

Work Based Learning, Enterprise Education and Small Family Businesses

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Topic

The world of education and work are adapting to the ever-changing political, economic and policy landscape as evidenced by approaches to enterprise education and work based learning. Work based learning often focuses on the development of employability skills of learners (e.g. Costley and Armsby, 2007) whereas the focus of enterprise education is often placed on developing skills, attributes and behaviours to encourage entrepreneurship and to help people cope with the uncertainties associated with the flexible market 'gig' economy (e.g. Gibb, 1993). This paper compares and contrasts these two educational concepts and in so doing looks at where they overlap and what one might learn from the other (Jones and Iredale, 2014). The paper draws on the literature to build theory and assesses the blending of the two concepts via case study analysis founded upon two Erasmus+ programme projects that tackle succession planning in small family businesses.

This paper addresses issues around succession planning in small family businesses and the design of a higher education curriculum that brings together Work Based Learning (WBL) and Enterprise Education. The blending of the two concepts is justified in that WBL is embedded in the structures, processes, practices and cultures of small family businesses. In such environments learning is largely informal, is passed on and acquired as part of everyday activity. At the point of succession there is a need to adopt an Enterprise Education approach to help re-think the original entrepreneurial skills, attributes and behaviours of the business founder for a new generation, changing environment and set of business circumstances.

Aim

Our premise is that WBL largely aspires to enhance skills and knowledge that will improve employability whilst enterprise education seeks to develop skills, attributes and behaviours which can be used, among other things, for entrepreneurship. In theory and in practice they share a degree of similarity of purpose as they both engage with the ideal of a curriculum that is work related.

This paper helps to better understand the rationale and purpose of WBL and Enterprise Education and how they inform and shape the other. It explores the boundary between WBL and enterprise education, comparing and contrasting the two concepts, identifying synergies and considering implications for theory and practice. It explores questions related to complementarities and differences associated with for example, learning context; theoretical underpinnings; educational content; pedagogical approach; place of learning; assessment of learning outcomes and measurement of impact.

Methodology

A review of the literature related to WBL and Enterprise Education was conducted to inform the comparative approach to research by drawing out points of similarity and difference between the two educational ideals. This helps guide subsequent analysis. A single, in depth case study is introduced to illustrate by way of example points and issues raised from the preceding discussion of the literature. The case study provides an opportunity to use multiple methods and to triangulate and validate the data and analysis. Two European projects seeking to develop Masters level curriculum to support succession planning in small businesses provide the foundation of the case study. The INSIST project (2014-2016) involved three university partners, two business intermediary organisations and two small enterprises in the development of four modules to support succession planning family businesses. The FAME project (2016-2018) aims to develop four further modules to support the sustainability of small family businesses that incorporate elements of WBL. The case study is informed by a review of multiple data sources including field notes, minutes of project meetings, interim and final project reports.

The paper concludes by detailing ways in which greater awareness and understanding of how the two concepts might better work together to deliver policy goals, as well as an enriched 'fit for purpose' curriculum.

Contribution

The paper makes contributions to theory and practice through the detailed analysis of the connections between WBL and Enterprise Education and the unique learning context (succession planning in small family businesses). The paper provides new theoretical and analytical insights to the potential synergies between WBL and enterprise education to inform curriculum design and a case study to test out these ideas using a practical example (the Erasmus projects). It is our contention that bringing WBL and Enterprise Education together the concepts will bring new synergies, efficiencies, and benefit a range of stakeholders - educators, learners, employers, employees, and among others entrepreneurs.

Introduction

The world of education and work are adapting to the ever-changing political, economic and policy landscape as evidenced by approaches to enterprise education and work based learning. This paper adopts a comparative approach (Jones and Iredale, 2014) and compares and contrasts these two educational concepts and illustrates their utility via a case study analysis of two Erasmus+ projects that addresses succession planning in small family businesses. It addresses issues around succession planning in small family businesses and the design of a curriculum that brings together work based learning and enterprise education. The fusion of the two concepts is justified in that work based learning is embedded in the structures, processes, practices and cultures of small family businesses. In such environments learning is "informal", is passed on and acquired. We suggest that as part of the process of succession there is a need to adopt an enterprise education approach to help re-think the original entrepreneurial skills, attributes and behaviours (Gibb, 1993) of the business founder for a new generation, changing environment and set of small family business circumstances.

