how positive and negative effects can be generated in such programmes. I was motivated to focus on this topic area because in my professional experience in enterprise education I observed how competitive activities are often taken for granted, presumed to be positive and recommended in guidance to schools with little consideration in relation to inclusive educational opportunities around enterprise *for all*. I aimed to unsettle assumptions about ‘what works’ in Competitive Enterprise Education, and to consider whether CEE programmes may change the context itself. The promotion of a ‘What Works’ narrative in Enterprise Education implies that *programmes* are *the* agent of change, as if a programme can be prescribed (for example, for all 11-18-year-olds) and will generate consistent results. This PhD study unsettles that notion, specifically by applying elements of Realist Evaluation, an approach which has evolved to better understand ‘what works for whom and why’.

The goal of this PhD thesis was to deepen understanding regarding these widely prescribed EE programmes, and this was achieved in the following ways:

- Firstly, a strategy in this thesis has been to argue that enterprise education is often conceptualised in relation to activities and to propose a new concept – Competitive Enterprise Education – which makes explicit what has thus far been taken for granted. This concept better reflects the fundamental competitive structure of many of the most familiar and widely promoted activities in school-based EE.
- A framework has also been introduced, developed from the perspective of realist evaluation, which has presented a more complex and realistic view of such activities. It has showed representations of people – students, teachers and judges – interacting in a shared space and illuminated through four layers of context (individual, inter-personal, institutional and infrastructural), that which might condition more positive or more negative effects. Aspects including being competitively inclined (or not), volunteering (or not), winning (or not) and being well resourced (or not), have been included as potentially influential factors which might impact on results.
- A literature review has focused on ‘the evidence base’ that is presented to schools in the guidance document Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works? with the aim of understanding on what basis such activities are prescribed and identifying problems with the construction of the evidence base, including the use of irrelevant and flawed evidence, the existence of evidence gaps and the reliance on a small number of impact measurement studies.
- A methodological strategy using the principles and resources of Realist Evaluation was proposed which would generate a more nuanced understanding of effects – both positive and negative – by organising data according to the four layers of context which are important for those evaluating social programmes to explore.
- Interviews were conducted with programme practitioners, including School Based Educators, Consultant/Providers of Competitive Activities, Consultant/Providers of non-

competitive activities and Commissioner/Managers. These stakeholders provided evidence from the perspective of deep knowledge of one or more schools, the experience of working across schools, across regions and nationally, and the perspective of those commissioning activities. Through semi-structured interviews, stakeholders were encouraged to describe the types of activities provided, and then explore for whom activities worked well for and why, and for whom they did not work so well, and why not.

- The data from interviews was analysed in various ways, including an initial coding against the *a priori* framework, and then a focus on the four layers of context, which were interpreted from two realistic questions: what in the context is being leveraged to generate more positive results, and second, for whom these activities do not work so well.
- Findings were organised by Short Form Competitive Enterprise Education (such as one day competitions or Dragon's Den challenges) and Long Form Competitions (such as student mini company programmes). This approach illuminated the various contextual conditions at individual, inter-personal, institutional and infra-structural level which can influence more positive and more negative effects.
- Results were theorised more with the goal of achieving a greater level of abstraction. In Short Form CEE, this involved illustrating the different behaviour states of students, whereby a student may arrive at a one-day competition equipped for the starting line, or may arrive 'on the back foot'. In Long Form CEE, this involved illuminating the different contextual circumstances of students, teachers, schools and communities, where the same programme may be inserted in a context where there is an abundance of skills, motivation, time, goodwill, resources and support, and it may also be inserted in a context where there is a scarcity of such resources.

- The ripple effects of CEE programmes were discussed, where the under-theorisation of the importance of contextual conditions (and the influence of context on more positive and more negative effects) feeds into particular explanations of success and failure. Individual students, teams and schools are described as lacking resilience, hard work and cultural strive), despite the recognition of background of disadvantage and challenge. Such meritocratic explanations of success in CEE help illuminate how competitive programmes, where contextual conditions are under-theorised, contribute to a socialisation process where success and failure is explained at individual levels and how inequalities are legitimised through such explanations.

Overall, I aimed, in this thesis to provide an alternative account of *what counts as rigorous* research (often characterised as quantitative, and/or experimental), *but is not measurement focused*. By investigating CEE programmes qualitatively using RE, new insight has been gained which may prompt a re-thinking of these activities. However, it is still necessary and useful to address the limitations of the study.

## **7.2 Potential limitations**

In this section I acknowledge some of the potential limitations of this PhD study before highlighting the contributions to knowledge and practice.

### **7.2.1 Literature Review**

This study is motivated by my professional experiences and practice in enterprise education, which included working in school settings when the guidance document Business Games and Competitions. What works? (BGECCW), was published. I wanted to thoroughly explore this authoritative guidance and understand its content and assumptions. Using a problematisation approach and an ancestry searching method, I used the literature contained within the



document itself as the parameter for a problematising review. Readers who might expect a more traditional or systematic review, searching for concepts and programme types, might find this focus a limitation. After all, while *I have presented previous work from the field* in the introduction, in the review itself I have not searched for literature beyond the document BGECWW. However, a thesis aims to provide an original and significant contribution to knowledge based on *an assessment of a knowledge system* (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). While this often involves identifying and filling a gap, the thesis goal of unsettling assumptions justifies an alternative approach. Indeed, Alvesson and Sandberg (2013, 2020), argue that it is necessary and important to try and identify literature and/or a body of work that has a *paradigmatic quality*, in order to generate new insights and questions. I argue that competitive activities are taken for granted in EE generally, and that schools are guided by an authoritative document, BGECWW, that claims to present '*the evidence base*' for such activities and therefore has the necessary paradigmatic quality sought after for a problematising review. The literature within BGECWW *is the knowledge system* I aim to understand, connect to and attempt to confirm, refute or modify. I am motivated to do this because I am aware of the power of such a document in shaping the actions of programme practitioners and the subsequent experience of students. This document is an artefact claiming to present 'the evidence base' for competitive activities. BGECWW aims to influence enterprise education provision for all 11-18-year-olds in England. It has been said that more policy related research needs to be conducted in EE (Rosa, 2013; Volery and Mazzarol, 2015). The results of the problematising review presented in this thesis – in terms of identifying evidence gaps, the use of irrelevant evidence and the various problems specified at the end of the literature review - demonstrate the usefulness of the approach. In addition, by relating findings back to these impact studies, other literature used in BGECWW and overall claims made in the document, this study provides programme practitioners with a

more informed and comprehensive picture of what can happen in programmes, beyond (but related to), what is stated in guidance.

### 7.2.2 Realist Approach

The challenges of using RE were discussed in Chapter 3. The opportunity to creatively apply realist principles, but the lack of a recipe book, can make the approach methodologically challenging for novice and individual researchers and it can be difficult to find a way to articulate results given the myriad complexities revealed through investigating various layers of context. In this study, I aimed to manage this limitation by simplifying how data was organised. I made a decision to avoid complex Context, Mechanism Outcome configurations, which felt potentially infinite, and instead organise data that was more positive and more negative under the four layers of context and then interpret this data from the perspective of two realistic questions - ‘what is being leveraged in the context to help generate more positive effects?’ and ‘for whom is the programme not working so well.’ These were pragmatic decisions based on the overall aim and advice of Jagosh (2017), to try and identify *the most important contextual conditions* and *the most important insights* for programme practitioners (advice gleaned through various online and face-to-face webinars and trainings). A limitation is that this does not achieve the stricter theory testing standards that a full realist evaluation might aim to achieve. However, this thesis is not a pure Realist Evaluation adhering to the official realist (RAMESES) standards published by Wong et al. (2017), nor is it aiming to be. It was clear to me that programme practitioners did not have very well elaborated ideas about which outcomes are sought in programmes or how such outcomes are generated. Equally, I learned from the data that some of the most fundamental participation related outcomes – who feels able to volunteer and has the capacity to retain themselves in the process - are not achieved through competitive structures. Thus, applying Realist Evaluation creatively and distinctly in this particular research situation (where benefits of

competitive activities are often assumed in EE), helps readers (and myself), to better understand negative as well as positive possibilities, and to think through the importance of context in conditioning effects. If, as Jagosh suggests (2017), the reader is satisfied by having achieved greater insight into what is actually happening in a programme and its ripple effects, then the challenges of applying this approach are validated.

### 7.2.3 Sample

Sometimes, and especially in quantitative studies, the trustworthiness of results is at least in part justified by sample size. However, as discussed in Chapter 3 (section [3.8](#)), in realist studies, *the number N* is not the basis of validity but rather participants are sought for their explanatory power (Emmel et al., 2018). However, during the course of this PhD and its design, I have been asked: if I am interested in the effects of programmes, why am I not interviewing the participants themselves (the students)? Indeed, impact measurement studies are focused on surveying students' perceptions of various skills, knowledge and attitudes (Huber et al., 2012, Oosterbeek et al., 2008, 2010; Athayde, 2009, 2012), and some studies have conducted focus groups with students (Riese, 2013). And yet, from this study, it is possible to see that *there is much to be gained from asking programme practitioners* - people with experience and expertise in delivering and/or co-ordinating or observing activities – *to step back and evaluate the experience of students*. Alongside demonstrating the insight which can be gained from interviewing programme practitioners, the crucial element to data collection was creating the space – through the realist approach – to question both sides of a spectrum: for whom do these activities work well for and why, and for whom are they not working so well for and why? Despite the smaller, or more intensive (Maxwell, 2012), sample size, the focus on experts (rather than participants), resulted in fruitful new insights. In creating space for negative as well as positive effects, this study demonstrates that there is much still to learn, and many stakeholders to learn from.

#### 7.2.4 Theorising

A goal of this thesis has been to think through - theorise – the effects that may be generated in Competitive Enterprise Education programmes. A limitation of this approach is that it might be judged as a less robust form of investigation, as compared to some application of a step-by-step procedure. If realist theorising is hunch driven, involving creative leaps and a search for insight and foresight (Dalkin et al., 2015; Jagosh 2019, 2020), it may be challenging to trust the results. However, softer forms of analysis – theorising – are useful in explanatory social science (Danermark et al., 2002; Swedberg, 2014; Jagosh, 2020). Such an approach is also in line with the objectives of this study, which aims to “*open up, and to point out the need and possible directions for rethinking...*” (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2013, p. 120). The original meaning for the word theorising was grounded in it being a practical activity: “*to see, to observe, to contemplate*” (Swedberg, 2014, p.19). There are some elements of the data (for example, the empirical material which illuminated such different contextual resources with ultimate explanations for success being rooted with the individual), that I contemplated for some time. Sometimes it was through professional discussion with colleagues and co-authors that I was signposted to a more abstract conceptualisation of the phenomenon I was observing. This means that creative leaps were achieved over time, and by interacting with my academic community (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014). While realists accept that insights that support abstract thinking may come from anywhere (Pawson, 2013), a limitation is that as a result such research may not be perceived as systematic and replicable. As discussed in Chapter 3 (section [3.11.1](#)), this limitation can be balanced by remembering that a key purpose of realist research is to beneficially inform practice, which involves, in this case, alerting programme practitioners and stakeholders to the layers of context which are conditioning effects. Broadly speaking, the goal of scholarship oriented towards prescience (Corley and Gioia, 2011), is to develop *foresight and foreknowledge*

about what might happen in different circumstances. So, while the theorising in this study may not be replicable in a procedural sense, it does address calls that research should aim to support future thinking (Corley and Gioia, 2011). And, in the realist sense of this, that it supports thinking regarding what could happen in different programmes in different contexts (Pawson, 2013, Jagosh, 2019). Finally, the very fact that *so much variance, in terms of experience and effects* in relation to context, *has been obscured by measurement studies*, demonstrates *the usefulness of complimenting measuring with thinking*.

