



**How does Enterprise & Entrepreneurship Education
influence postgraduate students' career intentions in the
New Era economy?**

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Review

How does Enterprise & Entrepreneurship Education influence postgraduate students' career intentions in the New Era economy?

Introduction & rationale

This paper is based on a short study of international students on an Entrepreneurship programme in the UK and their perceptions of the influence of entrepreneurship education on their career-making. It explores how Enterprise & Entrepreneurship Education (EEE) can influence postgraduate entrepreneurship and career initiation in the wider context of the economic, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities perceived by these students at an international level.

Recent years have seen rapid growth in EEE, in terms of educational practices; interest from policymakers; and demand from learners. Set against this has been the economic backdrop since the 2008 financial and economic crisis, which has resulted in what may be termed a 'new era' in entrepreneurship (Rae, 2010). A major consequence of this has been a low or negative rate of economic growth in many countries, and a concomitant shortage in the employment and career opportunities open to young people, including graduates. The interest in EEE has been paralleled by Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) developing support for students and graduate employability, in part to address this deficiency, but also to enhance their own competitiveness and attractiveness to students.

A critical assumption in these developments is the principle that entrepreneurship enhances learners' career prospects and employability, either through enabling them to create their own employment as a self-employed person or entrepreneur, or through increasing their potential value as a more 'enterprising' employee. Previous work found that career development is a major motivator for international study in the UK, with almost 70% of students sampled aiming to gain career advantage from studying in the UK (Rae & Woodier-Harris, 2012). This is especially important in the case of international students coming to the UK, because they originate from a range of countries which have quite different economic characteristics, employment markets and growth rates; whilst they are in general less well served by the provision to support their employability and employment within the UK. This paper sets out to explore in more depth the relationships between EEE and graduate career-making, in the context of international postgraduate students. Its contribution is to enhance understanding of the connections between EEE and students ability to apply this to their own lives and careers. We believe this connection, although presumably at the heart of the reasons for increasing the provision and participation in EEE, has been comparatively unexplored in the burgeoning literature on the subject. There has been extensive work on EEE and career-making which is summarised in the paper. However there is a lack of understanding of the relationships between EEE and graduate career intentions, especially at PG and international levels. Our concern is with the learner, and the development of their ability to apply entrepreneurial learning to their career.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the effects on young people and their progression from education into employment. Reports from sources such as the International Labour Office (ILO, 2013) and European Union (EU, 2013) show unemployment continuing to increase at a significant rate, the impact being felt disproportionately by young people. Whilst graduates may benefit to some extent from higher qualifications and other factors, graduate unemployment in the UK has still doubled since 2008 and this is mirrored at both a European level and in many developing countries. There is no early sign of an improvement, and ILO projections are for continuing global increases in worklessness.

Set against these gloomy trends, policymakers at national (UK), European and international levels argue that entrepreneurship will be a driving force for economic recovery by creating innovation, jobs and growth. This rhetoric is remarkably consistent across governments and agencies of differing political complexions, although there is not yet very much evidence of its efficacy. What is evident is that most governments have scant resources to act, other than funding infrastructure investment projects from increased borrowing. The age of austerity, driven by a political need to pacify international bond markets and ratings agencies such as Moody's, has spread like a dark cloud, demonstrating the fragility of institutions and the extent to which societies and a generation of young people risk being deprived of hope for the future (Blanchflower, 2009).

One effect of the crisis and the view that entrepreneurship is crucial to its resolution has been to elevate the role of entrepreneurship education as part of the societal and policy response, and there are signs of a shift in European thinking towards the need for new policies for job creation to alleviate these risks; for example in the EU Entrepreneurship Action Plan (EC 2013). This places educators and their educational institutions in a

conundrum: on one hand, they are recognised as having potential ‘solutions’ to offer; on the other, there is again a lack of evidence that these approaches are adequate to address the scale of the challenge, whilst educators and institutions are as affected by the austerity and its squeeze on public spending as anyone else.

In relation to the study, the research method is explained and the results are presented. This includes a short survey and extracts from the learning narratives of students which relate to their career learning, as these exemplify both some of the problems and learning outcomes at human, educational and institutional levels. This leads into proposed findings and the development of a simple conceptual model of graduate entrepreneurial career learning. A set of observations and suggestions for practical approaches to develop entrepreneurial career-making in the context of EEE are outlined. The implications of this for institutions, educators and learners are discussed.

Prior work

The paper builds on prior work by summarising the relevant literature in three interconnected areas:

- International Enterprise & Entrepreneurship Education
- The economic context
- Graduate career making & employability

International Enterprise & Entrepreneurship Education

There is a significant body of work predating the crisis which explored and defined enterprise education in Higher Education, notably through contributions by Allan Gibb (2002), and by Garavan and O’Cinneide at a European level (1994); by Gorman et al in a ten-year study which covered early work in the field (1997); by Hannon (2004) in creating foundations for the subsequent NCGE initiatives (2004); by Matlay and Carey (2007) through a ten-year longitudinal study from 1995-2004; by Pittaway and Cope (2007); and by Pittaway and Hannon (2008) in assessing institutional strategies for HE enterprise education.

Subsequent to 2008, these studies informed continuing debates on the purpose, goals, values and pedagogies of enterprise education, together with new thinking. Lewis (2011) concluded that entrepreneurship struggled to gain academic legitimacy at a moral, pedagogical and theoretical level, with the quality and focus of research being constrained, and asserted that the unresolved tension of the twin goals of enabling students to become entrepreneurs or to understand and operate within an enterprising society, together with an over-dependence on government policy initiatives, have prevented this legitimacy. Blenker et al (2011) proposed a progression from existing paradigms of education to a new one of ‘facilitating entrepreneurial energy for social change’ and ‘entrepreneurship as everyday practice’; whilst, like Lewis, saw the development of ‘an entrepreneurial mindset’ being an important outcome of the educational process.

Jones (2011) argued the importance of entrepreneurship education being underpinned by an explicit teaching philosophy grounded on student learning, whilst Jones and Matlay (2011) developed a conceptual framework centred on the student and their dialogic relationships with educator, institution, educational processes and community. Emergent issues and challenges facing educators were reported by Carey and Matlay (2011), addressing the need for cultural change to embrace entrepreneurship within HEIs, whilst Matlay (2009) provided a critical analysis of stakeholder expectations and assessed the impact of education on entrepreneurial outcomes, including graduate careers (2008).

Since 2008, there has been significant activity to connect enterprise and entrepreneurship education (EEE) with economic development. Rae (2010) proposed implications of the crisis and the New Era for entrepreneurship educators. At institutional and international levels, there have been several landmark studies (e.g. World Economic Forum, 2009), to establish activity levels (GEM, 2010) and to assess its effects and impact (EU, 2012). In the UK, the government initiated the development of curricular guidelines for enterprise and entrepreneurship education, drafted by practitioners and researchers (QAA, 2012). These apply to programmes for international as well as UK & EU students, their scope including undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The guidelines aim to capture ‘best practice’ in current entrepreneurship education, being based on the concept of students achieving a learning outcome of entrepreneurial effectiveness, through experiencing enterprise awareness, the development of an entrepreneurial mindset (way of thinking) and a range of capabilities (skills and knowledge, developed through experiential learning), illustrated in figure 1.