The two concepts are brought together and are explored through a case study analysis of two Erasmus+ projects tasked with addressing succession planning in small family businesses. The context for the case study is set by opening with a discussion of the comparative approach which helps shape a review of the literature around enterprise education and work based learning. The literature review, informed as it is by the comparative approach to research, draws out points of similarity and difference between the two educational ideals. A case study is then introduced to illustrate by way of example points and issues raised from the preceding discussion. The paper concludes by detailing ways in which greater awareness and understanding of how the two concepts might better work together to deliver policy goals, as well as an enriched 'fit for purpose' curriculum. Factors that inhibit and constrain improvements in work based learning with enterprise education are given due consideration and how such barriers might be addressed are outlined.

Context

Changes in the employment base and the structure of the UK and European economies have delivered new jobs requiring different skill sets and this is the context in which small family businesses operate. In the UK there has been, for a number of years, increased emphasis given to improving and increasing links between the world of work and education. Governments in the UK have sought to bring education and business closer and to make each more relevant to the other. In the higher education sector various enterprise initiatives have been introduced and the ideal of work based learning has been advanced. There have been a number of political, policy, employment and educational initiatives targeted at different phases of education. These initiatives have sought to deliver on multiple agendas. On the one hand they seek to address labour market inefficiencies by better equipping people with the knowledge, skills and abilities they will need to function in today's knowledge economy. New technology has brought with it the need for a technologically adept workforce able to meet the needs of technologically sophisticated customers and this is something to which small family businesses have had to adapt. At the same time, the insecure and uncertain nature of work born of the flexible labour market and today's "gig economy" presents another set of challenges for educationalists seeking to improve links with business. It is today generally accepted by politicians across the political spectrum as well as by employers and trade unions that encouraging education that is relevant to work brings positive gains for individuals as well as the wider society and economy. Higher education has an important role to play in bridging the many different transition points that now exist between education and work. Employability is very much on the higher education agenda and is one of the criteria for ranking in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

The context is also one of a changing Europe and Brexit Britain. Within this world of transformational change there is a need for continuity of policy and practice but also flexibility and innovation.

The British economy, employment structures and the workplace have changed considerably over the past 40 year and solutions to old and new problems are needed. Two such solutions that have been put forward are enterprise education and work based learning. They are tools for individuals to use that help them adjust to the changes that continue to take place in work and in its structure and organisation. Both enterprise education and work based learning shape and are shaped by the move towards a work related curriculum and by the close links that exist between education and business. These links continually need to be reinforced and delivered anew for different business and educational circumstances. Enterprise education and work based learning are part of the education business link narrative that is a recurring theme throughout this paper. Wilson's (2012) "Review of Business-University Collaboration" highlighted the importance of enterprise education as part of the UK higher education offer. The European Union has also promoted enterprise education (European Commission, 1996, 2002, 2006). Jones and Iredale (2010, p. 9) write, "*Increasingly employers are encouraged to deepen their links with schools, colleges and universities. They seek to promote more effective education-business collaboration and mutual understanding, by developing better two-way contacts that benefit both education and industry and involve employers more centrally in young people's education.*" The delivery of work based learning and enterprise education are key policy goals for both the UK Government and for the European Union (EU). The policies as well as the aims of these two concepts differ markedly in outcomes sought and achieved and yet there is, it is argued here, overlap.

The Comparative Approach

The comparative approach to research in the business, management and social sciences seeks to compare one thing with another over time (from one point to another), between places, and among different groups or market segments. The definitive problem of the comparative approach turns on the issue of what should be compared with what, and allied to this how and when this should be done. Informed by the work of Durkheim (1895) comparison has a rich history and remains relevant in the arsenal of research method tools used today.

This paper compares: 1] literature on work based learning with enterprise education; 2] the application of work based learning and enterprise education to two Erasmus+ projects addressing succession planning in small family businesses.

Like all research comparative research has a degree of "messiness" to it. It is rarely entirely clean and free of influence or bias be that intended or unintended. Comparing one unit of analysis for example work based learning with another such as enterprise education is not straightforward as much depends on how these concepts are defined, interpreted and operationalised. The purpose of the method is not only to compare but also to contrast views, opinions, data, and policy. The comparative approach, one of contrast and comparison is used to inform theory as well as policy and practice. Starting from different positions – literature (theory), policy, small family business practice – the comparative approach looks inwards and works outwards to build meaningful constructs and insights.

