

## **The Impact of Curricular Entrepreneurship Education in Higher Education on Entrepreneurial Intention, Mindset and Activity in Pre-placement Students**

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## Extended Abstract:

### The impact of curricular entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial activity of pre-placement students

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025

## 1. Introduction

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Director of Studies: Dr Louise Suckley.

Supervisors: Professor Steve Johnson and Associate Professor Alex Anderson

## 2. Research Background and Focus

Researchers and public policymakers widely recognise that entrepreneurship is an important driver of economic growth (Fayolle & Gailly, 2008; Nowiński et al., 2019; Stamboulis & Barlas, 2014; van Praag & Versloot, 2007). In response, governments develop policy to enable and support entrepreneurship. In the UK cross-subject guidance (QAA, 2018) on the best practice for EE is provided but not mandated. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) respond to the government policy by developing EE programmes which promise to support a range of entrepreneurial outcomes (Nabi et al., 2017) including Entrepreneurial Activity (EA) through New Venture Creation (NVC), venture development, revenue generation, graduate businesses and overall job creation through their employees. Subsequently, individuals can benefit from effective Entrepreneurship Education (EE) which can develop and nurture their entrepreneurial behaviours and skills, the 'Entrepreneurial Mindset' (EM) leading to personal and national economic growth and development and societal improvements.

The overall purpose of this research is to identify the extent and nature of any relationships between EE in HE, and EA in the form of self-employment during study and post-graduation. The specific context for investigation is curricular EE in a cohort of UK students undertaking an enterprise related undergraduate degree in HE. The literature gaps are developed into a conceptual framework and examined through

primary data collection. The overall research design is a longitudinal, qualitative study including analysis of Entrepreneurial Intention (EI), EM and EA with the focus of this paper on the analysis of pre-placement interviews of level five students. Gaps in the literature have been identified for longitudinal studies of EE which focus on the impact of EE on EA and the EM. The contribution to knowledge is that this research will contribute new longitudinal findings on the impact of EE on EA and the EM. The contribution to practice is that this research will establish the extent and practical nature of any relationship between EE and EA and EE and the EM. These contributions have the potential to stimulate, inform and develop economic practice and policy to promote entrepreneurship as an important catalyst for wealth creation and societal improvements and enable HE educators to develop, deliver and sustain EE to meet those policies and practices.

### 3. Research Aim

The aim of this research is to examine how curricular HE EE for pre-placement students influences their EM, EI and any EA.

### 4. Research Question

What are the influences on EM, EI and EA of pre-placement, curricular, undergraduate HE entrepreneurship education?

### 5. Research Objective

To critically examine the influence of curricular activity on developing the EM, EI and EA.

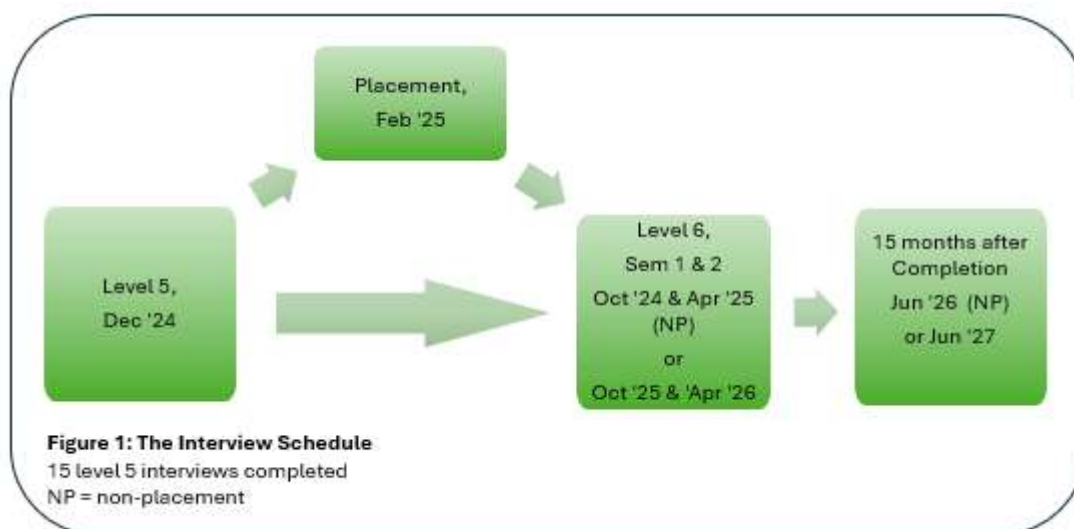
### 6. Literature Review of Key Theories