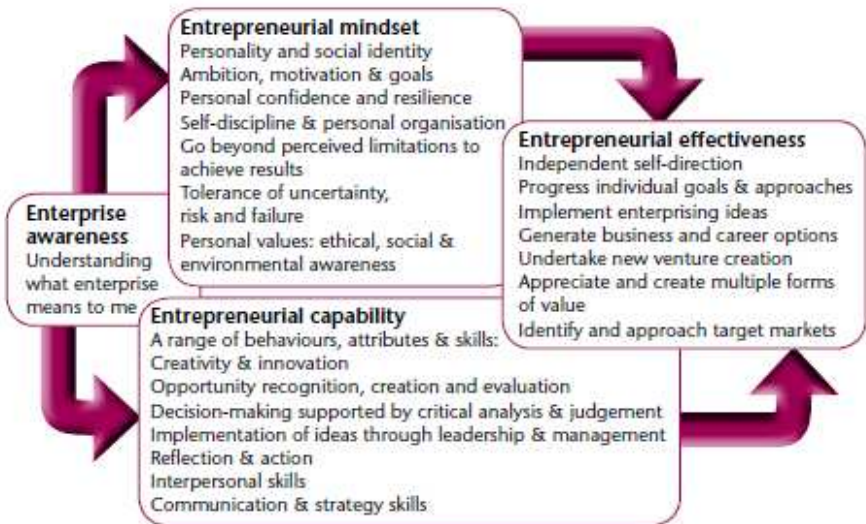


Figure 1: Connecting the development of entrepreneurial effectiveness with graduate outcomes (QAA, 2012:15).

There is also growing interest in the impact of entrepreneurship education on learners' subsequent behaviour. The first EU study (2012) highlighted that whilst EEE increased awareness of entrepreneurial options and enhanced understanding of risk and other factors, it did not materially increase the short-term propensity for entrepreneurial action; in other words, graduates with entrepreneurship skills were likely to be better informed on the choices they made, but these might be made at a later stage in their careers. Further work on the impact of EEE was commissioned by the UK government which reported in 2013 (Williamson et al, 2013).

The recognition that entrepreneurial learning is a natural process of learning to work in entrepreneurial ways, through recognising and acting on opportunities occurring through and being applied within everyday practice, has been increasingly apparent (Cope & Watts, 2000; Rae & Carswell, 2000; Blenker et al, 2011 etc) and indeed earlier through the work of Gibb (1996), and this should be valued as much as and alongside formal education. Active, experiential and practice-based learning have been long-established recurrent themes in the development of small firms and owner-managers (e.g. Down 1999). There has been a lengthy process of convergence of the ideas of entrepreneurial learning and enterprise education as being complementary and necessary to develop the ability to act effectively in the contingent and situational lifeworld of the New Era. This development has been accompanied by increasing interest from international and policy organisations in the potential contribution and impact of EEE for economic and social transformation (World Economic Forum, 2009; Martínez et al, 2010; EU, 2012). We expect to see much further work of this kind.

The economic context

Britain is in line with other EU countries in experiencing rising and sustained unemployment rates in the 18-25 age group of over 20%, or some 6 million young people in total (Eurostat, 2013); with UK graduate unemployment doubling between 2008 to over 20% in 2013. This results, not only from the recession, but from a longer-term failure to create sufficient new jobs for young people, increasing rates and lengths of economic activity by older workers, and mismatches between educational 'production' (skills) and employer demand. Both structural and cyclical worklessness in this age group is exceptionally serious, especially in post-industrial regions hardest hit by public spending constraints and dependent on declining public, retail, and service sector organisations no longer able to provide the employment opportunities of the 'boom years'. The shrinkage in economic activity is having visible and marked effects: in the UK, the economy is some 15% smaller than in 2008 (OBR 2013) and the decline in consumer spending, demand for business property and employment generation is widespread.

There are significant consequences from the economic crisis for communities, learners and their families, reinforcing the severe global decline in European economic performance, growth and competitiveness and creating catastrophic effects on youth employment as well as the wider economy in countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy. The Lisbon accord (EC, 2000) had the aspiration of transforming the EU into 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world' through entrepreneurship, but after a decade this had clearly failed. In early 2013 the EU launched an Entrepreneurship Action Plan, with the renewed intention of securing economic and social transformation by 'reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe'. Founded on three 'Action pillars' of 'Entrepreneurial education and training to support growth and business creation'; 'Creating an environment where entrepreneurs can flourish and grow' and 'Role models

and reaching out to specific groups', this plan offered a detailed and considered strategy intended to create and support an entrepreneurial economy and society across Europe. Yet there could hardly have been a less auspicious time to launch this plan when the EU was again convulsed with disputes over agreeing its spending in response to the problem of sovereign and bank debts, and the need for reform.

At a national level the fiscal tensions between reducing historic debt, funding current expenditure, especially in health, social benefits, the costs of an ageing population and education, and the levels of taxation required to do this, will continue. The OBR reports 'huge uncertainty around all public finance projections' (OBR, 2013). At international level, the problems of Eurozone debt will continue to constrain recovery in a number of economies, although the OECD confidently predicted that: 'Structural reforms, notably in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain, provide a solid base for a recovery in competitiveness and an increase in employment when demand turns around' (OECD, 2013).

The effects of the crisis have also made finance and lending to entrepreneurs much more difficult, contradicting the rhetoric that entrepreneurship, innovation and 'the march of the makers' will regenerate the economy and create the new jobs which are much needed. Within the UK, repeated efforts by government to exhort Bank lending to small firms have failed, with access to finance for small business remaining a major, unresolved problem.

Graduate career making & employability

Although economic trends continue to be adverse, there are counter-indications of some recovery in graduate careers in the UK, for example in increased demand for engineering, computer science and IT graduates but reduced public, professional and administrative demand (Redman, 2012). However, unemployment for graduates from 2010/11 compared to 2009/10 had increased by only 0.1% to 8.6% according to the annual DLHE survey, although in relation to degree subjects the range was from just fewer than 8% to over 12%. Montgomery's contribution to the same report (ibid) reported that graduate self-employment had increased from 3.3% in 2006/7 to 4.8% in 2010/11. This is still a small proportion, and although self-employment is now considered to be a legitimate 'graduate destination' the figure shows little change from the numbers observed by the researchers in HEIs during the preceding decade. AGCAS (2013) reported an upturn in confidence and 'buoyancy' in their survey of Heads of higher education careers and employability services in late 2012. This showed a decrease in public sector and full-time jobs, and an increase in part-time jobs and internships,

Behind these reports, there is a reality of significant graduate underemployment, with many graduates working in any service jobs they can find; working part-time rather than full-time; and working in a series of unpaid or low-paid internships and projects to gain experience and currency in the labour market. A forecast based on ONS and HESA data for 2013 concluded that new graduate unemployment would be 20% in early 2013, with 38% of recent graduates in lower-skilled jobs, resulting in a 58% under-utilisation of graduates which would continue without either economic upturn or government action (CareerMatters, 2013).