Cross national research and international projects with different country partners together drawing on and underpinned by two educational concepts – enterprise education and work based learning – are ideally suited to comparative analysis (Hantrais, 1996). Adopting a comparative approach to the analysis of projects and educational concepts allows for similarities and contrasts to be drawn. Literature around work based learning and enterprise education can be compared and contrasted. Within this subject area there are different types of comparison which can include curriculum, content, assessment, educational provider, over time, between and within countries and, among others, policy. A comparative approach to the analysis of problems, concepts, and issues can provide new insights by looking afresh at taken for granted assumptions and findings from a previously singular more narrowly focused approach to research. The similarities and differences between enterprise education and work based learning are explored through literature and in terms of their application to the projects on small family businesses. This approach provides fresh insight into old and sometimes seemingly intractable problems. Separating out issues for study allows for a more focused line of comparative enquiry from which meaningful results can be gleaned. The type of comparison

undertaken in part depends on the research objectives that are set. There is no one right way or thing to compare and much depends on the focus of the study, who has commissioned it and the overall purpose and remit. Comparison could be between different approaches to work based learning, competing definitions, or methods of assessment. Comparison could also involve the different groups (gender, ethnicity, age) participating in work based learning or enterprise education as part of the small family business projects and the resultant programme of study. Comparing enterprise education with work based learning is in effect an exercise of contrast in differences.

The potential of comparative analysis also serve as its limitations. Comparison is limited by the scope of what, how and why something is being compared. The limitation of the comparative method for this paper is that it is focused only on enterprise education and work based learning as part of two projects on small family businesses as a result of which bigger macro issues are not always afforded the due attention they might be given elsewhere via a different methodological framework of analysis. Comparative analysis requires comparison of things that are broadly alike and share similar traits and characteristics. Nevertheless, comparison can help shed light on processes and practices that might otherwise remain hidden. It helps open up new lines of enquiry from which new solutions have the potential to be found. The overall aim of the comparative approach applied to this paper is to create educational synergy as well as to realise meaningful and real value in terms of pedagogical practice and also educational outcomes.

Enterprise Education and Work Based Learning

The theoretical foundations for EE and WBL in HE can be traced back to the influential educational thinker John Dewey (1859-1952). His ideas sprang from a philosophy of pragmatism where a central tenet of education is its relevance to the lives of learners. For Dewey, learning is viewed as primarily an activity that arises from the personal experience of grappling with a problem. His view contrasted with the conventional view of learning at the time that was based on students receiving knowledge that was packaged by teachers, often in the form of textbooks and learnt largely by rote. This is echoed in the distinction between academic and practice based knowledge that has informed discussions and literature surrounding the nature of business schools and the tension between the requirement for discipline specific, robust, scientific approach to the production of knowledge and the requirement for practice based and relevant knowledge (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005; Thomas and Cornuel, 2012; Mingers, 2015).

Learning theories are embedded explicitly or implicitly in all curricula, but how these theories are applied depends on the larger social, cultural, economic and political contexts within which HE is situated. These broader contexts privilege some theories at the expense of others, determining what knowledge, which methods of instruction, assessments and learning objectives will dominate (Devins et al. 2015). Traditional perspectives view education as a means to ensure that knowledge, skills and values are transmitted from academy to the student body. Through this lens, learning focuses on the content of the curriculum that the student must master and the educators function is to design the learning environment and pedagogy to enforce correct behaviour (Fink, 2003; Van Gyn and Grove-White, 2004). However, the limitations of this approach, particularly in terms of the development of 'soft skills' and practical knowledge underpinning employability and enterprise have been well documented. As a consequence alternative learning theories that pursue a focus on problem solving activities and the development of cognitive skills to support further knowledge acquisition and active learning have been introduced (Garrison and Archer, 2000; Fink, 2003). These often lie at the heart of EE and WBL curriculum in HE. Through this lens, the educator is responsible for structuring a learning environment and facilitating active and collaborative learning with others rather than transferring codified academic knowledge. Teachers remain subject experts but also facilitate problem-solving by their learners who are expected to think in a work context where ambiguities and dilemmas provide a rich and dynamic learning environment (Boud and Soloman 2001).

