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Revisión de Budapest 2011 ¿Una Europa emprendedora o un viaje demasiado lejos?

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Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers, Vol. 6 (2)

<http://www.ugr.es/~jett/index.php>

Fecha de recepción: 22 de mayo de 2015

Fecha de revisión: 5 de octubre de 2015

Fecha de aceptación: 20 de noviembre de 2015

Hoare, M. (2015). Budapest 2011 revisited – An Enterprising Europe or a journey too far? *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, Vol. 6(2), pp. 10–16.



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ISSN 1989 – 9572

<http://www.ugr.es/~jett/index.php>

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Abstract

The paper considers the implications for European schools and colleges of the strategic decisions taken at the High Level Entrepreneurship Education conference in Budapest in April 2011. Particular focus is given to the impact in these organisations on the institutional culture and pedagogy necessary to implement the changes indicated by the so called Budapest Agenda. The concept of the entrepreneurial school is introduced as a prerequisite for change and a strategy for designing appropriate teacher professional development is outlined.

Resumen

El artículo examina las repercusiones de las escuelas e institutos europeos sobre las decisiones estratégicas adoptadas en la Conferencia de Educación en Emprendimiento de educación superior en Budapest en abril de 2011. Se presta especial atención al impacto de estas organizaciones en la cultura institucional y la pedagogía necesaria para implementar los cambios indicados por la llamada Agenda Budapest. El concepto de escuela empresarial se presenta como un requisito previo para el cambio y se marca una estrategia para diseñar el desarrollo profesional docente apropiado.

Keywords

Budapest agenda; Entrepreneurial school; Entrepreneurship education; Learner-centred pedagogies; Teacher professional development

Palabras clave

Agenda Budapest; Escuela empresarial; Educación en emprendimiento; Pedagogía centrada en el aprendizaje; Desarrollo profesional docente

1. Introduction

Many commentators have described the move from a 'job for life' culture to one of 'a life of jobs' and much has been written the need for 'portfolio careers'. Technological change and automation is often charged with bringing both uncertainty and greater insecurity to the jobs market. Whatever the outcome, there is general agreement that the economy will always require self-reliant enterprising workers and that schools and colleges have a major role to play. In April 2011 an event took place in Budapest which would have major implications for everyone working in the field of enterprise education in schools. The European Commission brought together expert practitioners from 30 countries for three days to consider the contribution of teachers to improving the quality of enterprise teaching. Following a parallel meeting in Istanbul, the Commission published a paper entitled;

"Entrepreneurship Education: Enabling Teachers as a Critical Success Factor, A report on Teacher Education and Training to prepare teachers for the challenge of entrepreneurship education"

The economic backdrop for this meeting in 2011 was gloomy. Many economies across Europe were in recession and youth unemployment was at record levels. As ever, education and training was seen by many policy makers if not as the panacea for all economic ills, as at least the right sort of place to be looking for some of the answers.

"As well as contributing to European competitiveness, entrepreneurship education also helps to ensure a number of positive social benefits. The entrepreneurship key competence plays a vital role in Europe" (European Commission Brussels 2011)

The report was produced as a direct result of the workshops organised during the three days of the conference, with delegates identifying their priorities for action based on their own experiences in classrooms and staffrooms and in strategic policy making in real life. A number of presenters from across Europe delivered succinct, evidence-based lecture inputs to add grist to the mill of debate, allowing for informed discussion about the relative merits of the different approaches being adopted in a range of different contexts and in different European countries.

Contained within this publication was a three-page guide to implementation, a call-to-arms for teachers, managers and policy makers wanting to enact real change (European Commission Brussels 2011:53-55). This 'Budapest Agenda' was perceived as key to galvanising support and providing direction, both a catalyst and a road map for development through to 2020. Writing now in mid 2015, and as we approach the half-way point on this journey, it would seem timely to review the agenda and remind ourselves of just what a task was being taken on. This paper is not intended as a progress report on the journey thus far but rather as a pause for reflection on the challenging range of tasks set out in those few sides of A4 paper. It may be that sometimes it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive!

2. The entrepreneurial teacher and the entrepreneurial school

Two central and essentially interlinked core concepts are discussed and developed in the report, firstly that of the entrepreneurial teacher and secondly of the entrepreneurial school. Importantly, these two were seen as vital to the success of the initiative. Both of these constructs will be examined in detail and their relative importance to the debate considered. Throughout this paper I will use the term enterprise education as shorthand for the plethora of terminology that surrounds this debate. Whether it should be 'enterprising learning' or 'entrepreneurial learning' or indeed whether there is any true difference between the two, is not the focus of this paper, although I do acknowledge the concerns of those kept awake at night by this semantic wrangle. Perhaps more fundamental has been the debate about the scope and potential reach for enterprise learning. The report acknowledges this discussion and comes down strongly on the side of those who want to go beyond the requirements of preparing learners for their economic role in society.