Now the limitations of the thesis have been addressed, I summarise the contribution to knowledge and the contribution to practice.

### 7.3 Contribution to Knowledge

In terms of what constitutes a theoretical contribution, as discussed in Chapter 3, this thesis is influenced by the thinking of qualitative authors such as Alvesson and Sandberg (2013; 2020), Abbott (2004) and Swedberg (2014), Tavory and Timmermans (2014), who share a general assessment that the value of creative (abductive and retroductive) theorising that *prompts a re-thinking of taken-for-granted material or phenomena*. In addition, the value of creative, hunch and insight driven theorising is also important in realist work where a programme, or ideas about a programme, need to be re-visited or more deeply explored (Pawson, 2006; Jagosh, 2019, 2020; Emmel et al., 2018). This thesis contains a number of contributions to knowledge in this vein, and I detail these below.

- The first, and a key, contribution of this thesis is proposing and elaborating the concept of Competitive Enterprise Education (CEE). Swedberg (2014), discusses *naming and explaining* as one of the cores of social science. Turning some phenomenon into some

concept means that words are used less automatically and there is more effort to scrutinise and decide what is essential to the term. Thus, naming and developing a picture of Competitive Enterprise Education and ‘for whom it works well for (or not) and why’, is both a strategy in this thesis and a contribution to knowledge. The concept proposed in this thesis, and the framework I developed in the first year of my studies, has been peer-reviewed and published (Brentnall, 2020), in *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*.

- The second contribution to knowledge this thesis makes is clarifying the importance of existing contextual conditions and developing a picture about their relationship to more positive and more negative effects. While measurement studies posit that unobservable characteristics *may* be influencing results, this thesis confirms *that they are*. The description of pre-existing contextual conditions, organised in relation to four layers of context, provides a more comprehensive picture of advantageous starting points (and what a starting point of disadvantage looks like), which can help programme practitioners and policy makers re-think how effects are generated in CEE programmes.
- The third contribution of this study is methodological – the thesis applies the broad principles, and specific elements of, RE to better understand *what is actually happening* in enterprise education provision that is competitive. This approach reveals that competing and the competitive structure of the activities is a crucial aspect of activities and demonstrates the usefulness of RE in building insight and knowledge about programmes. The RE goal of elaborating abstracted qualities of a family of interventions so that they can be understood more clearly, and the application of the Four Is to organise contextual conditions provides new ways of thinking about CEE programmes. While the theorising and conceptual abstraction derived from empirical material (interview data), are recognised to be partial and fallible, explanation and insight has been developed through this investigation. As a result of the thesis, we have new ways of thinking about

how (the same) competitive programmes are being inserted into contexts of abundance and contexts of scarcity, where students compete with unequal resources and with different previous experiences of success and failure. We are also more aware of how despite these differences, explanations of success and failure in programmes can be accounted for individually, and inequality legitimised through the under-theorisation of the influence of context. This shows how CEE programmes are part of socialising processes in education where people (teachers as well as students) make meritocratic inferences about unequal outcomes, even when they are also aware of the very different starting points of students. Considering how such programmes change the context itself over time is a crucial part of challenging assumptions which is necessary for more emancipatory research and practice to emerge in entrepreneurship and related education (Fayolle, 2013; Fayolle et al., 2016; Berglund and Verduijn, 2018; Hytti, 2020; Berglund, Hytti and Verduijn, 2020).

## 7.4 Contribution to Practice

- The first contribution this thesis makes to practice is in its scrutiny of an authoritative guidance document, Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works? (BGECWW). Enterprise Education is often explored separately from policy processes, whereas this thesis directly relates its purpose to understanding the ‘evidence base’ as it is presented in the ‘*what works*’ guidance document and therefore being able to say something about the relevance and quality of the ‘evidence base.’ This approach enables a better understanding of the information and evidence used to make policy prescriptions and enables an assessment of the relevance of that evidence. This is important for programme practitioners, particularly those in schools which might be directed to provide EE in particular (competitive) ways. An evaluation of ‘the evidence base’ draws

important attention to the constructed nature of policy prescriptions, as well as alerting practitioners to flawed assumptions contained within.

- The second contribution to practice is to shine a light on the role that existing resources play in supporting positive outcomes in competitive enterprise education activities. In Short Form CEE, this is can be about the existing skills and attitudes of the individual student and the capacity for a team to work well together. In Long Form CEE, this is also about the resources at school, family and community level. Overall, this demonstrates the significance of pre-existing resources in the context. With a fuller appreciation of the importance of these resources, programme practitioners could consider how they **re-design short form activities** to be more about skills mastery for *all* students. This would require engagement with different pedagogies (and philosophies), which embrace collective development over students achieving by out-competing each other, as were described by practitioners from cooperative and/or inclusive settings. Long Form activities, as some programme practitioners suggest, should **re-direct resources** to the students, teams and schools most in need. The fact that it was recognised that challenged schools struggle to participate in an enterprise competition itself illuminates that competitions *are not as socially transformative* as they are promoted as being. This insight should encourage commissioners and funders to re-evaluate provision, and/or at least be more realistic about ‘for whom’ such activities are working well (or not) and why.
- Related to this, a third contribution is in **revealing the hidden costs** that are involved in participating in CEE programmes. In BGECWW, authors advise “...there are several... competitions and games run nationally with no cash cost to schools or students, they present a viable and stimulating way for students to gain experience of enterprise and business” (Hanson et al., 2017). In addition, when highlighting different activities to



schools, such as Young Enterprise's Tenner Challenge and Coca Cola's Real Business Challenge, it is advised that the activities are "free" (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 8). What the evidence provided in this study shows is that while entry onto the programme might not have a cost, and that access to programme materials might be 'free', that participation in such competitions does have hidden cost implications. Even if Short Form or Long Form CEE is provided 'for free', *there is a cost implication for the school* in terms of resourcing staff, taking students off timetable, and potentially organising additional support. In some Short Form competitions students might have been asked to bring something from home, or in a Long Form programme because much of the work is done at home, there are significant implications regarding time and practical support. Beyond that, students characterised as most successful also tend to be characterised as those who have *benefitted from investments in their personal development* which is advantageous in competitions. The cost of gymnastics, horse riding and other extra-curricular activities which are useful in preparation for CEE may seem distant, but these are *advantageous contextual conditions which do cost* and which will not be accessible to less advantaged students. Recognising that these *hidden costs exist* helps to inform a more realistic view of CEE programmes and for whom they work best, and why. This is valuable information for programme practitioners, commissioners and other stakeholders interested in re-engineering EE to work for more students, or at the very least, aiming to ameliorate the reproduction of existing advantage and disadvantage. For example, at the moment, a business might sponsor an award and pay for a trophy and/or some element of a prize or awards experience. Let us imagine, with the new knowledge that students from disadvantaged schools feel inadequate next to their better dressed, socially advantaged counterparts, this business may instead **provide the 'immaculate business wear'** for a team. Or, it may **sponsor some programme t-shirts** so that all students have a

something akin to a uniform for their final pitch, so that the quality and style of clothing becomes a less obvious point of social comparison. Better understanding of the resources a school invests to support students' participation in a competition – the additional sessions, the mentors who encourage, the emails and check-ins which keep the students and teams moving through dark times – may prompt a **re-allocation of business support**. Let us imagine, with this knowledge, that now business support, or programme support, is deployed to support teams (in contexts of scarcity) in these endeavours, rather than leaving it to the discretion (and resources) of a school. Finally, as was highlighted by one programme practitioner, while it may be possible to boost school resources (to mimic support provided in a more advantaged setting), the idea of boosting the social and cultural side (so that disadvantaged students can somehow compete on a level playing field with socially advantaged students), is more difficult to achieve. This insight may prompt a more **substantial re-thinking about the design of provision** and encourage more inclusive EE *programme architecture* (Jagosh, 2017).

- The fourth and final contribution this thesis makes to practice is in how it illuminates the exclusionary potential of competitions. In Short Form activities the experience of struggling to access the activity and/or failing to win can be demoralising, feeding into future negative evaluations and (de)motivation regarding EE activities which are competitive. In Long Form activities, we can see as a result of this study, that the competitive structure influences who volunteers, who progresses and who achieves in the process. This is not well considered in discussions about CEE programmes and may prompt a re-thinking of the value of competitions overall. We can see from this thesis that there are students who do volunteer for activities but who drop out and/or who don't make the grade and are rejected because their ideas do not meet competition criteria. This suggests that, perhaps, without the constraining pressures of a competition (with its

criteria to ‘make something’ and ‘perform’ in pitches), these students may be involved in doing something entrepreneurial, but as a result of the competitive nature of the programme, have fallen by the wayside or been rejected. This must raise questions about the purpose and effectiveness of competitions as fulfilling the broad and ambitious goals of enterprise *for all*. The insights from this thesis better enables such conversations to take place and for alternative and/or complimentary provision to be developed and promoted.

## 7.5 Opportunities for further research

This thesis has demonstrated the usefulness of the realist approach of assuming a range of outcomes and specifically asking the question: ‘*for whom* is this activity not working so well?’ In terms of further research, applying this approach to programme evaluations and using the four layers of context to better understand conditions which generate more negative outcomes (as well as what is leveraged to support more positive effects) would be productive. The realist principle of accepting a spectrum of possible outcomes and trying to understand and explain these would represent a step forward for understanding effects and how they are generated.

This thesis has involved interviewing programme practitioners, and their evidence has proved instructive. Further research could take a realistic approach with students. For Short Form CEE activities, this would involve better understanding, and from the student perspective, elaborating the behaviour states and pathways of subjects (both positive and negative). For Long Form CEE activities, this would include interviewing students who not only take part and remain themselves in the process for the duration, but those *who do not* volunteer, those *who volunteer and drop out*, those *who are rejected*, those *who bail out* further into a process

and those *who fail to win*. This thesis has illuminated these as possible outcomes in CEE programmes, and there is a need to know more about these experiences and possible patterns and social effects relating to these experiences.

This thesis has also started to explore a more value laden question, posed by Biesta (2007), not just about whether programmes ‘work’, but what they work for. That is, what type of society does a programme help create? In this case, we can see programme practitioners implicating competition and competitiveness in students having difficulty cooperating. In light of this there could be more practice and processual style studies where these dynamics are ‘captured in the moment’ (Brundin, 2007). Inspiration could be taken from authors such as Parkarri and Kohtakangas (2018), whose practice study of student entrepreneurship society helps to elucidate the dynamics (positive and negative) involved in the experience of entrepreneurship and related educational experiences. Or from Nuthall (2007), who used recordings of student dialogues and extensive observations to generate powerful insights into what is happening in the classroom.

Given the potential negative effects of Short Form CEE and Long Form CEE, this reinforces previous calls for more comparative studies of provision, in particular researchers could be comparing competitive and non-competitive designs. These could include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods but which are under-pinned by ontologically deep philosophies. In addition, as we saw how experience of different types of programmes might influence students’ future enthusiasm and motivation, longitudinal studies using mixed methods which track this unfolding over a school career – say Year 6 to Year 11 – would help elaborate the relationship between experiences and effects in different types of programmes.