This situation is not entirely new, but it has increased significantly in scale with the recession and become a seemingly permanent feature of the economy. Factors such as gender, location, degree subject, class and type of HEI attended are all contributors to the relative 'life chances' of graduates in the job market. Unemployed graduates increasingly risk drifting into the 'precariat' (Standing, 2011), lacking security or predictability in their income, work or other aspects of life such as housing. This is especially the case for international students coming to the UK and aiming to work whilst studying for postgraduate qualifications, or having graduated. The limitations introduced by the UK Government on international student work visas in 2012 not only deterred many students from coming to the UK, but also made working and surviving economically much more difficult for many of those who did. The researchers have encountered many examples of such students living in economically marginal and precarious circumstances.

It is evident that the professional organisations and networks which exist to support HE staff in careers, employability and enterprise are keenly aware of the challenges and the imperative to address these; for example, through the HEA, AGCAS and HECSU. There is considerable activity, research and innovation in the employability field in HE. However, we are concerned that this too often does not target or engage postgraduate international students sufficiently, although this inevitably varies between institutions and the levels of support and investment they make in it.

The economic outlook shapes the current and likely future prospects for graduate careers in the UK. Based on a critical reading of economic forecasts, including the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), policy and fiscal intentions, the economic outlook and graduate employment market seem likely to be shaped by continuing uncertainty and economic volatility, with low levels of economic growth affecting businesses and other organisations. Although the OBR expects GDP growth to recover to 2.8% by 2017, their short-term record of predictions has been consistently over-optimistic. Unemployment is expected to peak in 2014 at 8% of the

workforce and then decline to 6.9%. Continuing public spending constraints mean that austerity will continue until at least 2018 and probably beyond, limiting public spending and jobs (OBR, 2013). Businesses are also likely to limit investment except where the returns are greatest, or there are incentives and risk offsetting by government, such as those seen in housebuilding and power generation.

The UK Commission for Employment & Skills (UKCES) undertook two major studies which significantly inform projections for future employment, covering the future of work (Wilson and Homenidou, 2012); and the employment of young people in the 16-24 age group ('Scaling the youth employment challenge', 2013). 'Working Futures' predicts a slow recovery from economic recession, with 1.5 million new jobs being generated by 2020, 588,000 (38%) of these being full-time, the balance being 57% part-time and 5% self-employed. Replacement jobs for people leaving the labour market are expected to create around 12 million vacancies, much greater than the number of new jobs. The demand for graduates is expected to increase, but more slowly than before (UKCES, 2012). The report on young people (UKCES 2013) makes clear the barriers this age group faces in entering the job market, and that although the number of jobs has increased during the 2008-13 period, 16-24 year olds have not benefited from this. There is flat demand for service-sector entry-level jobs and the only consolation for graduates is that they are marginally less disadvantaged than younger school and college leavers.

Summary of issues from prior work

Demand from international students to study in the UK has continued to remain strong, despite the imposition of strict controls by the UK government in its ideological drive to 'clamp down on bogus immigration'. The global economic uncertainty and increasing availability of study in both home countries, such as China and India, and in alternative study destinations such as Australia, the US and other European countries, such as France, the Netherlands and Denmark, where English language teaching is increasingly available, may well be affecting this but not yet to a significant extent. Career opportunity enhancement is a major motivation for their study decisions. However the limited job prospects for graduates in the UK and visa restrictions mean that international students should not have high expectations of being able to work in the UK. This is one reason why entrepreneurship continues to be a popular study option. For example, 75% (36) of a recent group of 48 international PG business students coming to Lincoln in spring 2013 opted for the entrepreneurship course. This supports our research interest in that we do not know enough about the students' motivations, experiences and learning outcomes in terms of career enhancement through entrepreneurial learning.

Research method

The research was conducted as a limited-scale and empirical educational study, with primary data collected from international postgraduate students enrolled on an entrepreneurship elective course. The research took place at the University of Lincoln in Spring 2013, building on findings from a previous study which compared international PG students' motivations for selecting entrepreneurship as a subject for study across two universities; University of Derby and University of Lincoln (Rae and Woodier-Harris, 2012).

A standardised end-of-module evaluation survey was used, supplemented with observations and experiences from the researchers and module leader delivering the module, and examples of work produced by students. The surveys were designed to be self-administered, anonymous and online, to be completed optionally after completion of study on the module. This approach was taken to avoid the risk of distortion by students being concerned about tutors' responses to their feedback. Similar to the prior paper (ibid) the survey was designed to capture the background, prior education, expectations and experiences of international postgraduate students who had completed the modules. In addition, this study aimed to explore the key stages in developing entrepreneurial effectiveness, as highlighted in the QAA (2012) Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education guidelines illustrated in figure 1; entrepreneurial awareness, entrepreneurial mindset, entrepreneurial capability and entrepreneurial effectiveness. This concept was introduced to the students during the module as a means of reflecting on their entrepreneurial learning. The four themes are integrated into the survey questionnaire alongside questions focusing on students' personal background information such as gender, age and domicile; previous education and experience; their expectations of the module and whether the module reached their expectations and 'added value' in terms of career preparedness.

Specific questions were devised in relation to each theme with the aim of exploring students' expectations (what they expected from the module); entrepreneurial awareness (how the module helped develop their awareness of enterprise); entrepreneurial mindset (how the module developed self-awareness of enterprising and entrepreneurial qualities, as well as the motivation and self-discipline); entrepreneurial capabilities (how the module experience and learning helped students to develop a range of enterprising and related practical, social and conceptual skills); and entrepreneurial effectiveness (how confident the student feels in relation to their career options). The design of the survey instrument was piloted with a test group of staff and students

and modified following their feedback prior to its administration. Responses used check-boxes, categorised scaling, lists of skills, personal attributes and abilities. The survey questions and response options were drawn from current research and literature on international entrepreneurship and drawn from the QAA guidelines (2012) and were congruent with the goals and objectives of the research.

The survey was introduced during the final week of the module in April 2013. The objectives of the research were explained to the students face-to-face with voluntary participation and anonymity explained. The primary means of distribution of the surveys was online with the link sent to the students via email and posted on the course website. Students were informed that if they agreed to participate in the research, the online survey should be submitted within two weeks of completion of the module, following which the survey was closed.

With the aim of understanding students' career-oriented learning in greater depth, it was decided that the end of module evaluation survey would be supplemented with narrative material drawn from students' personal reflective career coursework. Again, students were given the option of participating in this stage of the research. The academic assignment asked students to reflect critically on their entrepreneurial learning experience on the module and to explain how they could apply this in their future career. Students were encouraged to self-assess their entrepreneurial capabilities and to develop a career plan, both in the module and as part of the assessed work. In addition the reflective coursework highlighted their expectations and aims of postgraduate study and specific information relating to their awareness and career intentions. Extracts from their personal learning and career narratives were analysed in-depth alongside the survey to compare with and to validate the survey results. The analysis took place taking into consideration potential bias, distortion and the effects of changes within the research context. The survey results and narrative materials were analysed independently by both researchers and the results compared. The results are presented and analysed in the next section.