Whilst both work based learning and enterprise education are contested concepts there is a need to provide a summary definition of the terms in order to demarcate the two and thus shape understanding of them in real world practice. Work based learning focuses on the development of employability whereas the focus of enterprise education is on developing an array of skills, attributes and behaviours (Gibb, 1993) some of which can be used for entrepreneurship. When considering how these learning theories relate to EE and WBL in HE it would be useful to have an agreed definition to

underpin discussions associated with delivery, assessment and impact. However, both EE and WBL prove to be elusive concepts with a wide range of terms used to describe them (e.g. Costley and Dikerdem, 2011). For EE, the most frequently used alternative term is entrepreneurship education and other terms associated with the concept include learning by doing, action learning, and among others kinaesthetic learning. It is important to note that EE is focused on the development of a range of skills, attributes and behaviours that can be used in a range of contexts including as an employee in small, medium and large businesses. Entrepreneurship education is much more focused on business start up and the new venture creation process. There is inevitably some crossover between EE and entrepreneurship education (for a fuller discussion please see Jones and Iredale, 2014). For WBL, terms include cooperative education, work-integrated learning, workplace learning, work-related learning, vocational learning, flexible learning, experiential learning, situated learning, competence-based learning, problem-based learning, problem solving and many more (Devins et al. 2015). Each term embraces a range of variations and subtleties the explanation of which are beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, the terms capture the rich landscape of EE and WBL whilst they also lead to some confusion associated with what they mean in certain contexts. This influences the forms that EE and WBL should take to achieve their learning outcomes. Costley and Dikerdem (2011) use a typology outlining three WBL learning perspectives to discuss pedagogical inflections and differences in the delivery of WBL programmes. The typology includes first, discipline centred programmes delivered as part of a subject-based approach to be found in areas such as health, engineering and education. Second a learner-centred approach where the programme is not specifically located in an academic discipline but which uses the workplace as the principal context for learning as a value for life experience. Third an employer-centred approach where disciplinary knowledge is combined with more business-oriented approaches and an emphasis on capability based learning. Costley and Dikerdem's (2011) typology is relevant to the study of enterprise and entrepreneurship education. The enterprise education approach to teaching (i.e. the pedagogy) can be introduced to and applied across a number of subject areas (Jones and Iredale, 2010) and ties in with Costley and Dikerdem's (2011) subject-based approach. Their second learner-centred approach relates to enterprise and entrepreneurship education in as much as the process of starting a new venture is a given, if not the given, context for learning. Their third employer-centred approach can be related to the entrepreneurship education programmes that are in large part delivered in university business schools where the focus is on the new venture creation process and the requisite skills that are needed (Jones and Iredale, 2014).

Whilst recognising that there are many forms of EE and WBL, the concept of curriculum in HE has become broader in recent times, changing from a static document indicating the subject knowledge to be acquired at the completion of an academic year, towards a more dynamic framework embracing for example, occupational standards and defining learning outcomes, assessment, teaching and training methods (Psifidou, 2010). This provides a framework to consider the considerable differences between a traditional approach to university curriculum where the learner has a largely passive role as a recipient of knowledge provided by the academy to one where the learner has a more active, participative and context sensitive learning experience. Several of the differences between traditional and EE and WBL curriculum are summarised in Table 1 which provides an insight into some further implications for pedagogy and curriculum in HE.

Table 1. Differences between traditional and EE/ WBL Curriculum

	Traditional	EE	WBL
Policy drivers and intended outcomes	Preparing individuals for productive contribution to society	Preparing people to start-up or work for Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Improved levels of self-employment, entrepreneurship and enterprise. The "enterprising person" – better able to cope with and enjoy the uncertainty and insecurity of the flexible market and gig economy.	Preparing individuals for the world of work. Improved levels of graduate employment and a higher skilled and qualified workforce

Pedagogical approach:	Learning by rote; face to face; academic – student: theory and disciplinary focus	Learning through enterprise; learning by doing; simulated environment; academic - student: multiple disciplinary practical emphasis	Learning through experience; mentor-student; multi-disciplinary, practical and reflective emphasis
Place of learning:	University campus	Campus and off-campus	Off campus
Nature of curriculum	Significant theoretical and conceptual elements determined by HE	Curriculum informed and shaped by an understanding of the world of the entrepreneur and small business owner	Significant practice based elements determined by employer/learner
Teaching staff	Mainly full and part-time academic staff	Mixture of university academics, small business owners, entrepreneurs and business advisors	Mixture of university academics, employer trainers and third party tutors
Teaching materials	Developed and owned by the university	Developed by university with input by entrepreneurs, small business owners and business advisors	Often shared between university and employers
Learner support	Primarily university	University, business advisors, and the small business community	University and employer
Assessment	Primarily academic knowledge assessed by university	Mix of academic theory and practice. Jointly assessed by small businesses, student/entrepreneur, university and business advisors	Mix of academic and practice knowledge Jointly assessed with employer/student/university

Adapted from Carswell et al. (2010)