“Recent thinking has shown that narrow definitions based around preparing learners for the world of business may place limitations on both learners and the teaching community. Instead a broader definition which sees entrepreneurship education as a process through which learners acquire a broad set of competencies can bring greater individual, social and economic benefits since the competences acquired lend themselves to application in every aspect of people's lives” (European Commission Brussels 2011:2).

This approach has obvious implications for both programme content and delivery style and this is acknowledged in the report.

“The development of the entrepreneurship key competence is not simply a question of knowledge acquisition. Since entrepreneurship education is about developing the ability to act in an entrepreneurial manner, attitude and behaviours are perhaps more important than knowledge about how to run a business” (European Commission Brussels 2011:2).

There is also recognition of the major implications this will have on teaching and learning styles.

“Such competencies are best acquired through people-led enquiry and discovery that enable students to turn ideas into action. They are difficult to teach through traditional teaching and learning practices in which the learner tends to be a more or less passive recipient. They require active, learner-centred pedagogies and learning activities that use practical learning opportunities from the real world. Furthermore, since entrepreneurship education is a transversal competence it should be available to all students and be taught as a theme rather than as a separate subject at all stages and levels of education. Clearly, the implication of these changes for teachers is substantial. They mean nothing less than a new role for every teacher: that of ‘learning facilitator’ (European Commission Brussels 2011:3).

Good quality enterprise education learning experiences should be structured to comply with four basic requirements, namely:

1. Learners are presented with a real challenge – this implies a move away from text book learning and artificial constructs to identifying and tackling problems relevant to contemporary life. Local companies/social enterprises are often supportive in coming forward with realistic challenges.
2. Learners are required to take responsibility for their own learning- students are supported to manage their learning experience, to make decisions and reflect on the consequences. Importantly, the challenge experience becomes the core of the learning.
3. Learning is located in the local community and operates as a partnership- opening up the enterprise education experience to the world beyond the classroom gives both staff and learners access to a wide range of relevant and current resourcing
4. Learning results in real change- students experience the satisfaction of making a difference and are provided with an opportunity to to develop their sense of self worth and self esteem.

All of the above rests on one major assumption, namely that we have practitioners who are both able and willing to act as enablers rather than just didactic deliverers of knowledge. The need is for teacher who can create a learning environment which is both supportive and challenging and which gives learners the opportunity to show their full potential.

3. The entrepreneurial school

It has been said that a bureaucratic environment engenders bureaucratic behaviours and that, by the same logic, an entrepreneurial culture is a basic requirement as a backdrop for entrepreneurial learning. The so called '*Hidden curriculum*' often exercises as much influence, if not more than the prescribed curriculum requirements. This raises the question of what an entrepreneurial school would look like. I have written elsewhere about my research which allowed me to identify the ten characteristics of a truly entrepreneurial educational environment (Hoare, 2012). These ideas are picked up by the report and presented as generic characteristics. What is not so clearly presented is that these features were envisaged not as a random grouping of features but as an entrepreneurial development process which would allow the institution to evolve its latent potential as an innovative and creative environment in which learners could develop to their full extent. The process started with developing a vision, moved into planning and strategic decision making, before delivering and finally evaluating and assessing the outcomes. It is also important to say that the aim was not to be prescriptive, these were to be '*guidelines*' not '*tramlines*', with an emphasis on organic growth appropriate to the particular context and community setting that the school served. Engagement with the process was aimed at providing an entrepreneurial professional development experience for the staff, a chance for them to experience '*start-up*' as a curriculum based endeavour and to generate a belief in their own entrepreneurial capabilities.

4. Characteristics of the entrepreneurial school

Many of us will have visited schools which seem to encapsulate the notion of being entrepreneurial. I have tried to formalise this process somewhat and attempted to identify specific characteristics which seem to be essential. Firstly the school will have spent much time developing their vision for enterprise education. This will have been developed through consultation with staff, students and community stakeholders. It encompasses a shared understanding and definition of enterprise education to which all are signed up and which gives then a direction of travel. A strong component of this vision statement will be the attention paid to the moral and ethical dimension of enterprise education.

