

Enterprise education: pre-service further education teachers' impressions and aspirations

Peter Tiernan

School of STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland, and

Jane O'Kelly

School of Policy and Practice, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the attitudes and impressions of pre-service Further Education teachers towards enterprise education. It also looks at the potential impact on their future teaching practices and aspirations. This study builds on the literature in this area by bringing a teacher education focus and by providing views from the underserved further education sector.

Design/methodology/approach – A qualitative research approach was used to evaluate pre-service further education teachers' understanding of and attitudes towards, enterprise education. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 students in their final year of an initial teacher education degree.

Findings – Findings emerged through constant comparative analysis of interview transcripts. These findings indicate that exposure to enterprise education greatly increased understanding of its importance and relevance, while also encouraging pre-service further education teachers to recognise the benefits of incorporating enterprise education into their classrooms of the future.

Originality/value – While there is an array of literature on entrepreneurship and enterprise education outside of business contexts, very few studies exist, which examine enterprise education in an initial teacher education context. Fewer still examine enterprise education from the perspective of further education. This study provides a unique qualitative view of pre-service further education teachers' impressions of enterprise education and their aspirations for the future.

Keywords Entrepreneurship, Enterprise education, Initial teacher education, Further education, Experiential learning, Innovation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

We live in a dynamic and rapidly changing society, which requires individuals to have the capacity to operate in uncertain and challenging economic and social environments (Barnett, 2004; Täks, 2015; Tynjala and Gijbels, 2012). An enterprising mindset has the potential to equip individuals with the necessary skills and attributes to deal with such challenges and act on opportunities that may present themselves (Rae, 2008; Gibb, 2011). Education plays a key role in the development of these skills within society and there have been many calls for the integration of enterprise education throughout all levels of the education system (European Commission, 2004, 2008, 2012a), with only moderate success. While many courses in further education and vocational education include enterprise education or elements of it, the sector is underserved with regard to research on the potential impact this can have on teachers and students within the sector (Galvao *et al.*, 2018). This paper aims to address this gap by



examining pre-service further education teachers' impressions of enterprise education and their aspirations for its integration in their future teaching.

First, we unpack for the reader what enterprise education is, and why we must consider developing an enterprising mindset in the further education and training system. Enterprise education is a subset of a much broader field of education which includes entrepreneurship education, and these terms can often become confused (Lackéus, 2015; Pittaway and Cope, 2007). For clarity, entrepreneurship education is oriented towards business creation (Jones and Colwill, 2013; Kirby, 2004), with the purpose of equipping students with the knowledge, attributes and capabilities required to set up a new venture or business (Jones *et al.*, 2014; Jones and Iredale, 2010). Enterprise education is more nuanced in its goals, focussing instead on the development of a wide range of behaviours, attributes and skills which enable individuals to act in innovative ways in a wide variety of contexts (QAA, 2018; Bridge *et al.*, 2010). This distinction is encapsulated well by Bridge (2017), who states that enterprise education builds towards enterprise for life and entrepreneurship education builds towards enterprise for new venture creation. When framed in this way, educators can begin to broadly understand enterprise education as a vehicle through which students can learn: how to be creative and innovative (Hameed and Irfan, 2019); to spot opportunities and develop solutions in a range of social, political, environmental and business contexts (Rae and Woodier-Harris, 2013; Rae, 2006); and have the confidence and resilience to turn these ideas into action (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2006). There is a wealth of literature exploring the competencies associated with developing enterprising individuals. These include: creativity, innovation, risk-taking and a tolerance for ambiguity (Seelig, 2012; Syae, 2020; Gomez *et al.*, 2017; Arruti and Panos-Castro, 2020); proactiveness and achievement-orientation (Che Embi *et al.*, 2019; Al-Mamary *et al.*, 2020); the confidence to propose ideas (Kaur and Bains, 2013; Gibb, 2007); perseverance and dedication (de Pablo *et al.*, 2019); and leadership (Valerio *et al.*, 2014). It is clear that enterprise education holds great potential, and many educators would be excited at the possibility of developing these skills in their students - the future teachers, leaders, creators and innovators in our society. However, such a list also has the potential to create curricular tensions and confusion. How is it that further education teachers "teach" these skills, attributes and behaviours? What pedagogies and approaches are to be employed?