How might work based learning be used to develop enterprise and entrepreneurship? And of course, how might enterprise education add value to work based learning? The two concepts are not mutually exclusive and both have been subject to much academic (Costley and Armsby, 2007; Jones and Iredale, 2010; 2014) and policy (EC, 2006 and 2012; OECD, 1989, 2000, 2007, and 2014) debate. At their core both concepts seek to develop stronger links between the worlds of education and work. However, their focus and the means by which they seek to do this differ in emphasis. Enterprise education and work based learning are in part policy panaceas designed to address the perennial problem of the transition from education to work. Both policy initiatives seek to do similar but slightly different things and the concerns they seek to address have a shared heritage. Work based learning sits comfortably within the employability agenda that universities are tasked to address. Enterprise education best sits within the enterprise and entrepreneurship agenda to which universities are expected to contribute. Both enterprise education and work based learning share similar traits and characteristics although there are also differences.

Work based learning and enterprise education seeks to empower learners and thereby drive change from the bottom and does not seek to impose knowledge or impinge learning. Learning, knowledge and skills are generated through the process of engagement, doing and reflection. Work based learning and enterprise education does not make traditional forms of class based teaching redundant as each is necessary to the other to maximise opportunities for reflective active learners. Learning through, from and about work and especially small family businesses are key features of both educational concepts, as discussed. Learning from peers, copying and adapting and improving all feature in enterprise education and work based learning.

Enterprise education and work based learning are subject to much debate around their meaning, nature and purposes. Enterprise education and work based learning contribute to a process of culture change in higher education teaching, learning and assessment. They help bring the world of work into

education and also take education out into the work environs. The teacher/educator and student experience is qualitatively changed by teaching, learning and assessment through enterprise and work based learning. Recognition of prior learning, learning by doing and from experience, and being able to operate as an independent learner are key features of both concepts. Taking the initiative and being an active and participative learner in a work, business and educational context are key attributes to be realised through work based and enterprise learning.

The focus of entrepreneurship education is on business start-up and the new venture creation process and this is often done through the creation of a business plan. In contrast, enterprise education in a university context is primarily geared to help future graduates navigate careers as employees which is at some point likely to be for small medium sized enterprises including small family businesses, or as a self-employed person. The focus here is on the development of a range of skills, attributes and behaviours (Gibb, 1993) often using the simulated start-up of a new venture as a vehicle for learning. Flexible learning that incorporates, accounts for, and does justice to work lessons learned empowers individuals. It can help people adapt to and cope with the uncertainties and insecurities that come with the “gig economy” and the flexible labour market. As part of the drive towards creating and maintaining an enterprise culture (Gibb, 1993) government has had a role to play in providing funding for and championing enterprise in higher education – see for example the work of the National Centre for Entrepreneurship Education (NCEE) <http://ncee.org.uk/>. The approach of enterprise education to enablement and empowerment serve to equip students and future proof them for a more challenging and complex world in which the only certainty is uncertainty (Bauman, 2007). Helping people to cope with this new employment landscape so that they can work with it and take some degree of ownership of their futures is delivered by the development of a range of skills, attributes and behaviours (Gibb, 1993 and 2002).

We suggest that work based learning and enterprise education helps to:

- Give teaching and learning “real world” relevance
- Better motivate students and especially those who might otherwise become disengaged from learning
- Shape and inform views, opinions and knowledge of competing and different educational and workplace needs
- Overcome barriers that might otherwise cause misunderstanding between education and work
- Create new opportunities and openings that are work based or enterprise related
- Enrich and add variety to the curriculum as well as the accompanying pedagogy
- Broaden types of assessment to make them more work relevant and educationally robust and valid
- Provide opportunities to do things differently in work, entrepreneurship and education
- Further involve a) students in their own learning and assessment, b) employers in teaching, learning and assessments

Work based learning and enterprise education interventions have to be planned, delivered and evaluated to ensure they are fit for purpose and meeting the needs of relevant stakeholders. Employers and entrepreneurs have important roles to play in course design, delivery and assessment. Their involvement and the interventions that result are seen to be forces for good though their true and full impact is not always easy to assess and measure. Enterprise education particularly seeks to address the needs of and to prepare students for work in small medium sized enterprises including small family businesses. Work based learning and enterprise education give credence to the workings of a market economy and the associated freedoms that come with this (Friedman, 1962). Work based learning gives “real-world” context and content, as well as credence and credibility to both learning and work. Enterprise education helps create a “simulated world” in which calculated risk taking, networking, time management, creativity and, among other things, ideas can be tried and trialled in relative safety. Enterprise education is about learning that can be applied to a “real-world” context whereas work based learning is rooted in learning about and from that context. Both have positives in that they help learners recognise that what they do and seek to do operates within a bigger stakeholder network and broader context.