"Entrepreneurship in this sense refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation, showing initiative and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports everyone in day-to-day life at home and in society, makes employees more aware of the context of their work and better able to seize opportunities, and provides a foundation for entrepreneurs establishing a social or commercial activity. Entrepreneurship education is thus about life-wide as well as lifelong competence development"

The staff at the school will have been regularly auditing their existing provision for enterprise education right across the subject areas and including cross curricular and extracurricular experiences and mapping areas requiring more attention. This audit will show not simply what is delivered but also how the entitlement translates into the classroom experience. Interestingly, exercises of this sort often identify areas of the curriculum which are already delivering enterprising experiences but are failing to label them appropriately. Apart from anything else, this process can be reassuring for teachers who are wary of adding to their workload with yet another initiative.

Enterprise Education will be seen as an entitlement for all. The policy statements will reflect this, ensuring that all students are able to engage with the experience and take some ownership of the process, whilst acknowledging that some students may have varied learning styles. Student briefing will be scheduled in to the programme to ensure that they understand the importance of their role in contributing to the success of the programmes, with clear statements about the expected outcomes and benefits of their engagement.

The school will have adopted an innovative approach to timetabling and resourcing. Whilst some experiences will be designed as discrete programmes, many will operate as cross curricular and extra-curricular events. Effective mapping should identify gaps and omissions requiring attention.

It should go without mention that the school ensures full compliance with child protection, health and safety and public liability requirements. This becomes a central issue for effective enterprise education given that there will be a major reliance on partnerships with external community partners. The audit will have identified existing relationships and opportunities for developing new ones.

Adequate resourcing will have been made available by a leadership team committed to delivering excellence of provision. Often there will be a dedicated member of staff with responsibility for coordinating the provision.

The curriculum offer would encompass the full range of enterprise capabilities and learners would be encouraged to take on responsibility for their own learning through team working, decision making and problem solving activities. The approach to student assessment would encompass both assessment for learning as well as assessment of learning. The school will have recognised the need to go beyond the measurement of knowledge acquisition to address the development of transversal skills. Students will be used to reviewing and evaluating their own performance, in conjunction with their peers and with their teacher. Evidence gained will feedback into the school development process, informing planning for future years. The school would also disseminate and celebrate its good practice in entrepreneurship education activities with outside organisations. This will allow for networking and reflection.

5. An agenda for professional development

Planning appropriate, relevant and cost effective professional development for teachers is always going to be demanding. The Budapest Agenda sets out a comprehensive list of requirements and this could be seen as rather intimidating by some schools, particularly those who are new to enterprise education. It could be argued that there is a logic to structuring the professional development requirements in a way that fits with an entrepreneurial development cycle. Trainees should need to develop their vision for enterprise education before they can plan their provision, decide on delivery strategies and undertake assessment and evaluation of the learning outcomes. The sequencing of these topic areas is a deliberate attempt to replicate the same cycle of learning that the school students will be experiencing. The starting point has to be located in the trainees/students own experience. Both sets of learners need to examine their own preconceptions and prejudices about enterprise. One way to do this might be to provide a 'Challenging the Myths' session which allows for the exploration of definitions and is an ideal launch point for starting to build an institutional enterprise education vision statement.

The report provides a 'menu' of professional development choices which is designed as table d'hôte rather than a la carte (European Commission Brussels 2011:38). It also serves as a checklist, allowing schools to avoid duplication through mapping of their existing professional development provision. Health and Safety issues may already be covered as a generic topic and the need is only to fine tune the content to ensure it is appropriate for their enterprise education programmes. Other areas may require more bespoke inputs from expert providers but the central theme remains, that of school improvement. Teachers come into the profession because they want to help students develop their full potential. As an initiative, enterprise education starts with a huge advantage in that it aims to empower students to take responsibility, not just for their learning but for their future. Evidence suggests that it can have an equally powerful impact on teacher development. Having evaluated many enterprise education professional development programmes, I am always struck by the response of the practitioners who report that they have had a positive training experience. Invariably this means that the event has been planned with practitioner input and reflects the reality and the demands

of teacher workloads whilst also providing a balance of challenge and support. Memorably, one teacher wrote that his training event had reminded him why he came into teaching.

High quality enterprise education has to encompass exemplary teaching and learning and that, in a school context, is truly transferable. The entrepreneurial school has a default setting as a successful school. Linking enterprise education to school improvement has to be the goal and there is a sense that thus far, this has been understated. More research does indeed need to be undertaken to identify the links between institutional success and entrepreneurial culture but what better reason for a journey well travelled.

6. References

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