It is now widely accepted that enterprise skills can be taught and learnt, they are not the privilege of those born with a set of attributes or personality traits (Leffler and Näsström, 2014; Hindle, 2007; Harris and Gibson, 2008), however there is still much variation in how this is done. A range of teaching methods and approaches can be adopted in the teaching of enterprise education. Traditional lectures and didactic methods can be used to tackle the cognitive and theoretical aspects of enterprise education (Hynes *et al.*, 2011; Hynes, 1996), sometimes referred to as "education about enterprise" (Lackéus, 2015; Kyrö, 2005). The focus here is on educating students about the general field of entrepreneurship, helping to nurture an enterprising mindset and laying the foundation for later, more practical work (Otache, 2019). It is increasingly apparent that, even at this foundational stage, educators must display their own enterprising attitudes and behaviours and be seen as role models for their students (Otache, 2019; Toding and Venesaar, 2018; McCoshan *et al.*, 2010). Strategies used to develop enterprising skills and behaviours tend to draw on concepts from general education disciplines (e.g. experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), action learning (Revans, 1982) and constructivist learning (Piaget, 1993)). These include more action and experiential oriented activities such as problem-solving (Tiernan, 2016), project-based learning (Ruskovaara and Pihkala, 2013) and selling ideas (Blenker *et al.*, 2011). These have been shown to be effective, especially when collaboration and reflection are built-in as part of the process (Gibb, 2005). Guest speakers, discussion and case studies are also used to give context and foster links between students' perceptions and the real world (Jones and Liu, 2017; Solomon, 2007). There remains criticism of the field of enterprise education around the lack of its own educational

approaches (Mukesh *et al.*, 2020), quite possibly because the area receives little attention in teacher education programmes (Suska, 2018). This detachment from general education may also contribute to the dearth of guidelines available for educators in choosing approaches applicable to different teaching scenarios and contexts (Balan *et al.*, 2018). In their reviews of enterprise education literature, Sirelkhatim and Gangi (2015) and Samwel Mwasalwiba, 2010 have pointed out that the most commonly used methods are lectures, case studies, business plans and group discussion, with active and experiential methods being far less common. This has prompted a focus on how enterprise skills should be taught (Che Embi *et al.*, 2019) and attention paid to the development of skills and behaviours by adopting an imaginative approach to teaching (Samuel and Rahman, 2018; Hindle, 2007), which promotes the development of students' analytical and lateral thinking. The role of the teacher is critical in the enterprise education process as it is the teacher's methods, approaches and values that influence the learning environment (Garnett, 2013; Toding and Venesaar, 2018). Therefore, it is unsurprising that there have been many calls for the inclusion of enterprise education into initial teacher education in order to help educators internalise the concepts of entrepreneurial learning and incorporate it into their teaching in the future (Lepistö and Ronkko, 2013; Arruti and Paños-Castro, 2020). However, the EU report that uptake in initial teacher education is low and must improve if we are to see gains in this area (Eurydice, 2016). Further and vocational education is chronically under-represented in the literature in the area, especially concerning the training of its teachers (Galvao *et al.*, 2018).

This study adds to current discourse in the area of enterprise education by exposing future further education teachers to enterprise education methods and approaches. Following this, the paper examines the impact of this intervention on their attitudes towards enterprise education and its impact on their future teaching practices.

Methodology

Sample

This study was carried out in the {Author Department} at {Author Institute}. Participants were drawn from the "Further Education" strand of the B.Sc. in Education and Training, which is an optional strand, enabling students to work as teachers in further education upon graduation. Students were completing the module "enterprise education and team learning" during semester two of their final year. This was a compulsory module, taught by the author, two hours per week.