There was much richness in the experience and insight of programme practitioners, many of whom identified weaknesses and concerns about provision and yet *had not been engaged in such a discussion* about EE before. Many educators expressed that this was ‘the first time’ they had thought about *why* enterprise education was competitive and that they *had never* spoken to colleagues about why they provided it as such. Equally, there was no forum (or resources) for them to re-engineer provision in light of any critical insights they might have had. Creating space for educators, programme providers and commissioners and managers to *question and re-imagine* EE provision is important. Such an action learning type approach, where programme practitioners are facilitated to **fully (re)consider and innovate provision** for themselves, would be a valuable project.

Given the critical insight developed through close scrutiny of a school-focused guidance document and what information and evidence was used in it, to what effect, more research into the policy dimension of enterprise education is necessary to understand – on what basis are EE prescriptions made? Are these prescriptions sound and/or what can be learned regarding the use of information and evidence in guidance documents which might influence a more critical appreciation of policy recommendations?

Finally, when I began this thesis (in 2017), I was most curious and concerned to learn about the social effects that CEE programmes might influence. Since that time, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has released a series of reports (c.f. IPCC, 2021, 2022), which indicate another vitally important avenue to consider. After all, competitions that require students to *make and sell something* have **environmental as well as social implications**. Remember, in CEE programmes *creating a product was advantageous* in being accepted and progressing in a competition, whereas service-based businesses such as baby-sitting were not considered innovative enough. Yet, product-based businesses have material

(and therefore environmental) implications and may also **socialise students into the ‘consume and grow’ economic activity**, the type of which contributes to the exceeding of safe planetary boundaries (Raworth, 2017). Given this context, the way that competitive values and product- based business models are promoted through CEE take on a new significance. I am also aware of existing and new programmes which give eco-education an entrepreneurial spin, for example, Long Form competitions where students are challenged to create an idea to solve the climate crisis and Short Form eco-themed Dragon’s Den days. We must ask: for whom (*and what*) will these activities work well for (*or not*) and why? As well as developing and testing alternative educational models which nurture sustainable values and behaviours through cooperation, there is an (existential) need to achieve more inclusive participation and collective benefits. It would be an unfortunate unintended consequence indeed if the *competitive nature of eco-challenges* **alienated students from environmental issues** and led to students and schools self-selecting out of such activities, as has been shown to be possible in EE.

In the following section I consider ways forward in practice.

## 7.6 Ways forward in practice

Whilst this thesis is primarily concerned with unsettling EE, it is said that in revitalisation efforts, a deconstruction should be followed with some attempt at reconstructing (Berglund and Verduijn, 2018). For this thesis, that effort means considering, in light of everything that has been written and thought about in this thesis: now what? What possible ways forward are there and what alternatives might we consider?

Staying close to the approach of the thesis, where I have aimed to learn from the experiences and ideas of programme practitioners, three possibilities emerge which can be considered separately and in relation to each other.

First, if the goal of the enterprise education activity is skills development, then educators and policy makers should take notice of the philosophy and strategies of cooperative practitioners. I encourage readers to return to section [4.4.2](#) of this thesis, where evidence from two non-competitive (cooperative) practitioners illuminates the explicit focus on teaching behaviours and facilitating interaction routines which helps students participate and interact effectively. Considering the inter-personal dysfunction described in this section by competitive practitioners in relation to Short Form CEE, these **one day activities are ripe for immediate re-design** and cooperative practice has much to teach in regard to the development of skills of interest (communication, confidence, collaboration, creativity), to EE practitioners. As discussed by Consultant Practitioner Non Competitive 2, cooperatively structured activities pay careful attention to the participation of students, sufficient scaffolding is provided so that students can access the activity, and group interactions are carefully structured so that monopolisers are managed and shy students facilitated to speak. Since hearing the ideas of these practitioners I have aimed to develop my own practice cooperatively, for example advocating and developing resources for a school outreach programme based on confidence building through cooperation (Brentnall and Werdelin, 2021), and combining compassionate pedagogy and cooperative learning to develop enterprise skills and confidence *collectively* through the curriculum (Brentnall and Stanbury, 2023).

Second, if the goal is to inspire about business and start up, then educators and policy makers could pay attention to approach taken by the SEN (Special Educational Needs) practitioner (School Based Educator 5). In section [5.2.2](#) this practitioner described how they made use of

a competition programme to **enable all students to ‘do something amazing’**. The students of this practitioner had ‘no idea’ they were taking part in a competition, but rather the various activities required to bring a business to life were developed through a curriculum project and all students were supported to find a role and use and develop their skills. The experience did not culminate in winners or losers, there was no effort that was not celebrated, all students achieved a certificate, recognition and praise from their teachers and the community. This evidence shows that there is a model - participatory, celebratory, inclusive, and *non-competitive* – that is more likely to achieve ‘Enterprise for All’ than competitive activities which, by their very nature, exclude and demoralise some students and legitimise and reproduce inequalities by facilitating schools and students with vastly different resources to compete against each other.

Third, if the goal is that overall, EE somehow contributes to a better society and a better world, *more attention needs to be paid to the wider, **social and ecological ripple effects of programmes***. In the case of CEE, this might mean challenging programmes which encourage make and consume businesses and challenging socialising children and young people into the naturalness of shareholder business. In section [5.2.2](#), a programme practitioner running a socially focussed programme (Consultant Practitioner Competitive 7), provided evidence that participation *was enhanced* through students being able to follow their own (non-business related) passions and concerns. Furthermore, in section [4.4.4](#) one non-competitive practitioner (Consultant Practitioner Non Competitive 1), draws attention to the entrepreneurial possibilities that exist within a cooperative framework. Examples are provided of encouraging students to think about setting up a cooperative window cleaning round, or a cooperative alternative to Deliveroo, this practitioner signposts ways that EE practitioners might provide alternative visions and models for enterprise, ones which are more democratically owned and managed.



It has been noted that **education can contribute to unsustainability**, through the lack of opportunity to question lifestyles and the systems and structures that promote those lifestyles, and in the **reproduction of unsustainable models and practices** (UNECE, 2012). The challenge for practice then, is not only that programmes are fit for purpose in terms of achieving stated goals such as the development of individuals, their skills and confidence and likelihood of success in the economy, but also that programmes, which may reproduce unsustainable lifestyles, models and practice, are fit for purpose for the social and ecological context that we now find ourselves in.

Calls to action in EE abound. In the face of inequality, poverty and ecological breakdown enterprise, entrepreneurship, *and related education could be (re)designed* to be inclusive and supportive of democracy (Leffler, Svedberg and Botha, 2010; Hytti, 2018), humane (Parente et al., 2020), transformational (Ratten and Jones, 2018), socially and environmentally sustainable (Loi et al., 2021) and able to inspire hope and contribute to social justice in an era of crisis (Dodd et al., 2022).

Efforts can be seen to change, and inspire change, in practice with the advent of the new TrEE project (Transforming Enterprise Education), where universities are collaborating to consider how to decouple EE from the creation of (high growth) business, and instead put its (creative) potential to work to enact more just futures for people and planet<sup>1</sup>. Or the new EEUK (Enterprise Educators UK) project to explore the relationship between enterprise education and planetary sustainability and influencing change in practice in light of the climate and ecological crisis<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Transforming EE - <https://transformingee.eu/#/>

<sup>2</sup> See: Climate Action for Enterprise Educators: <https://www.enterprise.ac.uk/events/climate-action-for-ent-educators/>

In this thesis, in section [1.10](#) I proposed that evaluative thinking shift beyond considering ‘what works for whom’, and towards ‘what does it work for?’, that is, what effects, beyond individuals do programmes have. Projecting forwards, and considering ways forward in practice, we could also ask: what effects could programmes have? We could ask: what effects would *we want* programmes to have?

Returning to the examples provided from programme practitioners; imagine the three preceding approaches *combined*, so that enterprise education in schools involved cooperatively structured practice, where all students are enabled to find a role and ‘be amazing’ through embedded projects and activity is re-focused to contribute positively to wider community and ecological goals.

Then, imagine that school based educators engaged in delivering or commissioning Short Form CEE programmes (re)focused efforts on enabling students to cooperate and that instead of creating ideas for make-and-consume businesses, such activities involved developing ideas for cooperative enterprises that were *socially and environmentally regenerative*.

Then, imagine that the providers of large scale Long Form CEE programmes, potentially *even Junior Achievement itself*, a global franchiser of competitive start-up programmes, (re)focused programmes to enable students to engage with alternative legal structures (such as cooperatives) and engage in ideas about the sorts of regenerative economic activities that economic ecologists (Raworth, 2017; Hickel, 2021), recommend as vital for a safe and just planet. Such ways forward in practice might better help enterprise educators contribute to the *double purpose of education* (Kemmis, 2023) that is to help people *live well in a world worth living in*. And for enterprise educators, who often align with ideas of creativity, innovation and individual and social betterment, this is a purpose and a challenge that hopefully resonates.

Now the contributions of the study, opportunities for further research and ways forward in practice have been discussed, I conclude this chapter with a reflection on the PhD experience.

## **7.6 Reflections on the PhD experience**

### **7.6.1 Developing as a Scholar**

The experience of developing this research project and completing a thesis has advanced my skills as a researcher and facilitated me to feel part of the scholarly community. Prior to undertaking a PhD I had started writing with enterprise education colleagues on the subject of enterprise education competitions (Brentnall et al., 2018a, Brentnall et al., 2018b). However, the support (in terms of a scholarship and supervision) from Sheffield Hallam University enabled me to pursue a formal research project and collect and work with data in an original way. Undertaking research methods training in my first year was particularly helpful in expanding my view of what was possible in research design and feeling empowered to blend methodologies and bridge between authors and perspectives to create research which serves the purpose of re-thinking the taken-for-granted in EE. I went on to develop my first-year philosophies essay into a collaborative paper about the importance of discerning deep beliefs and assumptions in research (Brentnall and Higgins, 2022). I felt empowered to bring my developing understanding of practicing research to life with the creation of a method – Generative Critical Conversation – with a colleague in the School of Education at the University of Huddersfield (Huntsley and Brentnall, 2021). My interest in how scholars research and different approaches to inquiry led me to becoming involved in launching a new research/inquiry/methods and impact track at a scholarly conference I attend regularly (The Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, or ISBE), and I am co-editing a book about ‘Nurturing Modes of Inquiry’ in entrepreneurship and related research. I also brought the

realist mode of inquiry into my professional life, applying it as an evaluation approach to a project I was employed to deliver and evaluate.

These activities have been catalysed through the confidence built through doctoral studies.

Over the course of this PhD study I have been involved in presenting work for review and at conference, noticing what is interesting to colleagues and what prompts recognition (see Appendix 6 for a summary of this activity). This has given me confidence in the usefulness of the research project and the findings. Writing has been an important element of the process, because, as discussed in Chapter 3 (in section [3.12](#)), while a team of researchers can cross check their thinking with each other, a researcher working alone may lean on review among colleagues and argumentation with ones' academic community as a way of testing the credibility (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). Rehearsing and testing ideas through the development of papers for publication and conference was a way of gaining feedback from the very community whose perspective I am trying to unsettle regarding the taken-for-granted practice of CEE. I may previously have perceived my background in practice, and my research focus on schools, as unusual or even incongruous in an academic community where many colleagues are from business schools or venture creation programmes. However, the inclusion of school-focused work into conference schedules, the encouraging feedback received through review processes and the nature of interested interaction from scholars demonstrates that the subject itself is of interest and also the research approach and results are useful and portable between educational stages. I am very grateful to Sheffield Business School at Sheffield Hallam University for recognising the potential interest of this subject and including me in its business school scholarships, the provision of which enabled me to pursue this work.