Analysis & presentation of results

The survey results comprise:

A – Background information on participating students for comparison with the prior study

B - Exploration of the four entrepreneurial learning themes comprising:

- (1) Entrepreneurial awareness
- (2) Entrepreneurial mindset
- (3) Entrepreneurial capabilities
- (4) Entrepreneurial effectiveness

The characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table I. This table includes data taken from the previous study undertaken over two years as a comparator of the population. Respondents in 2013 represent mainly young (89 per cent of respondents were aged between 23 and 25), male (over 65 per cent) students with little work experience, China being the principal country of origin, replicated across all three years. Most respondents had less than one year's work experience (70.6 per cent in 2011, 68.5 in 2012 and 50 per cent in 2013) and for some no work experience (35.7 per cent in 2013). Their first degree subject backgrounds were in the main from business and management. Of the 60 students who opted for and completed the elective, 28 (46%) completed the survey.

[Insert table 1 here]

1. Entrepreneurial awareness

The study aimed to explore variations in respondents' entrepreneurial awareness using categorised scaling from 'not at all' 'to a limited extent', 'moderate' and 'strongly'. Respondents were able to respond accordingly to each category with their levels of awareness as a result of the module. 'Enterprise is important for my future career' (61.5 per cent of respondents) rated this strongly alongside 'I can see opportunities for becoming an entrepreneur' (46.2 per cent of respondents). Moderately rated, respondents highlighted that they appreciate the role that enterprise has in their own country (61.5 per cent) and understanding how enterprise skills can be used in different situations (65.4 per cent).

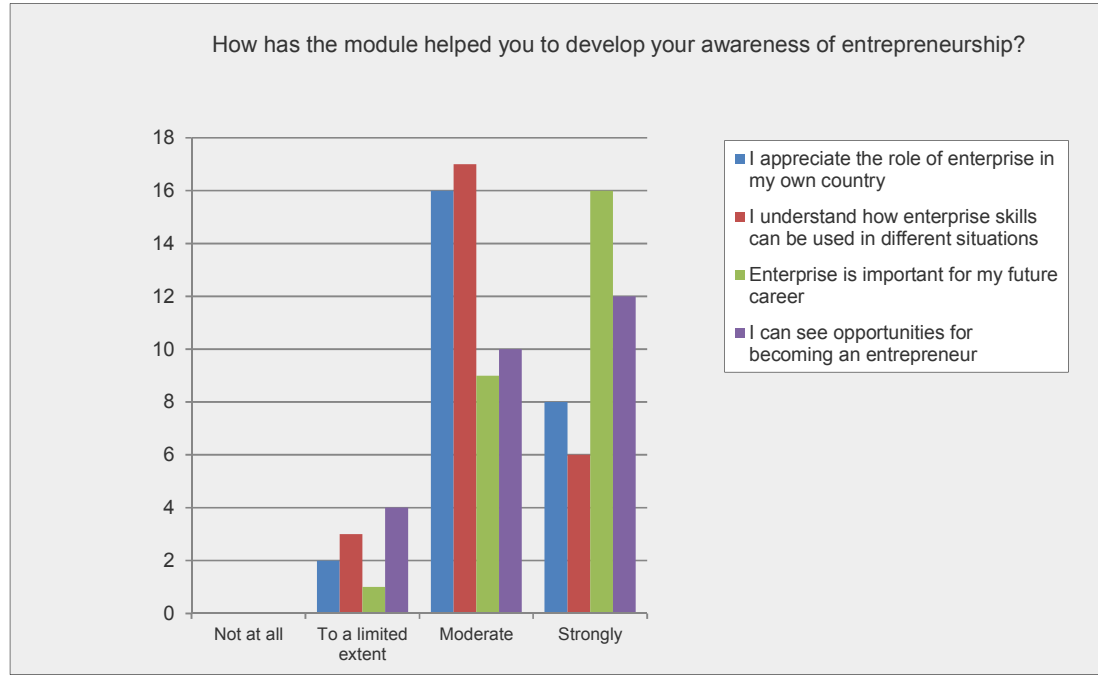


Figure 2: How has the module helped you develop your awareness of entrepreneurship?

2. Entrepreneurial mind-set

In accordance with the research questions, the respondents were asked to rate their levels of self-awareness of their own enterprising and entrepreneurial qualities, as well as motivation and self-discipline. With moderate levels of agreement, respondents scored the following the highest; 'I feel confident about my own ability to achieve my goals' (69.2 per cent), 'I think of myself as an entrepreneurial person' (53.8 per cent) and 'I know what I want to achieve in life' (53.8 per cent).

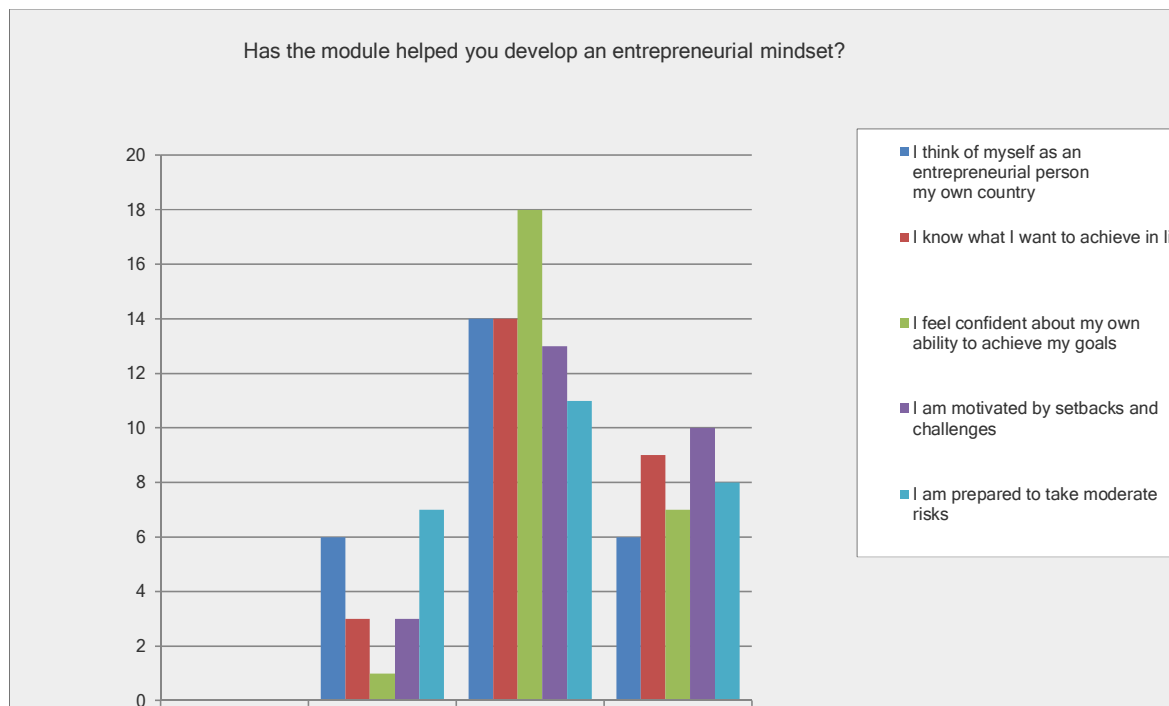


Figure 3: Has the module helped you develop an entrepreneurial mindset?