The module

The module is designed to give students an understanding of the theory and practice of enterprise education, leadership and the role of teams. Students are encouraged to develop their own skills, attitudes and behaviours and consider these approaches for use as teachers in the future. Module topics were "what is enterprise education", "enterprise education policy and practice", "effective teams in enterprise education", "leadership" and "decision making and challenges". Learning outcomes include being able to critically evaluate a range of theoretical and conceptual frameworks in relation to both enterprise education and team learning; synthesise and summarise individual and group research on the theory and practice of enterprise education and team learning and examine and reflect on the student's own experience of enterprise education.

Description of process

This module was designed to increase students' understanding of, experience with and integration of enterprise education – as it relates to their own experiences and their future

teaching. The module also contained significant elements of leadership and teamwork and how these relate to enterprise education. Delivery of the module included a range of teaching strategies and approaches including: lectures; case studies; discussion; group activities; and reflective activities. The assignment for the module was designed to solidify the concepts of enterprise education, leadership and the role of teams. Students were tasked with creating a group proposal for the integration of enterprise education into a further education subject of their choice, outlining how enterprise skills, attitudes and behaviours would be developed alongside specific subject knowledge. Students were first mentored through a team formation process, working together to define individual roles, share leadership responsibilities and collaborating to achieve a shared vision. Students were then tasked with developing several lessons (minimum three) that outlined how they would achieve the development of key skills alongside subject knowledge. Students were also required to justify their work from a theoretical perspective by providing supporting literature and justify their choices of classroom exercises by providing references to other enterprise education techniques they had researched.

Instruments

Data collection was carried out using semi-structured interviews. Data gathered were qualitative in nature. Questions were asked with the following themes in mind: (1) Content knowledge of enterprise education; (2) Pedagogical knowledge of enterprise education; (3) Activation and the likelihood of using enterprise education skills in the future. In the first category, content knowledge, students were asked a series of questions to ascertain their understanding of enterprise education, such as defining enterprise education and outlining the characteristics of an enterprising person. In the second category, pedagogical knowledge, students were asked a series of questions around the teaching of enterprise education, such as effective teaching strategies for skills development, techniques they will adopt in the future and specific strategies for embedding enterprise education in subject areas. In the third category, activation, students were asked a series of questions around their potential use of enterprise skills in the future. Questions focused on their likelihood to partake in “intrapreneurship” in a further education and training centre, to work with another enterprise or social enterprise and to embed enterprise education in their teaching practice.

Procedure

Students attended the module over one semester as part of their overall study. A total of 17 students who were taking part in the further education and Training strand of the degree were invited for interview, of these, 15 interviews were completed, giving a response rate of 88%. The interviews were conducted with audio recording, with the permission of the participants. Before the interviews, the participants were informed about the purpose of the research and relevant ethical procedures. Participants were provided with a plain language statement, research information sheet and informed consent documents. Data were not collected from participants who did not agree to participate on this basis.

Data analysis

Data from interviews were analysed using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 as cited in [Morehouse and Maykut, 2002](#), p. 126), which identifies patterns in the statements, phrases and words used by the participants. These are then grouped together as initial categories and defined using rules of inclusion to ensure consistency in each category. When participant data are encountered which do not meet these rules for inclusion, a new category is created. This process is repeated until clear categories are present. The final step

is the creation of propositional statements which capture the essence of the category they represent. Propositional statements are used to present findings to the reader in the language of the participants themselves.

To ensure credibility and viability of the findings from this study and the categories which contributed to them, the authors drew on Guba's (1978), pp. 56–57 work. First, data were checked for internal and external plausibility, ensuring consistency within categories and cohesion among separate categories. Second, the inclusivity of data was checked, ensuring the findings drew sufficiently on the data and information that were available. Third, data analysis, coding and categorisation records were kept so that the processes could be reproduced by another competent judge.

Findings and discussion

Key themes and findings are now discussed using extracts from participant interviews, to address the three themes outlined previously. This is followed by overall conclusions drawn from the inquiry. Propositional statements (explained above) are used in an effort to portray the overall meaning of the data categories.