Erasmus+ Insist and FAME

The Erasmus+ Insist and FAME projects were tasked to address succession planning in family owned small businesses. They offer educational solutions to a market failure in succession planning of small family businesses in the UK as well as across Europe and beyond. The academic, research, policy and practitioner communities have done much good work in the fields of entrepreneurship, business start-up and business growth. However, there has been less work done on the issue of succession planning especially in family owned small businesses. Succession planning can bring business rewards in terms of lower rates of business failure. Irene Mandl's (2008) 'Overview of Family Business Relevant Issues' Final Report for the European Commission, Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General identified a number of challenges for family businesses in Europe and proposed a number of policy recommendations. Mandl (2008, p.4) identified one such challenge as being:

"Lack of family firms' awareness of the importance of timely planning for intergenerational business transfer - - - resulting in ill-prepared successions endangering the firms' survival."

Two policy recommendations were put forward by Mandl (2008, p.4):

"Establish/continue awareness raising measures of the importance of planning business transfers as well as the provision of practical planning tools. Establish training for entrepreneurs and successors to prepare them to cope with the challenges of the transfer process."

It is against the background of the Mandl (2008) report that the need for the Erasmus+ Insist and FAME projects arose. The projects objectives are to develop a more work relevant higher education curriculum tailored to the needs of small family businesses. Both Insist and FAME projects use education to support as well as to further understanding of small family businesses and to recognise the integral role they play in a free society (Hayek, 1944 and 1960) and a dynamic wealth creating market economy (Friedman, 1955 and 1962). Education business links together with the ideal of a work related curriculum shape and inform the concepts of work based learning and enterprise education. Through the Erasmus+ projects these concepts help deliver a more vibrant, sustainable small family business future. They inform and are informed by real world small family business practice. The projects empower small family businesses and give them a voice in higher education and thus allow their needs to be more appropriately catered to and met. The projects meaningfully engaged small family businesses in education and value added through their involvement in the co-creation process. The projects help endorse small family businesses as a valid choice of career and in doing so support, sustain and help extend the life of those businesses.

Curriculum development: Some insights from ongoing projects

To become relevant for small family businesses, HE curriculum will need to take into account issues such as the situational nature of management practice in a heterogeneous business population, the qualitative differences between large and small firms, tensions between family and business interests and the growth orientation that clearly differentiates many firms of this type. This is by no means a straightforward task and is a far cry from traditional models of HE curriculum.

Two European projects are supporting the development of family business curriculum at Leeds Beckett University. The INSIST and FAME projects, funded under Erasmus+ have brought together a consortium of European partners to collaborate on curriculum design. The partners include Universities from Hungary and Poland; private sector consultants from France and Belgium and business representative organisations from Hungary, Poland and Croatia. The overall aim of the projects is to develop modules to underpin a masters level programme to support the sustainability and growth of small family businesses. There are several phases including:

- literature review
- company case studies
- development of 8 masters level modules
- piloting and evaluation

Literature review

A literature review was conducted by university partners in Hungary, Poland and the UK to provide a foundation for module development. This was influenced by research for the European Commission, Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General which identified a number of challenges for family businesses in Europe and proposed a number of policy recommendations including the need to *'Establish/continue awareness raising measures of the importance of planning business transfers as well as the provision of practical planning tools. Establish training for entrepreneurs and successors to prepare them to cope with the challenges of the transfer process'* (Mandl, 2008, p4).

The Comparative report from the INSIST project highlights a range of issues. These include definitional issues and a lack of comparable data making it difficult to provide a detailed picture of family businesses at the national and European levels. The review draws attention a preference towards bootstrapping (borrowing from family and friends), reinvesting profits and short-term loans to the financing of family business start up and growth. In many smaller family businesses, it is often difficult to disentangle business and family finances. The review also highlights a tension between business and family priorities and the importance of psycho-social dimensions of governance and leadership and the inter-relations of family and non-family. The review identifies participation as a dominant form of learning where firm success is founded upon positive narratives that can sustain the business over generations. It identifies knowledge transfer as a process extending far beyond a purely business-oriented activity to one that acknowledges socio-emotional wealth. It highlights the role that the institutional environment plays in the development of family businesses, drawing attention to the lack of attention they receive from policy makers and the important role that a stable legal system plays in providing an environment conducive to the sustainability of family businesses.