### 7.6.2 Developing a Realistic Perspective

As I described in the [prologue](#) of this thesis, this study was motivated by my experiences in practice. I felt that competitions were taken for granted, that unintended consequences were not properly understood and that there was limited interest in possible negative effects, for individuals and society. I wanted to adopt a realistic perspective because of the goal of extending thinking beyond ‘what works’ into ‘what works for whom and why’ and towards ‘what’ does CEE work for. The development of my thinking was emergent, and I value how theorising with, and re-describing phenomena from a realist perspective, supported me to be less judgemental and spend more time thinking through ‘*what is actually happening in and around these programmes.*’ One practical indication of this is the adaptation of the title of this study, which I originally called: *And the winner is? Exploring Competitive Enterprise Education*. This developed over time to include the act of thinking through - *theorising* – in the title and dropped the potentially spiky, accusatory sounding question. I can, at the end of this study, comfortably articulate that *some students and schools are having the time of their lives* in CEE programmes. For some students CEE *is* transformative, amazing, energising, spectacular, supporting career and personal goals. But these experiences are also patterned by social circumstance. I think this experience has brought me more fully into the realist mindset of ‘how can programmes be re-engineered to create more positive outcomes for *more* students?’ As a result of this study I am better equipped to argue (or advocate) for whom (and what) competitive activities will work well for (or not) and why. Using and sharing realistic questions that trigger deeper consideration - ‘Do these activities work the same for all students?’ or ‘Which students don’t do so well and why?’ and ‘Which students do really well in these activities and why?’ and ‘In what ways is this transforming the status quo (or not)?’ – enables a more insightful appreciation of the variance, in starting points and experiences that influences outcomes (for and beyond the individual), and prompt thinking about programme

design. Overall, I found all the programme practitioners who participated in this study to be realists who all recognised differences in students, experiences and effects and this very much legitimised the decision to study from this perspective.

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# Appendices – There are 6 appendices

## Appendix 1 – Visualisations Mapping Literature in BGECWW

### Grey Literature

1. The UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey (Vivian et al, 2016).
2. School leavers' skills gap undermining British productivity (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, 2016).
3. Developing the talents of the next Generation (British Chamber of Commerce, 2014).
4. EDGE Annual Programme of Stakeholder Surveys (YouGov, 2010).
5. Get My First Job (Youth Unemployment UK, 2016).
6. Economics, Business and Enterprise Education (Ofsted, 2011).
7. Getting ready for work (Ofsted, 2016).
8. Evaluation of Enterprise Education in England (McLarty, Highley & Alderson, 2010).
9. A guide to enterprise education (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010).
10. Enterprise Education: Value and Direction (Colfai, Dawkins, Kirwan & Mann, 2012).
11. Enterprise for All (Young, D, 2014).
12. The Careers and Enterprise Company: What Works in Careers and Enterprise (Hooley, 2016).

### Sample statement (p2).

This paper will focus on enterprise competitions, in part because previous research by the Careers and Enterprise Company identified this as a promising approach (Hooley, 2016), and in part because the research base suggests that gamified learning is engaging and well aligned to support the objectives of career and enterprise learning (Antonaci et al, 2015; Vickers et al, 2006).

### Careers and Employer Engagement Literature

1. Good Career Guidance (Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2014).
2. A Career Postcode Lottery? Local Authority Provision of Youth and Career Support (Langley, Hooley, Bertsch, 2014).
3. The Economic Benefits of Career Guidance (Hooley & Dodd, 2015).
4. ASPIRES 2 Project Spotlight: Year 11 Students' Views of Careers Education and Work Experience (Archer & Moote, 2016).
5. Careers Education: International Literature Review (Hughes, Mann, Barnes, Baldau, McKeown, 2016).
6. Contemporary transitions: Young Britons reflect on life after secondary school and college (Mann, Kashfipakdel, Rehill & Huddleston, 2017).

### Programme Evaluations

1. Review of the Enterprise Promotion Fund (Vickers, Baldock, Etherington & North, 2006).

### Serious Games Literature

1. A gamified collaborative course in entrepreneurship (Antonaci, Dagnino, Ott, Bellotti, Betta, De Gloria Lavagnino, Romero & Mayer, 2015).

### Serious Games Literature

1. A gamified collaborative course in entrepreneurship (Antonaci, Dagnino, Ott, Bellotti, Betta, De Gloria Lavagnino, Romero & Mayer, 2015).

### Grey Literature

1. Facilitating Youth Entrepreneurship Part II: A Directory of Awareness and Promotion Programmes in Formal & Non-Formal Education (Shaftenden & Carmela 2004).
2. Enterprise Education in Primary Schools (Enterprise Village, 2010). Not available online; organisation no longer exists.

### Neuro Science/Psychology

1. Decision Making in the Adolescent Brain (Blakemore & Robbins, 2012).

Introduction to Business Games and Enterprise Competitions pp 1 – 2.

What are Business Games and Competitions? P 3 - 4.

### Sample statement (p4).

Greco and colleagues (Greco et al, 2013) argue that such games and competitions should have two main purposes: 1) to facilitate learning and understanding different business topics and skills and 2) to evaluate the participants performance.

### Serious Games Literature

1. Providing Career Guidance to Adolescents through Digital Games (Dunwell, Lamas, de Freitas, Petridis, Hendrix, Arnab & Star (2014).
2. Teaching entrepreneurship using serious games in a Web 2.0 environment (Protopsaltis, Borotis, Connolly & Nainey, 2014).
3. A future for business simulations? (Friga, 1997).
4. Management simulations: determining their effectiveness (Adabor & Daneshfar, 2006).
5. Exploring and Upgrading the Educational Business-Game Taxonomy (Blašić & Blašić, 2015).
6. Teaching with games (Sanford, Ulicsak, Facer & Rudd, 2006).

Types of business games and competitions (p 5 – 6).

### Sample statement (p5).

Over recent years it has become increasingly popular to integrate digital elements to support engagement and enhance the quality of simulation (Dunwell et al, 2014; Protopsaltis et al, 2014).

### Careers And Employer Engagement Literature

1. A Conceptual Framework for Work Simulation (Watts, 2015).
2. A theoretical framework for employer engagement (Stanley & Mann, 2014).

### Serious Games Literature

1. The place of case studies in the simulation/gaming field (Percival & Ellington, 1980).
2. Viewpoints on learning and education with simulation games (Ruohomäki, 1995).
3. 10 years of evaluation research into gaming simulation for German entrepreneurship (Kriz & Aucther, 2016).

### Grey Literature

1. The Death of the Saturday Job (Conlon, Patignani & Mantovani, 2015).
2. Young people entering work (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012).

Examples of business games and enterprise competitions?\* P 7 – 10

### Sample statement (p9).

The idea of simulating the world of work is central to enterprise competitions and business games. A simulation is a representation of a real, operating event or situation (Percival & Ellington, 1980).

\*Five examples of programmes are given. The first (Rollercoaster Tycoon), is a simulation computer game, the other four are enterprise competitions (Young Enterprise Company Programme, The Tenner Challenge, The Real Business Challenge and the National Enterprise Challenge).

### Serious Games Literature

1. Business simulation in teaching strategic management (Abdullah, Hanafiah & Hashim, 2013).
2. Developments in business gaming: a review of the past 40 years (Faria, Hutchinson, Wellington & Gold, 2009).
3. Relationships between game attributes and learning outcomes review and research proposals (Wilson, Bedwell, Lazzara, Salas, Burke, Estock & Conkey, 2009).
4. 10 years of evaluation research into gaming simulation for German entrepreneurship (Kriz & Aucther, 2016).

### Programme Evaluations

1. Impact: 50 years of Young Enterprise (Kingston University Business School, 2012).

Impacts of business games and enterprise competitions?\* P 11.

### Sample statement (p11).

Although not all studies find a clear and positive impact from participating in enterprise competitions and business games, most find that these interventions can help to foster desirable skills, attitudes and aptitudes (Kriz & Aucther, 2016; Faria, Hutchinson, Wellington & Gold, 2009; Wilson et al, 2009).

\*Young Enterprise is presented as a 'exemplar study' at the beginning of this segment; a 'rare example of longitudinal research', where YE surveyed 371 YE alumni and a 'comparable group' of 202 who had never taken part, reported multiple benefits from the programme.

### Serious Games Literature

1. Developments in business gaming: a review of the past 40 years (Faria et al, 2009).
2. Relationships between game attributes and learning outcomes review and research proposals (Wilson et al, 2009).
3. 10 years of evaluation research into gaming simulation for German entrepreneurship (Kriz & Aucther, 2016).
4. Enhancing students' employability through business simulation (Kuramienko, A, 2012).
5. Learning outcomes from business simulation exercises: Challenges for the implementation of learning technologies (Sierke, 2009).

### Neuro Science/Psychology

1. Intelligence: Known and unknown (Neisser, Boodoo, Bouchard, Brody, Ceci, Halpern, Lohdin, Penick, Sternberg, Urbani, 1996).
2. The concept of intelligence and its role in lifelong learning and success (Sternberg, 1997).

### Enterprise Education

1. Connecting enterprise and graduate employability: Challenges to the higher education culture and curriculum? (Rae, 2007).

### Careers and Employer Engagement

1. Towards An Employer Engagement Toolkit (Mann, Dawkins & McKeown, 2017).
2. A theoretical framework for employer engagement (Stanley & Mann, 2014).

### Programme Evaluations

1. Impact: 50 years of Young Enterprise (Kingston University Business School, 2012).

### Impact Measurement Studies

1. The Effect of Early Entrepreneurship Education: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment (Huber, Stool & Van Praag, 2015).

Impacts of business games and enterprise competitions? Cognitive Abilities Skills p12.

### Sample statement (p9).

Although not all studies find a clear and positive impact from participating in enterprise competitions and business games, most find that these interventions can help to foster desirable skills, attitudes and aptitudes (Kriz & Aucther, 2016; Faria, Hutchinson, Wellington & Gold, 2009; Wilson et al, 2009).

## Serious Games Literature

1. 10 years of evaluation research into gaming simulation for German entrepreneurship [Kriz & Aucter, 2016].
2. Learning outcomes from business simulation exercises: Challenges for the implementation of learning technologies [Clarke, 2009]
3. Evaluation of the lasting impacts on employability of co-operative serious game-playing by first year Computing students [Bhardwaj, 2014]. -

## Enterprise Education

1. Connecting enterprise and graduate employability: Challenges to the higher education culture and curriculum? [Rae, 2007].
2. Mini-enterprise in schools: the pupils' experience [Williamson, 1989].

## Programme Evaluations

1. Company Programme 2015-2016 Impact Report [Young Enterprise, 2016a].
2. Young Enterprise: Evaluating the impact of the Team Programme [Moore, Sarah, Robinson, & Hoare, 2016].
3. Tenner Challenge Evaluation [Young Enterprise, 2016b].

## Grey Literature

1. A guide to enterprise education [Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010].

## Serious Games Literature

1. Business simulation in teaching strategic management [Abdullah, Hanafiah & Hashim, 2013].

## Impact Measurement Studies

1. The Effect of Early Entrepreneurship Education: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment [Huber, Sjoof & Van Praag, 2012].
2. Enterprise education: influencing students' perceptions of entrepreneurship [Peterman & Kennedy, 2003].
3. The impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurship skills and motivation [Dosterbeek, van Praag & Jusselstein, 2010].

## Grey Literature

1. A guide to enterprise education [Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010].

## Careers and Employer Engagement

1. Towards An Employer Engagement Toolkit [Mann, Dawkins & McKeown, 2017].

Impacts of business games and enterprise competitions?  
**Employability Skills** (business planning, decision making, leadership, risk taking, networking and team working, time management), p13.