This research is grounded in human capital theory applied to EE which suggests that individuals with greater levels of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and competencies will achieve greater entrepreneurial outcomes (Becker, 1962; Martin et al., 2013). Yami et al.(2021) find that the greater the entrepreneurial human capital gained through EE, the greater the potential entrepreneurial productivity (Buzavaite & Korsakiene, 2019; Kabongo & Okpara, 2010 and others). This reinforces the significant contribution of human capital to the production of entrepreneurial outcomes. Mathisen & (2013) contributing that the EM develops over time,

reinforcing the need for longitudinal study, rather than a universal definition (Naumann, 2017).

## 7. Research Design

The overall research will systematically gather longitudinal data through a schedule of semi-structured interviews (figure 1) allowing individual interviewees to provide data about their EE and EA. This paper focusses on the first round of interview data. It is a heterogeneous, purposive, non-probability convenience volunteer sample, selected because each participant has some or all the characteristics of students under examination enabling the research aim to be achieved (Saunders et al., 2019). Recording and transcription of interviews will employ digital recordings followed by reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Full ethical approval has been obtained ref ER44616575.



## 8. Data Analysis and Themes Generated

This research analyses the findings and generates themes from the data collected from the round of pre-placement. It examines the impact of EE on EI, EM and EA. Through the entrepreneurial pedagogy of action learning and reflective practice, the participants recognised and realised their latent opportunity to develop their entrepreneurial human and social capitals through the curriculum. Curricular activities included investigating and solving real-world client challenges; realistic and simulated business planning; field trips; action-learning; marketing and finance

activities. Human and social capitals included research skills; team-working; network development; financial awareness; globalisation and creativity. Participants reported on how their enterprise skills and attributes of their EM had been developed because of engagement with the curriculum. They found the capital that they acquired through reflecting on their engagement with the curriculum contributed to the development of their EM whether they intended to be a business owner, employed, combination or were undecided.

From the findings and analysis, we find that EE delivered using entrepreneurial pedagogy to learn for and through EA rather than about entrepreneurship can lead to developing the EM for example learning through action, autonomy, and globalisation. There appears to be an advantage in explicitly introducing the attributes and behaviours that contribute to the EM and personality development so that students can identify the benefits of developing them further and actively work on them and their inter-relationships, e.g. the need for both autonomy and collaboration, for entrepreneurial success. Participants spoke explicitly about developing their business and social values because of learning about values, ethical business and UN SDGs and able to apply these to their current situation. Participants are at different stages of their entrepreneurial journey and take advantage of the opportunities at a time that fits with their priorities and self-determined development. The participants constructed their EI, activity and possible outcomes through their EE as a developmental process and social construction (Ardichvili et al., 2003; Sullivan & Marvel, 2011). Those participants who arrived at university with a business have continued running it and some have used their HE experiences to access resources to enable them to develop and test their business ideas in curricular. Participants had a clearer understanding of their creativity, innovation and problem-solving activity and how the curricular course had provided opportunities to develop these behaviours.

Three themes were generated of the impact of EE on EM, EI and EA, specifically:

1. Participants proactively develop their entrepreneurial knowledge and skills (human capital) through entrepreneurship education.

2. Participants were able to socialise professionally, building the social capital with peers and stakeholders through entrepreneurship education.
3. Participants recognised and realised opportunities through engagement with entrepreneurship education.

## 9. Indication of potential contributions and societal impact of this research

This research has shown curricular EE with an entrepreneurial pedagogy can provide opportunities for entrepreneurial development entrepreneurial pedagogy. Consequently, the likelihood of participants realising their wealth creation potential through new venture creation can generate personal wealth and create employment opportunities. Simultaneously, some participants developed their understanding of values and ethics with some creating a positive impact on society.

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