Company case studies

Nine case studies were conducted to inform the development of the modules under the INSIST project. The case studies included companies from different countries, of varying size and operating in various sectors of the economy. Table 2 provides an indication of the key characteristics of the participating businesses.

Table 2. Company Case Studies

Company name	Sector	Number employed	Founded	Country
BI-KA	Logistics	103	1991	Hungary
Domex	Real Estate	20	1989	Hungary
Fein Winery	Wine production	4	1998	Hungary
Parodan	Engineering (Design and manufacturing)	27	1984	UK
Pillar	Construction	70	1980s	Poland
Plantex	Farming	81	1981	Poland
Podiums	Plant Hire	30	1977	UK
Quality Meat	Food processing	45	1992	Hungary
Wamech	Manufacturing (Automotive)	77	1989	Poland

The case studies were designed to provide an illustration of a real-life family business experiencing transition between one generation and the next. They are to be used as a resource to support learning and provide an opportunity for students to analyse and present their interpretations and solutions along with their critical reasoning. In this respect they can be seen as a work-related learning resource for students. They also fulfilled a role as a research resource, helping academic-researchers develop understanding of some of the situational nuances of family business practice. In particular they highlighted the often complex, uncertain, multi-dimensional (ownership and management) and lengthy aspects of family business transition.

Module development

The literature review and case studies are informing the development of eight modules at Masters level in the three participating universities. These are summarized in Table 3. INSIST and FAME.

Table 3. INSIST and FAME

INSIST	FAME
Socio-cultural context	Governance
Strategy	Management
Mentoring	Governance
Financial and legal Regulations	Entrepreneurial finance

The modules are designed to meet the UK QAA code. “*The UK Quality Code gives all UK higher education providers a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the academic standards of their higher education awards and programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities they provide. Providers use it to design their respective policies for maintaining academic standards and quality.*” (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Pages/Quality-Code-Chapter-B1.aspx#.WWe-yPWcEdV>). The modules are also designed to meet Leeds Beckett University’s internal quality standards, processes and procedures. Together the modules are designed to give a coherent overview and introduction to topics, themes and issues that are germane and relevant to succession in small family businesses. Academic concepts, models and frameworks are used to theoretically underpin module learning and to provide rigour, quality and analytical depth. The modules are designed to offer a blend of traditional lectures, seminar based activities, Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), individual study and work based learning. Case studies and group discussion activities are designed to bring real world examples of practice into the classroom environment. The Insist and FAME project modules aim to:

- Provide theoretical underpinning of the core conceptual models and frameworks that inform the constituent modules.
- Draw on real world insights into small family business practices through the context of work based experiential learning.
- Develop a theoretically informed plan of enterprising actions that can shape and guide future small family business thinking and practice.
- Impart Theory – by for example exploring macro and micro environmental issues, as well as futures thinking relevant to small family businesses.
- Have Context – by developing reflective and critical analysis skills and apply these to the circumstances of participants own small family businesses.
- Inform and Draw From Practice – by for example expecting participants to set/map out a strategic plan of action that contains short, medium and long term small family business objectives and account for futures thinking.

Piloting and evaluation

Each of the modules is tested with groups of business owners, business-support practitioners and MBA students to assess the extent to which the module designs are ‘fit for purpose’. Teaching materials are explained, trialled and tested and focus group discussions with for example existing Master level students help shape the final “product”.

Conclusions

The nature of the relationship between work based learning and enterprise education is symbiotic, mutually beneficial and when combined they are value adding. Theoretically WBL aspires to enhance skills and knowledge that will enhance employability and up-skill the workforce. In contrast enterprise education seeks to develop skills, attributes and behaviours which can be used for entrepreneurship or for work in a Small Medium Enterprise (SME), including small family businesses. In practice they share a degree of similarity of purpose as they both engage with the ideal of a curriculum that is work related. To conceptually untangle and separate the two is unnecessary as they already operate as distinct subjects and areas of practice. This paper has therefore sought to better understand the rationale and purpose of the two concepts and how they inform and shape the other. Work based learning can enrich enterprise education by placing more emphasis on employability skills. Enterprise

education can enrich work based learning by placing more emphasis on entrepreneurship, self-employment and SMEs. Adopting an enterprise education approach to work based learning can we suggest up skill employees, empower learners, energise nascent entrepreneurs and add value to the economy and society. The paper suggests that bringing the concepts together will bring synergy (e.g. working together the concepts will generate new classroom and teaching/learning dynamics), efficiency (e.g. less duplication of educational programmes), and benefit a range of stakeholders (e.g. more motivated and better equipped) - educators, learners, employers, employees, entrepreneurs and of course, small family businesses.