Sample statement (p13).

Business games and enterprise competitions can help participants to assess and manage risks and be more willing to take risks where appropriate.

Impacts of business games and enterprise competitions?  
**Personal Effectiveness** (confidence, resilience, self-efficacy) p 13.

Sample statement (p13).

Some studies have observed that enterprise competitions can have a positive effect on young people's confidence and self-esteem [Young Enterprise, 2016a; Young Enterprise 2016b; Moore, Sarah, Robinson, & Hoare, 2016].

## Serious Games Literature

1. PROLOG: A Business Logistics Simulation Game [Sentry, Jackson, Morgan, 1988].
2. Computer-based simulation games: A viable educational technique for entrepreneurship classes? [Feldman, 1995].
3. Entrepreneurship: A game of risk and reward Phase I—The search for opportunity [Murf & Teach, 2009].
4. Computer-assisted gaming for entrepreneurship education [Thavikulwat, 1995].
5. Learning outcomes from business simulation exercises: Challenges for the implementation of learning technologies [Clarke, 2009].
6. 10 years of evaluation research into gaming simulation for German entrepreneurship [Kriz & Aucter, 2016].

Impacts of business games and enterprise competitions?  
**Knowledge** p. 14.

Sample statement (p14).

A number of studies show it is often difficult to find clear evidence of games and competitions developing relevant knowledge [Feldman, 1995; Murf & Teach, 2009; Thavikulwat, 1995]. However some promising evidence has found impacts on knowledge development [Clarke, 2009].

## Enterprise Education

1. The Contribution of 'World View' to Pupils' Attitudes on Entrepreneurship [Peterman & Kennedy, 2003].
2. Measuring enterprise potential in young people [Athayde, 2009].

## Careers & Employer Engagement

1. Careers Education: International Literature Review [Hughes, Mann, Barnes, Beldar, McKee, 2016].

## Serious Games Literature

1. Teaching entrepreneurship using serious games in a Web 2.0 environment [Protopsalts, Borotis, Connolly & Hainey, 2014].
2. Use of serious games for creating awareness about social enterprises [Damani, Sardeshpande & Galtonde, 2015].
3. Evaluating the impact of serious games [Newbery, Leen & Molzer, 2016].

Impacts of business games and enterprise competitions?  
**Career Readiness** (occupational awareness, , resilience, self-efficacy), p. 13.

Sample statement (p13).

Some research finds that participating in games and competitions has a positive effect on the likelihood of young people to consider entrepreneurial [Protopsalts, Borotis, Connolly & Hainey, 2014; Peterman & Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2009].

## Introduction

### Careers & Employer Engagement

1. Towards An Employer Engagement Toolkit [Mann, Dawkins & McKeown, 2017].
2. The views of young Britons (aged 19-24) on their teen-age experiences of school-mediated employer engagement [Mann & Kashafpaktel, 2014].

## Relating to 'Design'

### Enterprise Education

1. What is "enterprise education"? An analysis of the objectives and methods [Hytti & O'Sullivan, 2004].

### Impact Measurement Studies

1. The Effect of Early Entrepreneurship Education: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment [Huber, Sjoof & Van Praag, 2012].

## Relating to 'Authenticity'

### Serious Games Literature

1. Viewpoints on learning and education with simulation games [Ruchomáki, 1995].
2. Redesigning the traditional business gaming process [Järvenpää, 2004].

### Grey Literature

1. What Works in Careers and Enterprise? [The Careers & Enterprise Company, 2016].

### Enterprise Education

1. Teachers' thoughts on entrepreneurship education [Backström-Widénkog, 2010].

Lessons for Practice. Introduction, Design and Authenticity, p.15 - 16.

Sample statement (p15).

Relating to 'design' - The difficulty of the game must be appropriate for the participant's abilities [Huber et al, 2012].  
Relating to 'authenticity' - Games and competitions should be designed to ensure that they represent the real world as faithfully as possible [Ruchomáki, 1995].

## Relating to 'Autonomy'

### Serious Games Literature

1. Developments in business gaming: a review of the past 40 years [Faria, Hutchinson, Wellington & Gold, 2009].

### Enterprise Education

1. Mini-enterprise in schools: the pupils' experience [Williamson, 1989].

## Relating to 'Teamwork'

### Enterprise Education

1. Mini-enterprise projects: friendship, business and learning [Riese, 2013].
2. Mini-enterprise in schools: the pupils' experience [Williamson, 1989].

## Relating to 'Employer Participation'

### Grey Literature

1. What Works in Careers and Enterprise? [The Careers & Enterprise Company, 2016].

### Serious Games Literature

1. Teaching with games [Sanford, Ulicsak, Facer & Rudd, 2006].

### Enterprise Education

1. Mini-enterprise in schools: the pupils' experience [Williamson, 1989].

Lessons for Practice. Introduction, Autonomy, Teamwork, Employer Participation and Feedback p.15.

Sample statement (p15).

Relating to 'autonomy' - The participants need to be allowed to experiment and learn independently [Faria et al, 2009; Williamson, 1989].  
Relating to 'teamwork' - While allowing students to choose their own teams may lead to more harmonious groups it offers poor simulation of the work place [Riese, 2013].  
Relating to 'Employer Participation' The coach or mentor should take the game seriously and treat participants with respect, ask questions, facilitate decision making and problem solving and facilitate feedback at key stages, be properly trained and encourage autonomy rather than telling participants what to do [The Careers & Enterprise Company, 2016; Sanford et al, 2006; Williamson, 1989].

## Grey Literature

1. What Works in Careers and Enterprise? [The Careers & Enterprise Company, 2016].
2. Evaluating and Measuring Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Education [Hytti & Kuopijärvi, 2004].

## Programme Evaluation

1. Evaluating youth entrepreneurship: the case of The Prince's Trust [Greene, Storey, 2005].

## Serious Games Literature

1. Relationships between game attributes and learning outcomes: review and research proposals [Wilson et al, 2009].
2. Providing Career Guidance to Adolescents through Digital Games [Dunwell et al, 2014].

Developing the evidence base p.18.

Sample statements (p15).

The evidence on enterprise competitions suggests that they are 'potentially effective' [The Careers and Enterprise Company, 2016]. While there are a number of studies that have examined this type of intervention, and identified impacts, these studies often have limited samples of lack methodological robustness.



## Appendix 2 – The Use of Literature in BGECWW

Category	Abbreviated title, author, date of each paper and footnote reference number.	Footnote reference number	Footnotes relation to content
Grey Literature	1. <i>The UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey</i> (Vivian, Winterbotham, Shury, Skone, Huntley Hewitt, Tweddle, Downing, Thornton, Sutton, Stanfield & Leach, 2016).	1	Footnotes 1 to 20 – introduction.
	2. <i>School leavers' skills gap undermining British productivity</i> (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, 2016).	2	
	3. <i>Developing the talents of the next Generation</i> (British Chamber of Commerce, 2014).	3	
	4. <i>Get My First Job</i> (Youth Unemployment UK, 2016).	5	
	5. <i>EDGE Annual Programme of Stakeholder Surveys</i> (YouGov, 2010).	6	
	6. <i>Enterprise for All</i> (Young, D, 2014).	11	
	7. <i>A guide to enterprise education</i> (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010).	12 & 53	
	8. <i>Evaluation of Enterprise Education in England</i> (McLarty, Highley & Alderson, 2010).	13	
	9. <i>Getting ready for work</i> (Ofsted, 2016).	14	
	10. <i>Economics, Business and Enterprise Education</i> (Ofsted, 2011).	15	
	11. <i>Enterprise Education: Value and Direction</i> (Coiffait, Dawkins, Kirwan & Mann, 2012).	17	
	12. <i>What Works in Careers and Enterprise?</i> (The Careers & Enterprise Company, 2016).	18	
	13. <i>Facilitating Youth Entrepreneurship Part II: A Directory of Awareness and Promotion Programmes in Formal &amp; Non-Formal Education</i> (Haftendon & Carmela 2004).	21	
	14. <i>Enterprise Education in Primary Schools</i> (Enterprise Village, 2010). Not available.	22	

	15. <i>The Death of the Saturday Job</i> (Conlon, Patrignani & Mantovani, 2015).	36	Footnotes 21 to 24:  <i>What are business games and enterprise competitions?</i>
	16. <i>Young people entering work</i> (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012).	37	
Careers & Employer Engagement Literature	1. <i>Contemporary transitions: Young Britons reflect on life after secondary school and college</i> (Mann, Kashefpakdel, Rehill & Huddleston, 2017).	4	
	2. <i>Careers Education: International Literature Review</i> (Hughes, Mann, Barnes, Baldauf, McKeown, 2016).	7	
	3. <i>The Economic Benefits of Career Guidance</i> (Hooley & Dodd, 2015).	8	
	4. <i>A Career Postcode Lottery? Local Authority Provision of Youth and Career Support</i> (Langley, Hooley, Bertuchi, 2014).	9	
	5. <i>ASPIRES 2 Project Spotlight: Year 11 Students' Views of Careers Education and Work Experience</i> (Archer & Moote, 2016).	10	
	6. <i>Good Career Guidance</i> (Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2014).	16	
	7. <i>A Conceptual Framework For Work Simulation</i> (Watts, 2015).	25	
	8. <i>A theoretical framework for employer engagement</i> (Stanley & Mann, 2014).	28	
	9. <i>Towards An Employer Engagement Toolkit</i> (Mann, Dawkins & McKeown, 2017).	45	
	10. <i>The views of young Britons (aged 19-24) on their teen-age experiences of school-mediated employer engagement</i> (Mann & Kashefpakdel, 2014).	69	
Serious Games Literature	1. <i>A gamified collaborative course in entrepreneurship</i> (Antonaci, Dagnino, Ott, Bellotti, Berta, De Gloria Lavagnino, Romera & Mayer, 2015).	19	Footnotes 25 to 32 –  <i>Types of business games and enterprise competitions –</i>
	2. <i>An exploratory taxonomy of business games</i> (Greco, Baldissin & Nonino, 2013).	24	
	3. <i>Providing Career Guidance to Adolescents through Digital Games</i> (Dunwell, Lamas, de Freitas, Petridis, Hendrix, Arnab & Star (2014).	26	
	4. <i>Teaching entrepreneurship using serious games in a Web 2.0 environment</i> (Protopsaltis, Borotis, Connolly & Hainey, 2014).	27	
	5. <i>A future for business simulations?</i> (Fripp, 1997).	29	
	6. <i>Exploring and Upgrading the Educational Business-Game Taxonomy</i> (Blažič & Blažič, 2015).	31	