3. Entrepreneurial capabilities

Respondents were asked to evaluate their levels of enterprising and related practical, social and conceptual skills that they gained from their experience and learning on the Entrepreneurship module. Finding out about markets and customers and making effective decisions on opportunities achieved the highest levels of agreement, with respondents believing strongly that these particular skills were developed as a result of the module, (42.3 per cent and 46.2 per cent). Amongst the other variables, respondents moderately agreed that financing a business (61.5 per cent), personal organisation (57.7 per cent) and presenting and communicating effectively (57.7 per cent) were all entrepreneurial skills that were developed during the course of the module.

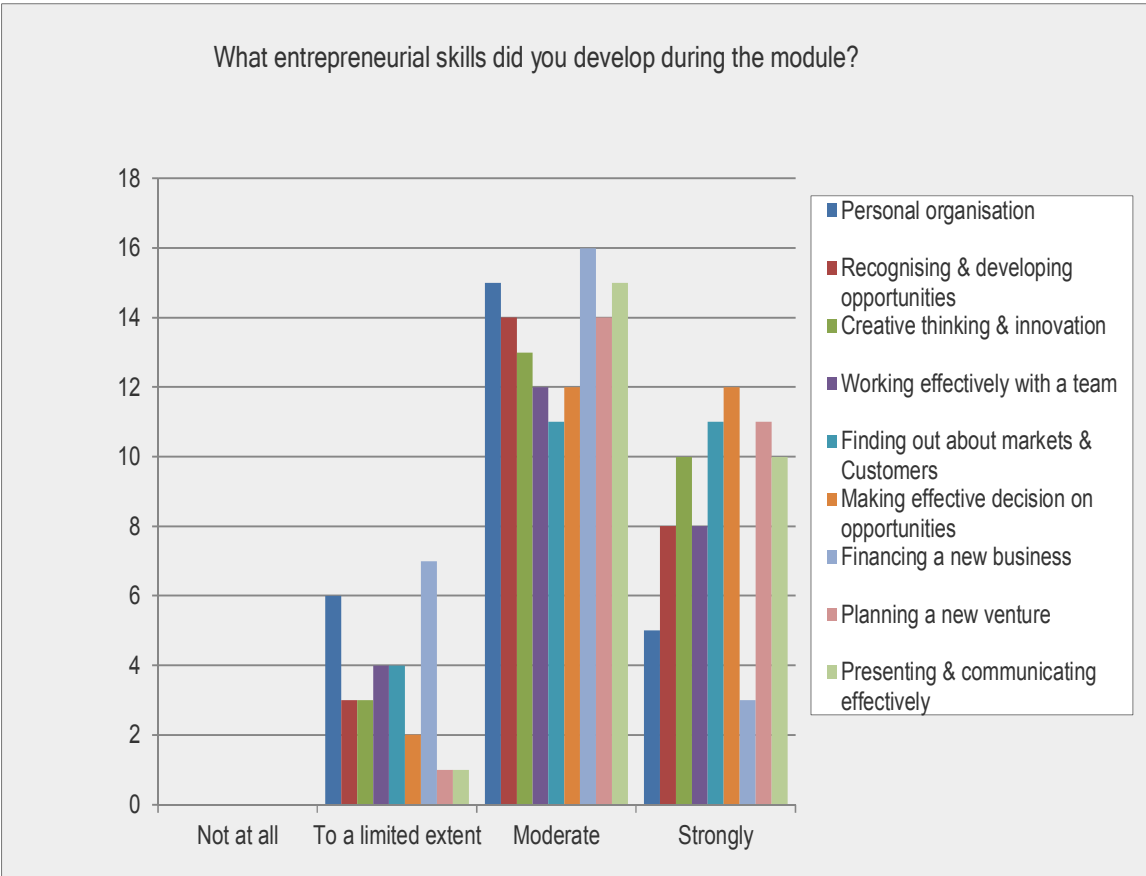


Figure 4: What entrepreneurial skills did you develop during the module?

4. Entrepreneurial effectiveness

Entrepreneurial effectiveness involves the development of self-directed learning and individual career and life goals. Respondents were asked to evaluate their confidence regarding their entrepreneurial careers as a result of the module, their future career options and whether the module met their expectations. Responses indicate that pursuing personal and career goals as well as generating new career options were moderately rated (65.4 per cent and 69.2 per cent).

Respondents were also asked to comment on whether the module met their expectations, with 61.5 per cent agreeing that the module had fully met what they had hoped. In terms of career options subsequent to the module, respondents were in agreement that the three most likely career options relevant to their goals following the module were: to start my own business within 2 years of graduation (42.3 per cent); to work in a corporate organisation (44 per cent); and to work in a family business (44 per cent).

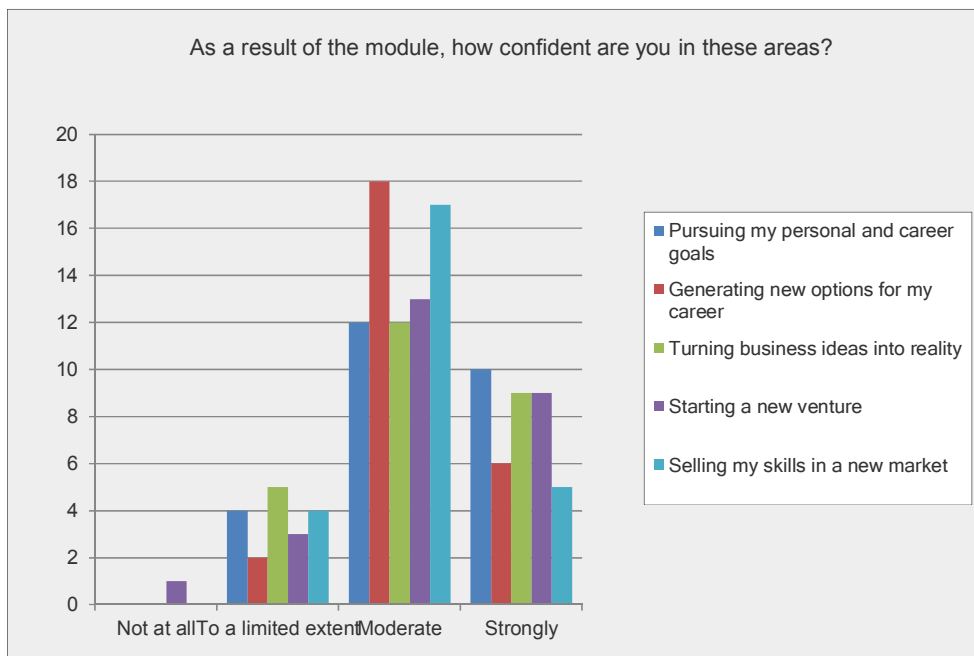


Figure 5: As a result of the module, how confident are you in these areas?

