

# International Entrepreneurship Educator's Programme

## Entrepreneurial Learning - Pedagogical Note Series

### 1. Selecting Appropriate Definitions

#### Use of Definitions

There are numerous definitions put forward in both the academic and practitioner literature relating to the Entrepreneurial concept and the notion of the Enterprising person. Most 'Entrepreneur' definitions are influenced by the work of economists and the Austrian economist Schumpeter<sup>1</sup> in particular. Following this tradition, the focus of most of these is upon the role of the entrepreneur in creating and grasping opportunities, and combining resources in an innovative way to this end.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation are closely linked in the policy rhetoric in many countries. The problem with this definition for educators is that it places the entrepreneur narrowly into an economic and business context. The main focus of entrepreneurship education in business schools, for example, is upon new venture management and the business planning process that purportedly goes with it.

This stance can lead to neglect of concern for the pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviour in wider personal and social contexts. It also fits less well with the current, almost international, policy emphasis upon the relationship of entrepreneurial behaviour to employability and the notion of an entrepreneurial culture – often described as developing an 'Entrepreneurial Mindset' in the population as a whole. The focus is therefore upon the Enterprising Person (displaying a number of behavioural and attitudinal attributes commonly associated with the entrepreneurial individual (except that these can be displayed in a wide range of contexts). This approach has greater acceptance within the education system as many educators at all levels are suspicious of embedding their educational philosophy in a seemingly capitalist ethic associated with the traditional notion of the entrepreneur.. They will, however, see developing the enterprising person as central to educational goals<sup>2</sup>.

For these reasons the operational definitions below have been adopted by the UK National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship (NCGE) and are embedded in the IEEP. For wider discussion of the issues see the references below.

#### NCGE Definitions

**The Enterprise Concept** focuses upon the development of the 'Enterprising Person and Entrepreneurial Mindset'. The former constitutes a set of personal skills, attributes, behavioral and motivational capacities (associated with those of the entrepreneur) but which can be used in any context (social, work, leisure etc). Prominent among these are; intuitive decision making, capacity to make things happen autonomously, networking, initiative taking, opportunity identification, creative problem solving, strategic thinking, self efficacy etc). The latter focuses upon creating empathy with the life-world of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurial ways of doing, thinking, feeling, communicating, organising and learning.

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**The Entrepreneurial Concept** focuses upon the application of these enterprising skills etc. to the context of setting up a new venture, developing/growing an existing venture and designing an entrepreneurial organisation (one in which the capacity for effective use of enterprising skills will be enhanced). The context might be business, social enterprise, NGOs or even public organisations (e.g. Local Government).

**The Innovation Concept** is the product of both of the above. Innovation is defined as creating and exploiting opportunities for new ways of doing things resulting in better products and services, systems and ways of managing people and organisations. As per Schumpeter, the successful pursuit of innovation is a function of individual enterprising endeavour and entrepreneurial organisation capacity. Innovation is impossible without these. They are both necessary conditions, sufficient only when combined with an environment that is conducive to such activity.

These definitions are embodied within the NCGE Entrepreneurial Education Outcomes framework (see Pedagogical Note 2)