The changing understanding of entrepreneurship and what it means to be enterprising

In this section participants' changing understanding of entrepreneurship and what it means to be enterprising are discussed. This includes data on what the terms "entrepreneurship" and "enterprising" mean to participants. This is followed by their perception of the skills, attributes and behaviours they associate with enterprising individuals.

Throughout the interviews, participants made a variety of comments on their understanding of entrepreneurship, and how, for some, this had changed over the course of the module. Comments ($n = 10$) suggested that perceptions before taking the module were in line with the traditional view of entrepreneurship (Jones and Colwill, 2013; Kirby, 2004). Students felt they were about to undertake a "P1 – business module" which focused on "P7 – business studies or starting a business". However, after the module, some participants' perceptions changed to a nuanced understanding which was more in line with the entrepreneurial mindset espoused by authors such as Rae and Woodier-Harris (2013), Gibb (2011) and Rae (2007). Participants began to align entrepreneurship with attributes such as: alternative thinking; risking taking; and generating ideas. Comments included: "P10 – [entrepreneurs] can think in a different way, think outside the box, but also implement those ideas into structures that are already there"; "P5 – it means creating new things in a variety of contexts"; and "P14 - entrepreneurs take risks to make things happen". These comments suggest an understanding that entrepreneurship is applicable outside of venture creation scenarios. Other participants continued to align entrepreneurship with setting up a business (Jones *et al.*, 2014; Jones and Iredale, 2010). These comments included: "P9 – entrepreneurship in my opinion is [. . .] learning skills to set up your own business"; "P2 – entrepreneurship is about setting up your own business and having the ability to do that"; "P6 – entrepreneurship is having the mindset to create a business, start an enterprise for profit. Well not necessarily for profit, but starting some kind of business, like social entrepreneurship. It is more the business end of enterprise and entrepreneurship". The continued association of entrepreneurship and enterprise with business start-up and venture creation by some students is interesting. It suggests that these conceptualisations may be engrained in their understanding and that more work needs to be done to foster a holistic view of entrepreneurship and enterprise.

In a general sense, participants associated being enterprising with a change in mindset (Gibb, 2011), which focuses on recognising opportunities (Rae and Woodier-Harris, 2013;

Rae, 2007) and seeing solutions instead of problems (Hegarty and Jones, 2008). This sentiment is summed up well by participant ten who said: “P10 - Being enterprising is seeing solutions instead of problems or having the kind of mind that goes, ok maybe if I did this, something will happen, and not being scared to try”. Participants’ views on the transferable attributes, behaviours and skills associated with enterprising behaviour mirror many of those outlined in the literature, with some interesting nuances.

“Drive” emerged as the most prominent theme ($n = 29$) throughout the interviews. This included comments from participants on risk-taking (Solesvik *et al.*, 2013), resilience (Kirby, 2007) and confidence (Kaur and Bains, 2013; Gibb, 2007), among others. Participants noted that enterprising people are “P2 – able to take certain risks and to see if they are worth taking in the long run”, contending that “P4 – you need to be able to take risks to get what you want. You have to be willing to go out of your comfort zone”. Participant sentiment on confidence and resilience are summed up well by participant six who said it is about “P6 - convincing yourself that if you want to do something, you can. Nothing can stop you from doing it. It can slow you down or throw you off course but if you keep going you will eventually get there”. Participant 13 also noted it is about “P13 – being self-assured in the belief that if you really want something you will get it, but you have to stick to the path”.

The theme of “creativity” was also prevalent during interviews, with comments ($n = 22$) on creativity, doing things differently and making connections. At a fundamental level, participants understood creativity to mean “P7 – the ability to think differently and try something new”, and “P12 – making links [. . .] enterprising people can integrate things quite well in their heads”. Other participants took a more reflective approach, recognising creativity within themselves saying “P4 - I think I am quite enterprising. I tend to start things all the time and try to do things in different ways”. Perhaps most interesting were the links made by participant six between creativity and teaching: “P6 - An enterprising teacher would be creative in their pedagogy or what they teach, or creative in making presentations and activities for their students”.

In line with authors such as Rae (2007), participants spoke also of enterprising people as solution-oriented ($n = 13$). Comments included several areas such as problem-solving, solution orientation and opportunity focus. Participants spoke of enterprising people as “P1 – interested in working at problems” and in “P15 – using their abilities to solve problems”. Enterprising individuals have the ability to identify “P4 – the best way to approach a task”, to “P10 – notice when something isn’t quite right” and “P10 – identify the gap and fix it”.

The final theme which emerged from interviews was interpersonal skills. Comments in this theme ($n = 9$) spoke of the interrelated ability of enterprising people to lead, negotiate, learn and positively interact with others. For participants, leadership in this context means “P2 – being a role model” and “P4 – helping others to achieve their goals” by “P5 – giving advice and support” to those around you. The ability to negotiate was seen as crucial in terms of being able to adapt ideas and viewpoints based on engagement and feedback from others. For example, one participant said that “P12 – ideas are not set”, flexibility is important and individuals need to accept that while “P12 – that was not my original idea, what you have said is really interesting so I’ll feed into that”. Participants also noted interaction with others as an essential, highlighting the importance of being “P2 - a good social person, to be able to interact with people. Teamwork and group work are a big part of it”.

Data in this section provide a detailed overview of pre-service further education teachers understanding of entrepreneurship and what it means to be enterprising. Some participants displayed a shift in perception of entrepreneurship towards a more nuanced “entrepreneurial” (Gibb, 2011) understanding, while others continued to view it as purely business orientation (Jones and Colwill, 2013; Kirby, 2004). This suggests that more work can be done in expanding the perceptions of pre-service further education teachers in relation to entrepreneurship and the contexts in which it can be applied. Participants’ views of “being

enterprising” suggest a comprehensive understanding of the transferrable nature of enterprising attributes, skills and behaviours, and they supplied insight into those they feel are important. Many of these are present in the existing literature, for example: risk-taking (Solevsik *et al.*, 2013); resilience (Kirby, 2007); confidence (Kaur and Bains, 2013; Gibb, 2007); creativity (Seeling, 2012); problem-solving (Tiernan, 2016); opportunity focus (Rae and Woodier-Harris, 2013; Rae, 2007); and leadership (Valerio *et al.*, 2014). What makes the data above valuable is that it provides evidence that pre-service further education teachers can identify with these attributes and begin to understand their relevance. Participants are using their own language to talk about confidence and resilience; they are linking creativity to teaching approaches, speaking about identifying gaps and fixing problems and displaying an understanding of the need to negotiate when new ideas are being put forward. This strongly suggests that pre-service further education teachers were able to identify key transferable skills associated with being enterprising, articulate their meaning and understand the benefits of developing these skills for use in a variety of contexts, including their own.

Experiential learning leads to understanding

In this section participants’ impressions of the pedagogy surrounding enterprise education is discussed. This includes data on the strategies and approaches used in enterprise education and their thoughts on the integration of these strategies into different disciplines.

During interviews, pre-service further education teachers were asked to consider the current and potential teaching strategies and approaches which they felt could be effective for enterprise education and in what contexts and subjects these can be applied. The overarching perspective in terms of the application suggests that pre-service further education teachers value an integrated approach to enterprise education. This approach should focus on incorporating strategies into existing subjects and courses, rather than stand-alone modules. Participants felt that enterprise education should not be “P4 – a subject that is examined”, but rather it should be used “P4 – as another approach” to teaching which incorporates “P4 – group work, or projects” which help students to develop enterprising skills, attributes and behaviours. Participants suggest that enterprise education can be incorporated into “P12 – any subject . . . you can teach it from a business perspective or from a humanities perspective”. Their comments indicate a high value placed on the interdisciplinary potential, where “P2 – you can get a taste of what it’s like working with different people in different disciplines’ and apply what you learn “P4 – in your own field”.

Per-service further education teachers overwhelmingly advocated practical, experience-based approaches recommended by authors such as Samuel and Rahman (2018) and Hindle (2007). Participants contended that it is “P14 – difficult to understand” what it means to be enterprising “P14 – if it is abstract”, continuing that “P14 - I feel like unless you experience it, it all seems a bit out there. So at least being able to bring it closer and give students an opportunity to experience it for themselves, it might help”. Participant three said that “P3 – in order to change people, you need to connect it to experiences. People need to actually act out those behaviours”. Participant five supported this, saying: “P5 – make it practical [. . .] simulate things, make it authentic learning [. . .] set real objectives and targets”. Participants specifically mentioned strategies such as problem-solving (Tiernan, 2016) and project-based work (Ruskovaara and Pihkala, 2013), but emphasised the need for support, mentoring and guidance throughout the process, to bring real value to the learning experience. Participant six said “P6 – you could teach students problem-solving through case studies and working through real problems, with guidance from the teacher”, while participant twelve said groups could “P12 – coming up with a social enterprise, for instance for a charity, where everyone has a chance to be a leader”. Participants emphasised that this practical work should take place in “P4 – some sort of workshop or tutorial setting”, where students work “P4 – in smaller groups

and are able to think on the spot and role-play situations. Where they are given a scenario to see how they might solve it" but that support is available should they require "P1 – help along the way" so that they can "P1 – overcome challenges and remain focused on their goal".

Data in this section suggest a clear preference for experiential learning approaches, on the part of pre-service further education teachers. Participants expressed the need to internalise enterprising behaviours by taking part in activities such as problem-solving and project-based learning. Their appreciation for the need for support and guidance throughout this process suggests that they understand their role as role models and mentors (Otache, 2019; Toding and Venesaar, 2018) and that they aspire to fulfil these aspirations in their future teaching practice. Based on their comments, participants desire a move away from content-laden approaches to facilitation techniques which allow learners to experience what it feels like to be enterprising, in addition to simply understanding this on a conceptual level.

Activation: entrepreneur? Maybe. Enterprise educator? Yes

In this section participants' potential for activation in a number of related areas is explored. Data on their aspirations to start an enterprise or work with another entrepreneur are examined first. Following this, their potential for innovation and intrapreneurship within organisations is examined. Finally, their aspirations to incorporate enterprise education into their future teaching are explored.

Throughout the interviews, pre-service further education teachers were asked a series of questions concerning the likelihood of them starting a business, working with another entrepreneur or acting as an intrapreneur within an existing organisation. Participation in the module appears to have had little impact on participants' consideration of starting their own venture. Of those participants that did indicate a desire to set up an enterprise ($n = 6$), work had already begun. For example, participant one said "P1 – at the moment we are setting up a youth club, trying to develop the idea organically with students as leaders", similarly participant twelve said "P12 – I actually have one. Myself and boyfriend have a handcrafted jewellery stand". The majority of participants ($n = 10$) indicated a willingness to work with another entrepreneur "P14 – if it was something they were interested in" and they could "P2 – contribute in a creative way", provided there "P6 – was not too much risk involved". All participants ($n = 15$) indicated aspirations to be intrapreneurs, where they could display their creative capabilities and be involved in the development of new ideas and initiatives. However, these aspirations came with a caveat. There was a strong sense among participants that intrapreneurship was only feasible following significant time within an organisation. Their comments ($n = 12$) suggested it would take time to feel comfortable proposing ideas or initiatives. For example, participant twelve said "P12 – if you're only in the door and you start trying to make changes, I do not think it will go very far". Similarly, participant four said "P4 – for someone new to come in and say, especially someone in a lower position, to say ok we are changing this. It would cause tension and senior members would feel unnerved". These data suggest that exposure to enterprise education has potentially increased awareness of and appreciation for the entrepreneurial process, especially in terms of working with others and displaying creative attributes within organisations. However, it is also clear that more work needs to be done to encourage individuals to display their creative and entrepreneurial capabilities as newer members of staff. This is especially relevant in education, where newly qualified teachers, who bring innovative teaching practices and pedagogical approaches, may remain silent if they do not feel empowered to put these ideas forward.

All pre-service further education teachers indicated a strong interest in the incorporation of enterprise education into their future teaching. Their comments suggest that future integration may take a number of forms. Some participants ($n = 4$) said they would focus on

developing students' potential and ambition. They said: "P11 – I would encourage them to set goals, to be as ambitious as possible". Another stated: "P7 – I really think that kids, students and mature students have so much potential, energy and intelligence to apply their entrepreneurial skills to the world" and that by "P7 – providing them with the right opportunities", they are given the "P7 – chance to use these skills". Others spoke of bringing problem-solving ($n = 2$) and creativity ($n = 2$) to their classrooms, saying: "P13 – I will definitely incorporate it. I would come at it from a different angle. I would focus on problem-solving, or solving problems relevant to student lives", and "P6 – I would start off small, little things in the classroom around creativity". Finally, participants ($n = 4$) specifically mentioned focussing on social entrepreneurship, saying "P2 – I can definitely see the advantages of it. I would do group work or a project, a fundraiser, for example, to give them a taste of social entrepreneurship", another said "P14 – I would incorporate social entrepreneurship. It's not that everyone needs to change the world, but an understanding of how it works, and compassion, would benefit students'. Data here suggest that exposure to enterprise education in their initial teacher training had a positive impact on pre-service further education teachers' intentions to incorporate these practices in their future teaching. Participants identified key attributes, skills and behaviours which they value and could develop in their students in the future.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of enterprise education on pre-service further education teachers' attitudes towards entrepreneurship and enterprise education, and its potential impact on their future teaching practices in this area. Data were gathered through participant interviews, around the key areas of content knowledge of enterprise education and entrepreneurship, pedagogical approaches to enterprise education and entrepreneurship activation and the likelihood of embedding enterprise education in their future teaching.

Findings suggest that when exposed to enterprise education in their initial teacher education, some pre-service further education teachers understand entrepreneurship and enterprise in the context of an entrepreneurial mindset which is applicable in a variety of life scenarios. Others continued to associate entrepreneurship and enterprise with business start-up and venture creation. Further work may be needed to explore these beliefs and change perceptions in this regard. Following engagement with the module, pre-service further education teachers could identify a range of transferable skills associated with enterprising individuals and recognise their value in a multitude of life scenarios. Participants can see the value in promoting skills to develop creativity, drive, leadership and solution orientation. Participants also strongly supported previous research which advocates a focus on experience-based approaches to enterprise education. While this study included many practical elements, participants were clear in their desire to take part in real-world activities which would allow them to feel what it is like to be enterprising, to solve problems and to display and act on their creativity. Data gathered on participants' future intentions were encouraging. The majority of participants indicated that while they may not start their own enterprise in the near future, they would be willing to work with another entrepreneur, under the right circumstances. Also, the data gathered, clearly demonstrate the value participants place on the development of enterprising attributes and the importance of including these within further education. All participants noted that they will include elements of enterprise education in their future teaching in further education, with a particular focus on motivation and ambition, creativity and problem solving and social entrepreneurship – all of which are extremely valuable attributes for further education students to develop.

Limitations

This study has some limitations which should be noted in relation to the findings and conclusions described above. The research sample which was used for this research was relatively limited in size, focussing on a subset of one university cohort. While the intention was to gather in-depth interview data from participants on their experiences, impressions and aspirations in relation to enterprise education, a larger scale study may be needed to explore and develop these areas. Second, as the data were obtained from one in-depth interview conducted at the end of an academic semester, alternative findings may be reached if a more long term evaluation took place which, for example, looked at participants teaching practice when they enter the field of further education. Finally, the literature on enterprise education in initial teacher education programmes is relatively scarce. As this field develops, alternative themes for investigation might emerge which were not addressed in this study.

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Corresponding author

Peter Tiernan can be contacted at: peter.d.tiernan@dcu.ie

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