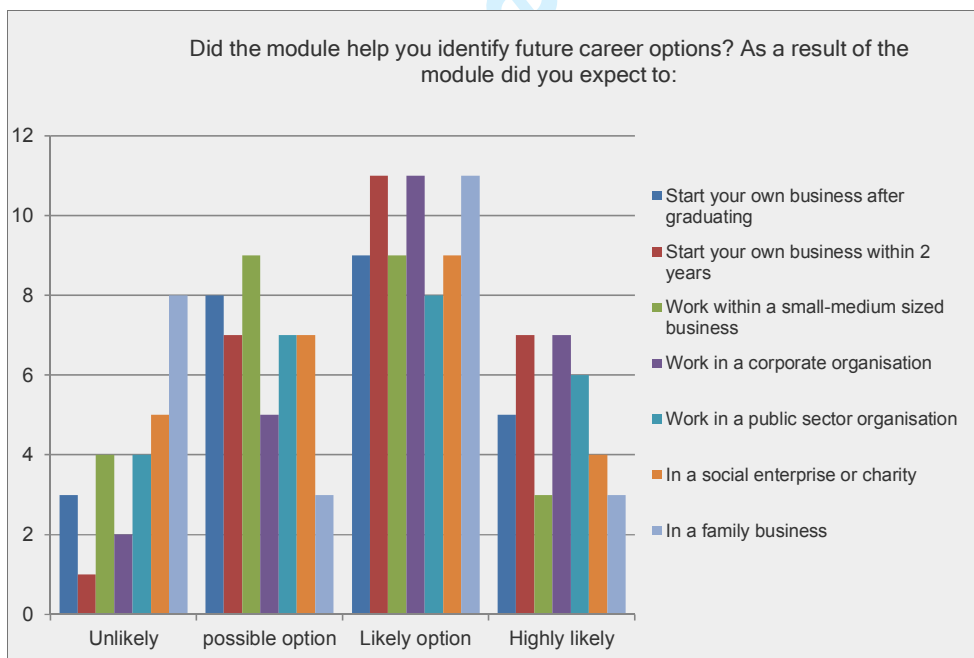


Figure 6: Did the module help you identify future career options?

Overall, these survey results confirm fairly high levels of career intentionality and focus from those responding. Accepting that the response rate was just under 50% and that the survey was completed at the end of the module with no earlier test or survey to assess the 'value added' by the course, the results indicate that learners had developed in confidence, ambition and generated increased career options and strategies through the module.

The critical reflection assignments completed by the learners were analysed by both researchers using the same discursive categories as the survey, covering their aims for PG study; expectations; enterprise awareness; entrepreneurial capabilities, mindset and effectiveness; and future career intentions. The results were compared and a number of meta-themes emerged from analysis where groups of learners commented on the same issue. These seven meta-themes were:

- Awareness of enterprise in their own country
- Opportunity focus
- Creative thinking
- Market & customer awareness
- Venture planning
- Intention to start own business within two years
- Confidence in setting and pursuing career goals.

These are explained and extracts are included below.

1. Awareness of enterprise in their own country

Learners were encouraged to reflect on their personal learning journeys including prior learning before coming to Lincoln and to develop a forward career plan. A number of learners related this quite deeply to their understanding of the context in their own country, mainly but not exclusively China.

'China has about 200 million luxury consumers or potential consumers and is the most promising luxury consumption market in future. This means I have a large amount of potential customers, and the size of the market is increasing in the future.'

'I believe I can apply this knowledge in the future when I start a business of my own, contributing to my home country's economy. Nigeria is among the third world countries, where individuals as well as the government need to contribute to the economy for the progress of the country.'

2. Opportunity focus

The module was based on the Opportunity-centred entrepreneurship approach (Rae, 2007). Given this emphasis it is not surprising that learners had absorbed and reflected on how they could identify or create and develop future opportunities for business and career.

'By relating opportunity to personal goals, and drawing from the ever changing social context, I have established two distinctive business models, a car sharing enterprise and 'idea firm'. At the same time, further and more in-depth market research are needed in order to turn ideas into reality.'

'The course has been very beneficial when it comes to helping me develop ideas, create opportunities and make them happen and that is why I have been able to develop my career using the module learning outcomes.'

3. Creative thinking

Learners reflected on the applications they were able to make of creative thinking

'The long development of a business cannot be without innovation. Each product all has its life cycle, cuisine is also. Customers' demand and market is changing time to time, innovation could always stimulate customer's interesting and enhance their loyalty.'

'Previously before attending the program, I was uncertain about my future career, but with the help of the course made me think creatively and innovatively based on entrepreneurship knowledge.'

4. Market & customer awareness

A number of learners recognised the application of market research, segmentation and marketing concepts to their own career and business development.

'I also learned the effectiveness and importance of networking, self marketing and learning from experience as a tool to properly exploit opportunities. Networking includes selling, marketing and managing human relationship, which I think are very important.'

'In this module, I learned that market research can help a business target their consumer segments.'

'I believe a business will succeed through networking and researching an opportunity and its market.'

5. Venture planning

The module included assessed work on developing a business proposal (a mini-business plan) with new venture planning as a key process, so it was not surprising that students related this as a learning outcome, but they also showed an awareness of how to use planning more generally in developing their careers.

'The first thing that I have learned is how to plan for the business before I start up the business in the real situation. Planning help me to know and understand myself, and what I have to do when I start up the business.'

'No matter what kind of job I will do in my future career, it is essential skill to write plans, such as marketing plan, financial plan or venture proposal. Venture plan will put my opportunity into practice.'

'I got a better understanding of market researching, business planning and organizing. I also learned approaches in business such as creative thinking, business models and strategies which play a significant role in running a business.'

6. Intention to start their own business within two years

Learners commented on a range of possible career options but the one most often cited was to start their own business. A significant number of learners had aspirations and others had concrete intentions to start their own business within the context of their career goals. Perhaps coincidentally, hospitality businesses including Japanese or Mexican themed restaurants, health cafes and a resort hotel were popular options.

'On completion of my studies, I intend to take a break to be with my family. During this break, I will continue to carry out market research and evaluate the opportunities available to me. I will use this time to develop my website, consolidate with my suppliers which will be mainly from the UK as well as work out the logistics of how I will get my supplies. I am looking at starting my business in the first quarter of 2014.'

'I hope to have my own business, because it not only can resolve my own employment problem and satisfy my own interest, but also can provide job opportunity to other people.'

'I prepare to start my first restaurant in Beijing China because that is my hometown and the target customer seems more than other cities. Then open several branches in the capital cities of each province in China. Finally put my restaurant around the world.'

'My vision for the future is seeing my clothing brand on the top 10 most successful online business list in my Country. My career goal is to be listed among the top female entrepreneurs in my Country, Nigeria.'