This paper has informed understanding of the stakeholder context of small family business enterprise and work based learning and the means by which it can be delivered at a local and national level through European funding and partnership working. University engagement with small family businesses is integral to economic growth, societal well being, and meaningful as well as value adding education business partnerships. The narrative running throughout has been one concerned with better understanding as well as realisation of education business links and how this enriches the curriculum and adds business value. Enterprise education and work based learning help develop “work-ready” graduates with appropriate skills and competencies fit for the challenges of an ever changing labour market.

In recognising and addressing the need for Higher Education intervention for small family businesses a more prosperous and successful future for all can be delivered. The development of curriculum resources and an appropriate fit for purpose assessment, learning and teaching strategy are critical success factors. Assessment, teaching and learning needs to take account of and be done in the context of the small family business environment. Work based learning and enterprise education are appropriate educational tools that can take account of local conditions and family circumstances and make teaching, learning and assessment relevant to the specific needs of small family businesses. These tools are vital to successful project delivery and implementation and to future business transfer, growth and success.

This paper has offered description, explanation and analysis of enterprise education and work based learning via a case study of two Erasmus+ project on the theme of succession planning within small family businesses. Theory has been built through the adoption of a comparative approach to the projects and the underlying educational concepts that inform their pedagogical delivery. The projects and individual component modules have been shown to be theoretically informed and practice focused and this helps ensure academic rigour and 'real world' relevance.

The intended benefits developed out of the INSIST and FAME projects include: 1] partners working together and learning from one another; 2] making a difference (having impact) on small family businesses rates of survival through better and more informed succession planning; 3] engaging small family businesses in formal training, development and education which is something they are not always good at; 4] learning from small family businesses and thereby inform training and education practice, knowledge and insight; 5] engaging in cross country research and development. Both the Insist and FAME projects are underpinned by theory and informed by practice so as to ensure that they have 'real world', workplace, employment related and small family business relevance. The main tangible project outcome is a Master's degree programme that will address a gap in the market and support small family businesses with the issue of succession and succession planning.

A number of lessons can be drawn from the application of work based learning and enterprise education to Erasmus+ projects such as Insist and FAME:

- Involving small family businesses in the project helps co-create additional value for learners, educational providers and for businesses/employers
- Involving employers, learners and other key stakeholders in the development and delivery of the projects helped ensure shared ownership
- International projects with different country partners from the public and private sectors almost inevitably requires a degree of tact, negotiation and subtle diplomacy in order to arrive at solutions that deliver shared project goals and addresses key performance indicators

- For work based learning and enterprise education to be successful requires support and input from employers, entrepreneurs and education providers
- The voice of small family businesses needs to be heard much more than it has to date as they contribute enormously to the communities they serve, the economy and the public good

These projects help raise the profile of small family businesses and put them and their needs on the higher education agenda. The two small family business projects involve research, design, implementation and evaluation and through this process will deliver more robust interventions that are educationally sound, work relevant and enterprise focused. Through these projects higher education curriculum is being broadened, deepened and enriched and a more rounded teaching, learning and assessment experience will result.

The specific focus on research, policy and practice intervention in a European context serves to show how Higher Education can help family owned small businesses better prepare for succession planning. Public policy intervention can add value to private sector small family businesses. A number of value adding tangible and measurable outcomes are expected from both projects and they include transforming, improving, enhancing and enriching the small business offer. The tailored and dedicated Higher Education projects can be used to deliver successful intergenerational transfer of business knowledge, practices and can be used to rethink skill sets, finance and among other things, strategy. Higher Education interventions of the type outlined here can add value to family owned small businesses and can thus contribute to the wealth preservation, transfer and creation process. They have the potential to help protect family wealth with the transfer of small business ownership. Such interventions can contribute to more sustainable and viable small businesses and can improve future prospects. Looking to the future the Higher Education initiatives described here can help the next generation adapt so as to possibly grow the family business to suit the circumstances and contexts of the time. The “right to work”, the “right to start a business” and the “right to own, be part of and inherit a small family business” are not inalienable rights but have to be fought over and delivered anew for each generation as they adjust to changes in the labour market and associated types of work that are available and that can be created. The two projects help support the rights of small family businesses to succeed in what they do and in the transfer of the business to the next generation. Succession planning of family owned small businesses is necessary to protect existing business interests. It can contribute to small business innovation and entrepreneurship and can help people cope with and enjoy what can be perceived as being an uncertain family owned small business future.

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