7.	<i>Teaching with games</i> (Sanford, Ulicsak, Facer & Rudd, 2006).	32	<i>Footnotes 33 to 37 - Examples of business games and enterprise competitions.</i>
8.	<i>The place of case studies in the simulation/gaming field</i> (Percival & Ellington, 1980). In Race, P. & Brook, D. (Eds.) <i>Perspectives on Academic Gaming and Simulation 5: Simulation and Gaming for the 1980's</i> .	33	
9.	<i>Viewpoints on learning and education with simulation games</i> (34 Ruohomäki, 1995).	34	
10.	<i>10 years of evaluation research into gaming simulation for German entrepreneurship</i> (Kriz & Auchter, 2016).	35	
11.	<i>Business simulation in teaching strategic management</i> (Abdullah, Hanafiah & Hashim, 2013).	38	
12.	<i>Developments in business gaming a review of the past 40 years</i> (Faria, Hutchinson, Wellington & Gold, 2009).	39	
13.	<i>Relationships between game attributes and learning outcomes review and research proposals</i> (Wilson, Bedwell, Lazzara, Salas, Burke, Estock & Conkey, 2009).	40	
14.	<i>Enhancing students' employability through business simulation</i> (Avramenko, A. (2012).	44	<i>Footnotes 41 to 68 - Impacts of business games and enterprise competitions...</i>
15.	<i>A study of the relationship between student final exam performance and simulation game participation</i> (Whiteley & Faria, 2016).	46	
16.	<i>Using a business simulation to teach applied skills</i> (Doyle & Brown, 2000).	47	
17.	<i>Learning outcomes from business simulation exercises: Challenges for the implementation of learning technologies</i> (Clarke, 2009).	49	
18.	<i>Evaluation of the lasting impacts on employability of co-operative serious game-playing by first year Computing students</i> (Bhardwaj, 2014).	55	
19.	<i>PROLOG: A Business Logistics Simulation Game</i> (Gentry, Jackson, Morgan, 1988).	60	
20.	<i>Computer-based simulation games: A viable educational technique for entrepreneurship classes?</i> (Feldman, 1995).	61	
21.	<i>Entrepreneurship: A game of risk and reward Phase I—The search for opportunity</i> (Murff & Teach, 2009).	62	<i>Footnotes 41 to 50 – Impact</i>
22.	<i>Computer-assisted gaming for entrepreneurship education</i> (Thavikulwat, 1995).	63	
23.	<i>Use of serious games for creating awareness about social enterprises</i> (Damani, Sardeshpande & Gaitonde, 2015).	66	
24.	<i>Evaluating the impact of serious games</i> (Newbery, Lean & Moizer, 2016).	67	

	25. <i>Redesigning the traditional business gaming process</i> (Lainema, 2004).	71	<i>on cognitive abilities.</i>
	26. <i>Management simulations: determining their effectiveness</i> (Adobor & Daneshfar, 2006).	74	
Programme Evaluations	1. <i>Review of the Enterprise Promotion Fund</i> (Vickers, Baldock, Etherington & North, 2006).	20	<i>Footnotes 51 – 56: Impact on Employability Skills .</i>
	2. <i>Impact: 50 years of Young Enterprise</i> (Kingston University Business School, 2012).	41	
	3. <i>Company Programme 2015-2016 Impact Report</i> (Young Enterprise, 2016).	57	
	4. <i>Young Enterprise: Evaluating the impact of the Team Programme</i> (Moore, Sarah, Robinson, & Hoare, 2016).	58	
	5. <i>Tenner Challenge Evaluation</i> (Young Enterprise, 2016).	59	
	6. <i>Evaluating youth entrepreneurship: the case of The Prince's Trust</i> (Greene & Storey, 2005).	76	
Neuro Science/ Psychology	1. <i>Decision Making in the Adolescent Brain</i> (Blakemore & Robbins, 2012).	23	<i>Footnotes 57 to 59 – Impact on personal effectiveness.</i>
	2. <i>Intelligence: Knowns and unknowns</i> (Neisser, Boodoo, Bouchard, Boykin, Brody, Ceci, Halpern, Lohelin, Perloff, Sternberg, Urbina, (1996).	42	
	3. <i>The concept of intelligence and its role in lifelong learning and success</i> (Sternberg, 1997).	43	
EE Impact Measurement Studies	1. <i>The Effect of Early Entrepreneurship Education: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment</i> (Huber, Sloof & Van Praag, 2012).	48	<i>Footnotes 60 to 63 – impact on knowledge.</i>
	2. <i>The impact of enterprise education on attitudes to enterprise in young people: an evaluation study</i> (Athayde, 2012).	50	
	3. <i>Enterprise education: Influencing students' perceptions of entrepreneurship</i> (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003).	51	
	4. <i>The impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurship skills and motivation</i> (Oosterbeek, van Praag & Ijsselstein, 2010).	54	
	5. <i>Measuring enterprise potential in young people</i> (Athayde, 2009).	65	
	6. <i>The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurship Competencies and Intentions</i> (Oosterbeek, van Praag & Ijsselstein, 2008).	68	
	1. <i>Connecting enterprise and graduate employability. Challenges to the higher education culture and curriculum?</i> (Rae, 2007).	52	

Enterprise Education Literature	2. <i>Mini-enterprise in schools: the pupils' experience</i> (Williamson, 1989).	56	<i>Footnotes 64 to 68 – Impact on entrepreneurial intent.</i>
	3. <i>The Contribution of 'World View' to Pupils' Attitudes on Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Learning</i> (Black, Corbin, Warburton & Campbell, 2003).	64	
	4. <i>What is "enterprise education"? An analysis of the objectives and methods</i> (Hytti & O'Gorman, 2004).	70	
	5. <i>Teachers' thoughts on entrepreneurship education</i> (Backström-Widjeskog, 2010).	72	
	6. <i>Mini-enterprise projects: friendship, business and learning</i> (Riese, 2013).	73	<i>Footnotes 69 to 74 – Lessons for practice</i>
	7. <i>Evaluating and Measuring Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Education</i> (Hytti & Kuopusjärvi, 2004).	75	
			<i>Footnotes 75 to 76 – Developing the evidence base.</i>

## **Appendix 3 – Narrative Summary of Use of Literature in BGECWW**

This written narrative was part of the process of clarifying the use of literature in the school-focussed guidance document Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. What Works? The narrative is provided to make transparent how knowledge and information – evidence - is used in the guidance document. Italics are used to draw attention to categories of literature being used in different elements of the document. Creating this narrative both developed, and captures, my understanding of how and what evidence is used in BGECWW, which informed the development of the critical insights presented in Chapter 2.

### **Building the context – setting the scene for Business Games and Enterprise Competitions**

Business Games and Enterprise Competitions is a guidance document published by The Careers and Enterprise Company in 2017. At the beginning of the document authors states that “The Careers and Enterprise Company is evidence led” and then lists a number of “strategic partners” it works closely with: Career Development Institute, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Confederation of British Industry, Gatsby Charitable Foundation, Teach First, The Federation of Small Business, The Institute of Directors, World Skills and Young Enterprise (Hanson et al., 2017, p ii). It also lists 20 organisations (including Ahead Partnership, EBP Kent, Teen Tech CIC, The Prince’s Trust and Young Enterprise), which it works with “to deliver business games and enterprise competitions in schools and colleges in England” and also acknowledges specific people from Education and Employers, Young Enterprise and National Enterprise Challenge for “providing information, guidance and comments on drafts during the development of this paper” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. ii).

Authors say that the purpose of the paper is to provide “...the underpinning evidence on business games and enterprise competitions” and invites school leaders and providers to “use this evidence to inform the programmes that they are running and developing” (Hanson et al., 2017, p iv). Readers are briefed that the “...evidence suggests that business games and enterprise competitions are ‘potentially effective’.... because we have identified multiple evaluations which typically demonstrate positive outcomes for participants, but these interventions have limited samples or methodological robustness” (Hanson et al., 2017, p v). However, authors also say that “...the evidence suggests that business games and enterprise competitions can have significant and observable impact on cognitive abilities, employability skills, personal effectiveness, knowledge and career readiness” (Hanson et al., 2017, p v). Authors assert that the experiential nature of activities can be “engaging and encourage the development of such abilities, skills and knowledge in a different way from more conventional career learning activities (Hanson et al., 2017, p vi). In addition, they suggest

that since “there are several competitions and games run nationally with no cash cost to schools or students, they present a viable and stimulating way for students to gain experience of enterprise and business” (Hanson et al., 2017, p vi). The pre-amble concludes with a trailer for important lessons for practice (design, authenticity, autonomy, teamwork, employer participation and feedback). At this point, no references or footnotes have been included, however, as readers, we are directed towards the idea that there is ‘underpinning evidence’ for the use of BGECWW and that such interventions are potentially effective because of multiple evaluations which show positive outcomes.

### **Building the case for Business Games and Enterprise Competitions.**

The introduction of Business Games and Enterprise Competitions develops two lines of argument. First, it outlines the problem which the proposed interventions are said to exist to address. Then it introduces the interventions, namely: Business Games and Enterprise Competitions. Policy interventions need a problem (Weiss, 1993; Mukarjee, Pawson & Tilley), that is, some social issue that they exist to solve, ameliorate or transform in some way. The social issue authors focus on in BGECWW is the challenging transition from school to work, skills gaps reported by employers and unpreparedness felt by young people. In this segment, *Grey Literature* features prominently, with surveys of employers, children and young people and parents (Vivian et al., 2016; YouGov, 2010; GetMyFirstJob, 2016) and reports about the failings of education to prepare young people for the world of work (British Chamber of Commerce, 2014). When introducing potential interventions, references from *Careers and Employer Engagement* literature (Hughes et al., 2016; Hooley & Dodd, 2015; Langley, Hooley & Bertuchi, 2014) are used to identify that business games and enterprise competitions as a type of intervention that “can be useful to young people as they develop a range of skills and knowledge in a way which simulates the workplace” (Hanson et al., 2017, p 1). *Grey Literature* referring to enterprise education is used to articulate the aspiration for a broader set out the outcomes from activities that go beyond encouraging young people into self-employment, and towards “fostering a can-do positive attitude” (Young, 2014). As well as highlighting the types of activities and pedagogic and curriculum enhancing potential of enterprise education (McLarty et al., 2010; DCSF, 2010). Authors also highlight critiques of school focussed enterprise education, in terms of inconsistent access and poor planning and delivery (Ofsted, 2016), and criteria for good quality enterprise education (Ofsted, 2011). Authors justify a focus on Business Games and Enterprise Competitions, in two ways. First, they reference *Grey Literature*, a previous “What Works” publication from The Careers and Enterprise Company (Hooley, 2016), where authors summarise the results from a rapid evidence review by Deloitte (not available), and say that there is “strong evidence” for the positive impacts of enterprise competitions and “some evidence” of positive impact of enterprise activities (Hooley, 2016). In addition authors say that “the evidence base suggests that gamified learning is engaging and well aligned to supporting the objectives of career and enterprise learning” (Hanson et al., 2017), whilst referencing *Serious Games* literature (Antonaci et al., 2015), and a *Programme Evaluation* of an enterprise promotion fund (Vickers et al., 2006).

### **Building a definition for Business Games and Enterprise Competitions.**

Authors reference a “Directory of Awareness and Promotion Programmes” (Haftendorn & Carmela, 2014), from *Grey Literature* as a starting point to assert that Business Games and Enterprise Competitions are a well-established form of career and enterprise education (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 3). They say they will describe what business games and competitions are, explaining that they have “made use of evidence from across the life course where it offers insights that are useful to our core focus on secondary schools and colleges” (Hanson et al., 2017, p 3). Definition of ‘games’ and ‘competitions’ appear without references. The conceptualisations proposed are that “enterprise activities focus on the creation or formation of a business, whilst business activities focus more on the management of an existing business”, then “Business games and competitions focus more on how teams deal with scenarios, so the focus is on making business decisions with respect to both internal factors such as finance, and external factors such as stocks markets” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 3). A distinction is made between competitions, where “individuals or teams compete to beat other teams by developing (and sometimes implementing) an idea and/or service” and games “which have rules and goals....and maybe individual or team based...and usually attempt to simulate a real life scenario. Literature from *Neuro Science* (Blakemore & Robbins, 2012) is used to explain that such simulations allow for a “safe environment without any personal or financial consequences” (Hanson et al., p. 4), which enables young people a safe space to explore career learning and assess risks and consequences. The section concludes with a reference from *Serious Games* literature (Greco et al., 2013), arguing that games and competitions have two main purposes: to facilitate learning and understanding of different business topics and skills, and to evaluate participants performance and that what unites the two types of activities is a “focus on experiential learning and the simulation of work” (Hanson et al., 2017, p.4).