Where learners highlighted other career options, there was in most cases an indication that they recognised how to transfer learning from the module into an existing small or family businesses such as this:

'I would like to expand my family business. My family business is rice mill. It started up as a small business and expanded product lines. It is stable now but the system does not look professional anymore. My parents do not have enough knowledge to improve the business because they can not adapt their lifestyle.'

'My former boss promised that I will get promoted after I finished the postgraduate degree. My working experiences told me that I need more professional knowledge to keep my career smooth and stand at a better start line.'

'I came to UK to finish an undergraduate degree and do a postgraduate degree because I want to join the international project as a director in CNPC (China national petroleum corporation).'

7. Confidence in setting and pursuing career goals.

Some respondents were quite general and vague in describing career aspirations, whilst others were much more clearly focused. The more focused descriptions of career aspirations included their reasons for PG study in the UK and for selecting entrepreneurship:

'My educational background aroused my interests in entrepreneurship management, and hence I wish to take up business management jobs which focused on market research and business planning.'

'I chose the entrepreneurship as one of the main courses because I consider developing my own business in the future, and the new knowledge of this course will bring me more creative ideas.'

They also related the development of confidence and belief in their ability to attain their goals during the module.

'I believe I was born with some of the listed traits and as I search for a career path in the future, I can develop more skills that will help me be innovative. I believe being innovative is an important characteristic that defines an entrepreneur and a successful individual.'

'I gained more confidence to my dream venture after study entrepreneurship, because my personal capability has been developed.'

'I want to achieve my goals because they stand as a reward for time and money spent on receiving education. My goals also serve as accomplishments, which I think is another personal definition for success. My value to others and myself are based on honesty, trust and commitment. I believe these are core values that will enable me be a better person and an entrepreneur.'

Learners also wrote about the strategies and intermediate steps they would take to gain experience in working towards their goals.

These narrative extracts are included to demonstrate the capacity for reflective thought and self-awareness which many learners showed in writing about their learning and future career plans. The narratives revealed a wide range of levels of ability, including the ability to understand and respond to the brief; and fluency in written English. Although beyond their level of fluency, some career aspirations remained very general and vague, even at the margins of fantasy, whilst others were much more clearly defined. However in reading and analysing the material, there seemed to be a relationship between the learners' self-awareness of their own motivations and abilities (which we might characterise as entrepreneurial mindset), and their orientation towards career options. This is expressed in figure 2 below.

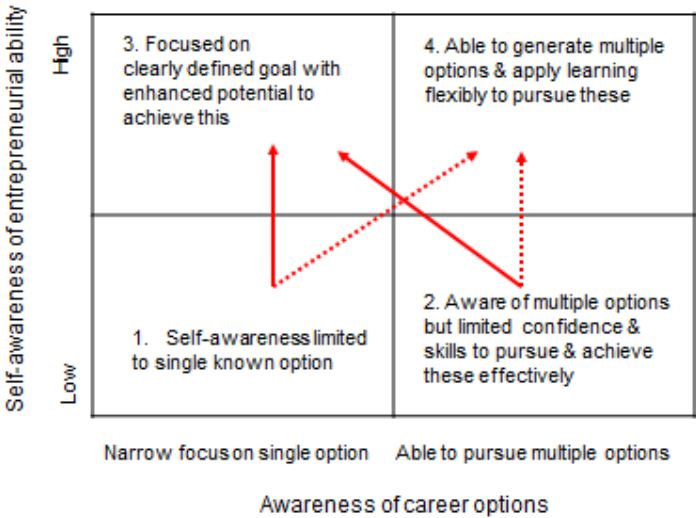


Figure 7: Graduate entrepreneurial career learning

Career learning and development is an important facet of PG education. It is quite common for students to have a starting point in either of the positions of low self-awareness, and as a result to have just one goal they think they can achieve (1), or to be aware of a range of quite general possibilities but without the ability to work through, focus and pursue these (2). By gaining self-awareness of their entrepreneurial ability, in terms of mindset and capabilities, their effectiveness to enhance their career decision-making can be enhanced. This can lead either to a more effective focus on achieving a clearly defined goal (3), which they can describe a strategy for attaining, or an awareness of multiple options and the ability to work contingently or opportunistically towards these (4).

As self-awareness increases, learners may either gain a sense that they have multiple career options, reducing the dependence on a single route, or alternatively they may become focused and determined to pursue a single option. Most of those in this study whose reflection suggests they have gained a more advanced level of self-awareness were focussed on achieving a single outcome, mainly starting their own

business venture. Others showed an awareness of multiple possibilities. We would not suggest either course of action being better than the other. However enhanced awareness can lead to an ability to generate multiple career options. But the main issue is that students whose reflective writing reveals that they are less reflective and self-aware tend also to be less able to relate their preferred career outcomes with confidence and a sense of their efficacy to attain them. In a previous study we explored the notion of 'emotional confidence' as a factor which influences graduates' ability to translate entrepreneurial aspirations into practice on completion of their studies and again this appears to be a relevant factor (Rae & Woodier, 2006).

Statements from learners' narratives illustrate these four positions:

1. *'After my education, my goal is to secure a job that will be the start of my career preferably in management.'*
2. *'As the costs to start a self-employed career may be very high, the second options for me will be finding a management relevant jobs in a company, but the employment conditions for newly graduated students are generally bleak, so I think it might be better to come back to China to find a job since it will reduce some living expenses.'*
3. *'In order to achieve my final goal of running my own restaurant, I need to complete some objectives. Firstly, I will find a job in a fast food restaurant in Beijing for one or two years to learn how they operate their business and to collect some start-up capital. Then I will put my idea on the well known Chinese forum to find one or two partners, because I may not have enough money to do that, and it may be a way to decline risks.'*
4. *'The opportunity of an art gallery is my long-term goal and a fall back plan for my future. I made the decision to be a business owner shortly after studying art history and I intend on gaining professional experience in business field before being self-employed.'*

Possible career learning pathways are shown as arrows in the diagram. From position 1, gaining enhanced self-awareness of entrepreneurial capability can assist in self-confidence and the ability to envisage multiple career options, which may be a useful step before focusing on a chosen option which may differ from the starting point. From position 2, the learner can explore their abilities and motivations to recognise a better fit between these and a single option rather than pursuing all of them. In either case, realising that entrepreneurial ability is transferable in generating and selecting multiple career and business options is vital.

'Previously before attending the program, I was uncertain about my future career, but with the help of the course made me think creatively and innovatively based on entrepreneurship knowledge.'

Findings: issues and challenges

This small study reinforces the connection between entrepreneurship education as personal development and the enhancement of career learning. It is significant that the postgraduate programmes on which the entrepreneurship module was an elective did not include any core modules on personal or career development; all other modules focussed on cognate business and management subjects. This is, to quote a Tom Jones song, 'not unusual' but it does not fit well with the reasons that students give for coming to the UK to advance their careers. A direct consequence of conducting this research was the decision to include a core module on 'Personal learning and career development' at the foundation stage of revalidated Masters programmes for international students at Lincoln to address this need.