### **Building a picture of Business Games and Enterprise Competitions in Practice.**

Two sections of BGECWW build out knowledge of what activities look like in practice. Literature from *Careers and Employer Engagement* (Watts, 2015), is used to propose a typology for “five forms of enterprise or business simulation” which are design and make simulations, production simulations, work practice units, school work tasks and mini-enterprises (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 5). *Serious Games* Literature (Dunwell et al., 2014; Protopsaltis et al., 2014), is used to assert that “it has become increasingly common to integrate digital elements to support engagement and enhance the quality of the simulation (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 5). In extending the discussion about types of games and competitions, a number of statements are made which are justified with literature from *Serious Games*, indeed, all footnotes on page 6 are from *Serious Games* literature. A reference from Fripp (1997), is used to assert that the games and competitions format is “designed to be enjoyable and to foster engagement in careers and enterprise learning” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 6). A reference from Adobor & Daneshfar (2006), is used to advise that “well-designed games build feedback into the process so that when a player makes a bad



choice they receive signals from the game...” (Hanson et al., p.6). And a reference from Blazic & Blazic (2015), reinforces this point to advise that “signalling and feedback is key to an effective simulation” (Hanson, 2017, p.6). At the end of the section, when referring to “competitions that incorporate real elements and which potentially offer participants experiences of entrepreneurship or the world of work”, readers are directed to a boxout overleaf, about the suite of programmes that Young Enterprise offer, such as Company Programme, where participants develop and sell products. In the section *Examples of business games and enterprise competitions* (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 7 – 9), five example programmes are provided. The first is a computer simulation business game (Rollercoaster Tycoon). The other four are enterprise competitions (Young Enterprise Company Programme, The Tenner Challenge, The Real Business Challenge, and the National Enterprise Challenge. Though, it is important to note, that the literature used in the summary of the case studies is from *Serious Games*, first using Percival & Ellington (1980), to reinforce that a simulation should represent a real operating event or situation, and then from Ruohomaki (1995), advising “Designing games which stretch participants but do not overwhelm them is critical” (Hanson et al., 2017, p.9). The conclusion of this section of the publication uses literature from *Serious Games* (Kriz & Auchter, 2016), and *Grey Literature* (Conlon et al., 2015; Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012), to suggest that a lack work experience means that “simulations open the possibility for experiential career learning (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 10).

### **Building an account for the impact of Business Games and Competitions.**

A significant section of Business Games and Competitions is from pages 11 to 14, regarding *The impacts of business games and enterprise competitions*. In the introductory paragraph four references from *Serious Games* literature are used (Abdullah et al., 2013; Faria et al., 2009; Wilson et al., 2009; Kriz & Auchter, 2016), to support statements that around what skills are needed for successful careers and that “enterprise competitions and business games....can help foster desirable skills, attitudes and aptitudes” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 11). Whilst all the footnotes on this page are from the field of *Serious Games*, there is a box out about Young Enterprise, which refers to a “rare example of longitudinal research” where “YE surveyed YE alumni from across the UK and a comparable group of 202 people who had never taken part in the programme” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 11). Whilst a reference is not provided for the *Programme Evaluation*, over the page, there is a footnote to a report, Impact: 50 Years of Young Enterprise, by Kingston University (Not available).

In the following section, authors organise “observed impacts under five domains” – 1) cognitive abilities 2) employability skills 3) personal effectiveness 4) knowledge and 5) career readiness and the “evidence of impacts of business games and competitions” is discussed in more detail (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 12). In terms of cognitive abilities, literature from *Neuro Science* (Neisser et al., 1996; Sternberg, 1997), is used to outline a definition for cognitive ability. Then literature from *Serious Games* (Avramenko, 2012), is used to link assert that business games and competitions provide the opportunities to develop cognitive

abilities such as observation, reflection, decision making and problem solving (Hanson et al., 2017, p.12). The argument developed as a result of this is presented unsupported by references: “Given the range of cognitive abilities that business games and competitions require for participants to be successful in them, it is possible to make a logical connection between playing these games and developing cognitive abilities” (Hanson et al., 2017). However, *Careers and Employer Engagement* literature (Mann, Dawkins & McKeown, 2017), is used to assert that “teachers...felt that business games and competitions were particularly suited to developing cognitive abilities such as problem solving” (Hanson et al., 2017, p.12).

*Serious Games* literature is used to support assertions about the types of cognitive abilities that are developed. Whitley and Faria (2016) and Doyle and Brown (2000) are used to support a general statement that “research has demonstrated that a range of cognitive abilities are developed as an outcome of business games and enterprise competitions” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 12). Then the development of specific abilities are supported by other *Serious Games* literature: Kriz & Auchter (2016), and Clarke (2009) support analytical skills; Faria et al (2009) and Wilson et al. (2009) support creativity and problem solving; Blazic & Blazic (2015) and support quantitative skills (Hanson et al., 2017, p.12).

At this point (on p. 12), we also start to see literature from *Enterprise Education* and *EE Impact Measurement Studies* appear in the references: a reference to Huber et al. (2012) is used to support the development analytical skills and Rae (2007) is used to support creativity and problem solving. A Programme Evaluation (Young Enterprise, 2012), is also used to support the development of quantitative skills. This trend of seeing more enterprise related references continues through the next two sections, which lay out how “Studies have identified a range of soft skills that can be developed by enterprise competitions and business games” (Hanson et al., 2017, p.12). Huber et al. (2012), is used to support that such interventions develop business planning, risk taking and networking and team working (Hanson et al., 2017, p.13). Peterman & Kennedy (2003), is used to support that such interventions develop leadership. Oosterbeek et al. (2010) and Williamson (1989), is used to support that such interventions are used to develop social contacts. The section on employability skills still leans on other literature, for example *Serious Games* literature from Clarke (2009) is used as evidence to support decision making outcomes; Kriz and Auchter (2016), support time management outcomes and Bhardwaj (2014), is used to support networking and teamworking outcomes (Hanson et al., 2017, p.13). And *Careers Literature* (Mann, Dawkins & McKeown, 2017), is used to support networking outcomes.

In the section on Personal Effectiveness it is said that “enterprise competitions and business games have been shown to positively influence a range of personal attributes that contribute to an individual’s effectiveness” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 13). Specific outcomes are then supported largely by a mixture of *Programme Evaluations* by third parties and delivery organisations, with some *Enterprise Education* and *Serious Games* literature mixed in. References from Williamson (1989) on mini companies, an evaluation of Young Enterprise

Team programme (Moore et al., 2016) and a Tenner evaluation (Young Enterprise, 2012), are provided as evidence for confidence/self-esteem outcomes. References to a *Grey Literature Guide to Enterprise Education* (DCSF, 2010), and *Programme Evaluations* - Young Enterprise Team programme (Moore et al., 2016) and a Tenner evaluation (Young Enterprise, 2012) - support resilience outcomes. And a *Serious Games* reference from Abdullah et al. (2013) supports the self-efficacy outcome (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 13).

The section on knowledge is supported entirely by literature from *Serious Games*. A reference from Gentry et al. (1988), asserts that “competitions and games are designed to help students develop their knowledge in specific areas of business or enterprise” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 14). Then a number of studies (Feldman, 1995; Murff & Teach and Thavikulwat, 1995), are referenced in relation to the statement “...studies show it is often difficult to find clear evidence of games and competitions developing business relevant knowledge” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 14). Then two studies from *Serious Games* (Clarke, 2009; Kriz & Auchter, 2016) which show impact are used to say that knowledge development is possible.

The final section on career readiness identifies three types of outcome: occupational awareness (supported by a *Careers and Employer Engagement* reference to Hughes et al., 2016), career management skills (supported by a *Serious Games* reference to Protopsaltis et al., 2014) and entrepreneurial intent. The section on entrepreneurial intent sets the scene referencing some *Enterprise Education* literature (Black et al., 2003), about the relatively few young people who view entrepreneurship as a viable career. Then, authors highlight research which finds that “participating in games and competitions has a positive effect on the likelihood of young people to consider entrepreneurial careers” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 14). To support this, two references from *Serious Games* literature (Protopsaltis et al., 2014; Damani et al., 2015), and two references from *EE Impact Measurement Studies* (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003; Athayde, 2012), are provided (though reference number 50, Athayde, 2012, is not referred to directly in the text). Authors go on to highlight that “other studies find that participating in such games reduces entrepreneurial intent, perhaps because they provide insights into what entrepreneurial careers involve” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 14). This statement is supported by two *EE Impact Measurement Studies* by Oosterbeek et al. (2008 and 2010) and a *Serious Games* study (Newbery et al., 2016).

In the final few pages of the report, two sections: Lesson for practice and Developing the evidence base, make comment on gaps and problems with current literature. Authors write “At present the literature does not provide comparative studies on which to base clear recommendations on what the ideal organisation of a game or competition...” (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 15). Though they go on to cite “very helpful recent research which has provided insights on different interventions” and reference two *Careers and Employer Engagement* items (Mann, Dawkins & McKeown, 2017; Mann & Kashefpakdel, 2014). In addition, literature from various sources is used to support a number of features of interventions that are said to be important: design, authenticity, autonomy, team work, employer participation and feedback. In terms of design, *Enterprise Education* literature (Hytti & O’Gorman, 2004)

and *EE Impact Measurement Studies* (Huber et al., 2012) support statements that games or competitions should have clear objectives and the difficulty must be appropriate for participant's abilities. In terms of authenticity, *Serious Games* literature (Ruohomäki, 1995), and *Grey Literature* (Hooley, 2016) is used to support statements that games and competitions should represent the real world and reflect real life situations. In terms of autonomy, a *Serious Games* literature reference (Faria et al., 2009), supports a statement that participants should be allowed to experiment and learn independently. Then an *Enterprise Education* reference from Williamson, (1989), reinforces this as important aspect, and is also used to suggest that participants should be "prepared for the game, their progress monitored and gently guided when they get too far off track" (Hanson et al., 2017, p.16). In terms of employer participation, references from *Grey Literature* (Hooley, 2016), *Serious Games* (Sanford, 2006) and *Enterprise Education* (Williamson, 1989), are used at the end of a paragraph explaining the pivotal role coaches and mentors play, and how they should be trained, encouraging, respectful and facilitative (Hanson et al., 2017, p.16). In terms of feedback, one reference from *Grey Literature* is provided (Hooley, 2016). However there are a three paragraphs of guidance, such as "A final debrief should take place at the end of the game to allow participants to review their performance, see how it compares to others and to reflect on what they have learnt" (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 17).

### **Recommendations on developing the evidence base.**

BGECWW concludes with a section on: Developing the evidence base. Referring to *Grey Literature* (Hooley, 2016), authors write "The evidence on enterprise competitions suggests that they are 'potentially effective'" (Hanson et al., 2017, p.18). Then uses *Enterprise Education* literature (Hytti & Kuopusjärvi, 2004) and a *Programme Evaluation* (Greene & Storey, 2005), to support the statement "While there are a number of studies which have examined this intervention, and identified impacts, these studies often have limited samples or lack methodological robustness" (Hanson et al., 2017, p.18). Some of the advice proposed for improving research is referenced. For example, one *Serious Games* paper (Wilson et al., 2009), suggest that improvements in research design including randomisation and control groups are needed to avoid the limitations of sample bias (Hanson et al., 2017, p. 18). Another *Serious Games* paper (Dunwell et al., 2014) is used to support the statement that "undertaking more independent evaluations which are not conducted or funded by organisations responsible for the delivery of the interventions" (Hanson et al., 2017, p.18). Other "key areas for improving the evidence base" are not referenced, but include such actions as: using more objective measures such as test or course work grades, salaries and job satisfaction; comparisons of students taking part in different types of games or competitions and conducting more evaluations of business games and competitions *in school settings* rather than college or higher education (Hanson et al., 2017, p.18, emphasis added).

In the concluding comments of the paper, authors assert that "the evidence base provides us with clear guidance about how to run effective enterprise and business competitions and games" and that when "...games and competitions are run in this way, the evidence suggests

that they are most likely to be effective in achieving their goals” (Hanson et al., 2017, p.19. The paper conclude with the line that, because “several such competitions and games are run nationally with no cash cost to schools or students, they present a viable and stimulating way for students to gain experience of enterprise and business” Hanson et al., 2017, p.19).

## Appendix 4 – Participant Information Sheet

(with redacted contact details)



### Information Sheet

Project title: And the winner is? Exploring Competitive Enterprise Education

Researcher: Catherine Brentnall	<i>Telephone:</i> [REDACTED] <i>Email:</i> [REDACTED]	Date: 04.01.2019
Study Sponsor: Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University		

I am a PhD student at Sheffield Hallam University. I would like to invite you to take part in a study about Competitive Enterprise Education. This study forms part of my doctoral research programme which is concerned with the theory and practice of Competitive Enterprise Education, an intervention which schools are encouraged to provide to 11-18 year olds. This document provides some detail about what my study is about, what your contribution might be and what I intend to do with the results. Please discuss the project with others before deciding whether to take part. And if you want to discuss any element of this project with me, please contact me at the details above.

### Legal basis for the research

The university undertakes research as part of its function for the community under its legal status. Data protection allows us to use personal data for research with appropriate safeguards in place under the legal basis of public tasks that are in the public interest. A full statement of your rights can be found here:

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research>. However, all university research is reviewed to ensure that

participants are treated appropriately and their rights respected. This study has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee with Converis number ER9511408. Further information can be found at

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice>.

### The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to contribute to my PhD thesis about Competitive Enterprise Education. The study has been designed to explore the theory and practice of Competitive Enterprise Education and to capture the views and

experiences of different stakeholders involved in its design, delivery, management and commission. It is designed to surface and question the underlying theory of, and assumptions about, Competitive Enterprise Education programmes, as well as exploring the complexity of such activities.

Participants will, from their particular point of view, 'teach' the researcher about how the theory does (or doesn't) work in practice. My aim is that this information contributes to the development of policy and practice, as well as capturing participants views about this frequently recommended activity.

### **Who is taking part?**

The study aims to get the views and experiences of a range of people with knowledge of different delivery models of Competitive Enterprise Education in 11-18 school settings (for example, in the curriculum activities, extra-curricular activities, small/volunteer programmes, one day challenges). These people may include secondary school teachers or enterprise coordinators, activity providers, people who coordinate or manage activities, or people responsible for commissioning activities.

### **Do I have to take part?**

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you do agree to participate you could still decline to answer questions you don't want to. You are also free to withdraw at any time, including after you have completed the interview but before completion of the researcher's thesis or publication of results.

### **What would I have to do?**

You are invited to take part in an interview. The interview would last up to one hour and involve questions and conversation about Competitive Enterprise Education.

You don't need to prepare anything in advance although thinking broadly about these themes and examples of practice would be helpful.

The interview would be conducted in a location and time of your choice. Ideally this would be in a place where you are comfortable and can speak freely. The interview would be audio taped and transcribed word for word. It would then be pseudonymised, that is, some details would be changed to protect your identity. This means any identifying features may be changed (though not the quality and nature of what you are saying). Neither the recording nor the original transcript would ever be made public. The pseudonymised transcript would become part of a project data set, which, following the end of the project, would be made available on an open access repository (such as SHURA). You are welcome to discuss the project and your participation at any time with the researcher. Some participants may be invited to undertake a follow up interview, however, there is absolutely no obligation to do this.

### **Confidentiality**

All information collected during the research will be treated as confidential and any identifying aspects, such as names, locations, and any other identifying markers, will be pseudonymised to ensure confidentiality. This means any identifying features

may be changed (though not the quality and nature of what you are saying). Neither the recording nor the original transcript would ever be made public.

### **What will happen to the information at the end of the study?**

The data and thesis will be embargoed for 3 years following completion of the project in order to protect opportunities for potential publishing (some journals won't accept papers based on a published/open access thesis. Following this, the thesis and the data set (final, definitive versions), will be available of SHURA and SHURDA (the open access repositories for research and data). Informed consent forms will be stored securely by the researcher but all other records (apart from pseudonymised transcripts) will be securely destroyed (for example, digital files will be overwritten, not just deleted).

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

Following ethical good practice codes, the aim is to provide a comfortable and safe environment for interviewees. However, that does not mean that unforeseen harm, discomfort or misconceptions are impossible. A debrief will take place at the end of the interview to reiterate the right to withdraw, and underscore how to act on any concerns. Your organisation does not have to know that you have agreed to take part if you do not wish to disclose this. The researcher will not tell anybody else of your involvement and, once transcribed, the audio recording of your interview will be destroyed. The transcription, which will be pseudonymised, will be stored on a secure server and password protected, meaning only the researcher will have access to it.

### **How will data be used?**

The data collected during the discussion will mainly be used, alongside a range of other sources, to develop the researcher's thesis, as well as contributing to academic journal articles, chapters or conference presentations. In all circumstances, any direct quotations or examples used could not be attributed to you or the organisation you work for as identifying information will be removed.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Participants may benefit in a number of different ways. For example, programme designers will have the opportunity to reflect on how they structure activities and consider improvements that could be made; educators may value contributing insights and experiences, and the opportunity to reflect on experiences; students who are or who have participated in competitive activities may value contributing what they enjoyed or would change.

### **How long will the study last and how can I find out the results?**

The data collection will take place over 7 months from January 2019. A draft thesis will be completed by spring 2020 and the final version submitted in summer 2020. At any point participants can contact me to get an update, and also a feedback workshop is planned for summer 2019, where stakeholders interested in the project can hear and comment on emerging findings. Though the thesis will be under a general embargo to protect opportunities to publish, participants can request a digital copy so they can see the final research product.



## What I have a question, or there is a problem and I want to speak to someone?

<p>If you have any queries or questions about the research programme, aims, objectives etc: please contact Catherine Brentnall:</p> <p>☎ Telephone: [REDACTED] ✉ email: [REDACTED]</p> <p>c/o Unit 5, Science Park, Sheffield Hallam University, City Campus, Howard Street, Sheffield, S 1 1WB</p>	<p>If you have any concerns or complaints, please contact my academic supervisor:</p> <p>Dr. Fariba Darabi:</p> <p>☎ Telephone: [REDACTED] ✉ email: [REDACTED] c/o Sheffield Hallam University, City Campus, Howard Street, Sheffield, S 1 1WB</p>
<p>You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you have a query about how your data is used by the University</li> <li>• you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately)</li> <li>• you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data</li> </ul> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Professor Ann Macaskill) if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated</li> </ul> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p>Postal address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WB Telephone: 0114 225 5555</p>	

## Appendix 5 – Consent Form

### Participant Consent Form

Project title: And the winner is? Exploring Competitive Enterprise Education.

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

- |   | YES                      | NO                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I consent to give information which will be audio-recorded and pseudonymised (so that I cannot be identified), and used in this research study, potentially used in journal articles related to this study, and be uploaded to open access data repositories (such as SHURDA, and potentially, the UK data service). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out here and in the Information Sheet.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Your signature will certify that you have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study.

If you change your mind about participating you may withdraw at any point prior to: October 2019, at which point, the thesis and/or the publication of any academic papers. All information you have provided up to that time will be deleted.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name (Printed): Catherine Brentnall

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's contact details:

☎ Telephone: [REDACTED] ✉ email: [REDACTED]

c/o Unit 5, Science Park, Sheffield Hallam University, City Campus, Howard Street, Sheffield, S1 1WB

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together.

## Appendix 6 – Summary of Scholarly Activity connected to PhD study

### Publications and writing

Brentnall, C. and Higgins, D. (2022). "Problematising philosophical assumptions in EE's Invisible College", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, Vol. 28 No. 4, pp. 878-909. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBr-07-2021-0553>

Brentnall, C. (2020). Space to Question. In Jones (ed), *How to Become an Entrepreneurship Educator*. <https://www.e-elgar.com/shop/gbp/how-to-become-an-entrepreneurship-educator-9781789900026.html>

Brentnall, C. (2020). Competitive Enterprise Education – Developing a Concept. *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2515127419900486>

Brentnall, C. (2019). Let's Get Real about Education Research. Times Educational Supplement (TES), four-page spread and [cover feature](#) and available online:  
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/archived/lets-get-real-about-education-research>

Brentnall, C., Rodríguez, I. D., & Culkin, N. (2019). A realistic look at entrepreneurship education competitions (BERA blog). Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/a-realistic-look-at-entrepreneurship-education-competitions>

Brentnall, C., Rodríguez, I. D., & Culkin, N. (2018). The contribution of realist evaluation to critical analysis of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education competitions. *Industry and Higher Education*, 32(6), 405-417.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0950422218807499>

Brentnall, C., Rodríguez, I. D., & Culkin, N. (2018). Enterprise Education Competitions: A Theoretically Flawed Intervention?. In *Creating Entrepreneurial Space: Talking Through Multi-Voices, Reflections on Emerging Debates* (pp. 25-48). Emerald Publishing Limited.  
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/S2040-72462018000009A002/full/html>

Brentnall, C., & Culkin, N. (2018). 'Before university' provision: Enterprise education through the school curriculum. In *Enterprising Education in UK Higher Education* (pp. 180-

198). Routledge.

[https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9781315518138/chapters/10.4324/9781315518138-](https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9781315518138/chapters/10.4324/9781315518138-11)

11

### **Conferences and workshops**

- Brentnall, C. (2022). The Evidence Base for Business Games and Competitions – A Problematising Review. Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE), York, October 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
- Brentnall, C. (2022). Theorising Effects in Long Form Competitive Enterprise Education. European Council of Small Business Entrepreneurship Education (ECSB) 3e, Dijon, May 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
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- Brentnall, C. (2020). Competitive Enterprise Education, 3MT finalist, Creating Knowledge Conference, Sheffield Hallam University, 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2020.
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- Brentnall, C. (2018). And the winner is? Exploring Competitive Enterprise Education (Nominated for best doctoral paper), RENT, Toledo, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> November, 2018.
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### **Other scholarly activity**

- Co-editing and Industry and Higher Education Special Issue: The entrepreneurship educator's classroom – Exploring and uncovering what lies beneath:  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/09504222211023720>
- Co-editing a book: Nurturing Modalities of Inquiry: seeing the world through the eyes of those who research [https://isbe.org.uk/emerald\\_isbe\\_nurturing\\_modalities/](https://isbe.org.uk/emerald_isbe_nurturing_modalities/)
- Co-chair of a new Research/Methods/Inquiry and Impact track which launches at ISBE 2022 - <https://isbe.org.uk/isbe-2022/isbe-2022-conference-tracks/isbe-2022-research-methods-practice-and-inquiry-impact-rmpi/>