There has been extensive innovation and development in the employability-entrepreneurship nexus in the UK in recent years. However there is a continuing concern that this has tended to concentrate mainly on UK and undergraduate students. Postgraduate, and especially international students, tend to be less well connected with enterprise and career development support; the University in question is no exception to this. Yet it is increasingly clear that career progression is a major reason for study and in the highly competitive international HE market, universities which provide this will be more attractive. Indeed we suggest that entrepreneurial career development will become one of the main drivers in Postgraduate education. The continuing activities of the UK coalition government to discourage international students are also an important factor in this; following the restrictions on student work visas in 2012, it was reported that applicants from six 'high risk' Asian and African countries (including India, but not China) will be required to provide a bond of £3000, returnable when they leave the UK on time (Matthews, 2013). With more than 75,000 fewer student visas being issued in the year to June 2012 than in the previous 12 months, a drop of 21%, these figures are alarming for the higher education sector and education industry as a whole (BBC, 2012). International students have contributed a great deal to the growth of postgraduate education. They make up over a quarter of all postgraduate numbers and in certain subject areas they are more than half of the cohort, which carries risks if the international market declines (Williamson et al, 2013).

In this research, it has been rewarding to experience the growth and development of learners' self-awareness, entrepreneurial abilities, and understanding of their options to apply these in their future careers through their writing. Some students did not know what to expect from an entrepreneurship programme, whilst for others it was a reason for study in itself. Almost all students re-enter a highly competitive and uncertain job market on return to their own countries and have often taken significant career risks by investing in studying in the UK, which we need to appreciate is in itself an entrepreneurial act. The development of a career narrative as an integral aspect of the critical and reflective learning process is often an unfamiliar and challenging task for students accustomed to reproducing extant knowledge rather than generating personal insights. Some do not succeed or try to avoid the task by reproducing 'boilerplate' textbook theories of entrepreneurship. But for most it is a productive and generative process and one which accords with the learning outcomes and level indicators for Postgraduate study in management (QAA).

There is often a rather limited view in UK academia that Chinese students struggle with independent learning and with self-expression, and in some cases this is justified. However this study, and the educational practice and experience which underpins it, demonstrates that the majority of students are able to learn and develop critical self-awareness of their personal learning and their ability to apply this in entrepreneurial ways; and can do so in a second language. These students are entirely typical of the large population of such students in Business Schools who have gained a first degree in their own country, an IELTS score of 6, and limited work experience. They can achieve more than some academics may believe.

The role of the tutor in creating and providing a learning experience which enables entrepreneurial and personal career development is important. We have found that the tutor needs to engage closely and frequently with the students, for example by having dialogue with every student each week, preferably in person. This is demanding both in time and emotionally where there are large groups such as the 60 students (in 3 tutorial groups) who were supported by one of the researchers in this study. However the individual attention, guidance and feedback this interaction provides is both welcomed and necessary for many students.

Just as there is a lively critique of the utility of business plans in EEE, so the efficacy of career plans may be open to question. We do not yet know much about how these learners will operationalise their plans or what career outcomes they will achieve after graduating. Follow-up research of this kind could be valuable in establishing more knowledge of the impact and usefulness of entrepreneurship education for international students.

Conclusions

This study continues the exploration of the human story of entrepreneurial and personal learning and development which the researchers have engaged in, individually and collaboratively, for some years. In this period there has generally been a sense that writing on entrepreneurial learning and education has attracted more interest (and certainly more citations) than a focus on personal and career development. Our view is that these two strands are inseparable. Moreover, the volatile state of the world economy and the environments in which students have to make their lives, businesses and careers means that they have never been more important or relevant.

However, the UK Government has created an environment where international students are less welcome to study in the UK. Figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) from January 2013, show that the number of Indians studying in the UK has fallen by some 24% from the previous academic year, partly because of the limitations on gaining work experience. The classification of India and other countries as 'high risk' will accentuate this and the unhealthy dependence on the Chinese market, where numbers have risen by almost 20% in the same period.

Our previous work and extensive student contact confirms career development is a major motivator for international study in the UK (Rae & Woodier-Harris, 2012). As both employment and self-employment restrictions narrow their available career options in the UK, how will this affect student expectations for entrepreneurship? There are limited opportunities for international graduates to start businesses in the UK, with 2000 'Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur' places being permitted by the UK, but surrounded by restrictions on qualifications, criteria and self-funding, the bureaucratic language seemingly designed to deter applicants (UKBA, 2013). There is a real tension between the UK Government's positive rhetoric on rebuilding the economy through entrepreneurship and business growth, and its xenophobia towards international graduates educated in the UK who can demonstrate entrepreneurial potential. Given this contradiction, our view as educators is that programmes on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial careers must encourage and prepare international students to develop their aspirations in international markets, including their own countries, rather than the UK.

At the time of writing, social unrest and economic turmoil were evident in many countries, including Brazil, Turkey, Egypt and China, where there are serious questions about the sustainability of bank lending, credit and economic growth. An economic slowdown or even a banking crash, in China may seem unlikely, but either event would pose serious consequences for the world economy and the reliance of the UK University sector on this market. In this way, the global context of the new era for entrepreneurship continues to be one of rapid and unpredictable change, complexity and risk. Educators and learners have to be able to connect the implications arising from this wider context with the specific activities of learning and developing entrepreneurial possibilities and projects. The appetite and demand for internationally oriented entrepreneurship education continues to grow; it is not a solution, but it can help people adapt and improve their lives and prospects. Since 2008, we have learned it is best not to be startled in the face of what may seem to be alarming events, but rather to expect the unexpected, to recognise the latent opportunities they bring, and to thrive optimistically.

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Variable	Sub-variable	2011 numbers	%	2012 numbers	%	2013 numbers	%
Age	22 years or less	7	20.6	15	27.8	1	3.6
	23 - 25	20	58.8	32	59.3	25	89.3
	26 - 30	4	11.8	6	11.1	0	0
	30 - 34	3	8.8	1	1.9	2	7.1
	35 or more	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gender	Male	20	60.6	34	63	19	67.9
	Female	13	39.4	20	37	9	32.1
Nationality	United Kingdom	5	14.7	3	5.6	0	0
	China	14	41.2	34	63	21	75
	India	4	11.8	14	25.9	2	7.1
	Another country	11	32.4	3	5.6	5	17.9
Prior education	Business	13	38.2	18	33.3	11	39.3
	Management	10	29.4	11	20.4	6	21.4
	Marketing	2	5.9	1	1.9	2	7.1
	Finance	0	0	6	11.1	0	0
	Human Resources	2	5.9	2	3.7	0	0
	Information Technology	1	2.9	2	3.7	3	10.7
	Another subject	6	17.6	14	25.9	6	21.4
Years of work experience	None	0	0	0	0	10	35.7
	Less than 1 year	24	70.6	37	68.5	14	50
	1 - 2 years	7	20.6	11	20.4	2	7.1
	2 - 3 years	1	2.9	3	5.6	0	0
	3 - 5 years	0	0	0	0	1	3.6
	More than 5 years	2	5.9	3	5.6	1	3.6

Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents