

entrepreneurship



A study of attitudes and needs among young people within schools and further education colleges in Northern Ireland

Entrepreneurship Education in Northern Ireland:

A Study of Attitudes & Needs Among Young
People within Schools & Further Education

Report by

Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education

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Executive Summary

Introduction

In December 2003, the Belfast Institute was funded to undertake a major study into attitudes towards entrepreneurship among key groupings of young people aged 14-21 and professional educators in Northern Ireland. The research will fill a yawning gap in the evidence base in Northern Ireland regarding attitudes towards entrepreneurship among the young, will supply much needed intelligence for the further development of the EPF initiatives in Belfast West, Belfast North and Greater Shankill and will deliver lessons of relevance to entrepreneurship education within schools and colleges throughout Northern Ireland.

Methodology

This study was designed to satisfy the need for triangulation¹ and involved the following methods of investigation. An in-depth preliminary desktop review and preliminary semi-structured interviews with representatives of government departments, education and library board officers, teaching and lecturing staff, and staff from accreditation bodies. It also included surveys of young people across schools and further education colleges in Northern Ireland, the surveys used a variety of judgment capturing techniques.

A series of 32 Action Science sessions was held with 459 pupils and students across Northern Ireland. These sessions were used to search for explanations which would assist in interpreting survey findings.

123 teachers and lecturers completed the Teachers' Questionnaire, aimed at capturing insights into their understanding of the economy, the labour market and the importance of entrepreneurship training for pupils and students.

¹ See Hall D. and Hall I. (1996) *Practical Social Research* (London: Macmillan) pp 44-45 for a discussion on the advantages of triangulation in social research.

Table 1: Study participation levels.

Research Activity	Participant Numbers
Interviews	15
Survey of Pupils and Students	2264
Action Science Participants (Sessions)	459(32)
Survey of Teachers and Lecturers	123

Summary of Key Findings

Although Northern Ireland is comparatively weak in terms of business birth rate it has ambitions to become an entrepreneurial economy.

The freelancing self-employed are increasingly significant in the modern economy with 57% of the 98,234 self-employed in Northern Ireland in 2001 being freelancers.

Current business courses focus on topics such as structure and culture of organisations; motivation & leadership styles; size; goals; classification and stakeholders and most courses also have a finance unit and a marketing/strategy unit. However, a lot of key issues such as risk and labour market issues were identified along with soft skills by stakeholders and international research as important for entrepreneurship education.

On the positive side, individuals with a business idea have a wide choice of agencies and programmes to approach for support. There is also evidence that one of Northern Ireland's main curriculum examining boards has recognised the need to include entrepreneurship in the curriculum from primary school through to higher education and are working to put this in place.

70% of respondents studying full-time also work part-time. However respondents significantly overestimated the scale of part-time employment in Northern Ireland.

The research revealed that young people's ambitions as regards future self-employment was stronger than their expectation that they would one day actually

become self-employed and respondents did underestimate the scale of self-employment.

Just over a half of all young people could recall attending classes where entrepreneurship was addressed, but over 90% wanted such classes to be available. Respondents rated current education programmes which deal with entrepreneurship positively.

Respondents rated all 20 emotional intelligence skills as important for employment, but perceived them as particularly challenging for self-employment and running your own business.

Teachers strongly supported the introduction of entrepreneurship classes and were keen themselves to be kept informed on labour market trends. However, like students they view being your own boss as risky and are aware that their students highly value a good steady job.

The majority of young people agreed that in running your own business you have a chance of making more money than being in employment and that self-employment would enable them to develop their skills.

However, while young people desired the freedom to make their own decisions in running their own business they did feel that this would also involve a lot of extra work. Further disadvantages identified, included the risk involved as well as the required level of experience and financial support and the perception that it would involve taking on too many responsibilities.

Some young people did not know how to go about starting their own business and although most identified some source of assistance the majority of young people did not mention many current agencies specialising in this area. Similarly, teachers were unable to identify all main sources of support, however, both students and teachers were positive about existing entrepreneurship programmes.

Recommendations

1. There is a need for further research into the incidence of part-time employment amongst pupils and students. Such research should include a focus on how part-time employment could be integrated into programmes of learning.
2. There should be a policy review of entrepreneurship programmes in Northern Ireland. This should analyse the role and extent of entrepreneurship within the curriculum in schools and further education colleges.
3. Entrepreneurship programmes for young people in Northern Ireland should include:
 - a. Addressing the issue of risk as identified in this report.
 - b. Reviewing labour market trends including the incidence and role of all forms of self-employment.
 - c. Ensuring that freelancing in addition to establishing an employing business is specifically addressed.
 - d. Developing a wide range of soft skills including those identified within this report.
 - e. Using local role models to facilitate part of the delivery of entrepreneurship programmes.
4. Programmes of staff development for both school and college staff should be devised and should incorporate a-e above.
5. At the outset of the academic year teaching staff should be provided with a summary review of current trends in the Northern Ireland labour market.

Introduction

In December 2003, the Belfast Institute was partially funded by the Executive Programme Funding (EPF) to undertake a major study into attitudes towards entrepreneurship among key groupings of young people aged 14-21 and professional educators in Northern Ireland. The research was managed by the Centre for Applied Research and Development and given the scale and depth of research required, Inter-ed Ltd, authors of the EPF Baseline analysis of Belfast West, Belfast North and Greater Shankill², worked in partnership with the Centre.

Evidence Base

The study has wide relevance for the education and policy communities in Northern Ireland.

The Belfast Institute strives to play its part in meeting the challenges outlined in “Accelerating Entrepreneurship”³ which set as a priority the need:

“to inculcate an appreciation and understanding of entrepreneurship through the education system – from the primary stage to university and right through to lifelong learning”.

The research will fill a yawning gap in the evidence base in Northern Ireland regarding attitudes towards entrepreneurship among the young, will supply much needed intelligence for the further development of the EPF initiatives in Belfast West, Belfast North and Greater Shankill, and will deliver lessons of relevance to entrepreneurship education within schools and colleges throughout Northern Ireland.

Although there has always been an interest amongst employers and educators in establishing such an evidence base in Northern Ireland, it has only been with the advent of the Executive Programme Funding that research funds have been available

² Inter-ed Ltd *Belfast West, North and Greater Shankill: A Baseline Analysis* (BIFHE, July 2003). See also Inter-ed Ltd, *East Belfast: A Baseline Education Study* (BIFHE, February 2004)

³ See <http://www.enterpriseni.com/XcNews.asp?cmd=view&articleid=21>

to pursue independent research of this type. Studies have taken place around this issue in other parts of the world and comparisons will be made with a similar study carried out in Scotland by Inter-ed Ltd.⁴

Assistance

This study has only been possible because of the assistance provided by Principals, Vice-Principals, teachers and lecturers in our target schools and colleges, interviewees from a range of agencies and finally from more than 2500 pupils and students in Northern Ireland's schools and colleges who gave of their time to assist in this study. We are grateful to them all.

⁴ Inter-ed Ltd *Youth Enterprise Strategy Attitude and Awareness Study* (Unpublished, for Careers Scotland Renfrewshire, 2000 and study repeated in 2003)

Methodology

This study was designed to satisfy the need for triangulation⁵. That is, for all major areas of investigation we used a range of research methods to ensure we did not rely solely on one data collection method. This is reflected in many of the report sections where, for example, we draw upon both survey and action science session findings in discussing key issues.

This study involved the following methods of investigation.

1. Preliminary Desktop Review.

Our desk-top review spanned a range of academic studies into entrepreneurship, some of which the reader will find referenced in the footnotes; a review of curricula documentation relevant to schools and colleges in Northern Ireland, a review of Census 2001 data, and a review of research studies into entrepreneurship in Northern Ireland, again referenced where appropriate in the footnotes.

The desktop review raised a series of issues which were subsequently incorporated within our primary research.

2. Preliminary Semi-structured Interviews.

A series of semi-structured interviews were held with representatives of government departments, education and library board officers, teaching and lecturing staff, and staff from accreditation bodies.

These interviews were undertaken at an early stage in the research, and used primarily to inform the focus of our primary research.

⁵ See Hall D. and Hall I. (1996) *Practical Social Research* (London: Macmillan) pp 44-45 for a discussion on the advantages of triangulation in social research.

3. Surveys of Young People.

A major survey of young people was held across schools and further education colleges in Northern Ireland. Within each education and library board area, a subset of schools was selected to ensure a representative spread of schools. Further details on the sample follow. The surveys used a variety of judgment capturing techniques. These included free response questions, statement rating items, self-judgment scoring and item selection. We embedded within the surveys some items for internal consistency checks. As will be seen, high degrees of internal consistency have been achieved, as have high degrees of consistency across the different questioning methods.

Furthermore, we note the different questioning methods allowed us to use a variety of analysis techniques, including content analysis and a range of statistical measures.

4. Action Science Sessions with Young People.

A series of 32 Action Science sessions was held with 459 pupils and students across Northern Ireland. These sessions were used to search for explanations, which would assist in interpreting survey findings. Some pupils and students were following a Business course or a Business unit, as part of another course and others had never studied Business. 5 Action Science sessions were conducted with pupils and students aged 14 and 15, a further 5 sessions were conducted with pupils and students aged 15 and 16, 7 sessions with 16 and 17 year olds and 15 sessions with 17-21 year olds.

5. Survey of Teachers.

123 teachers and lecturers completed the Teachers' questionnaire, aimed at capturing insights into their understanding of the economy, the labour market and the importance of entrepreneurship training for pupils and students. The survey also offered respondents the opportunity to make additional contributions with regard to promoting entrepreneurship.

Summary Participation Rates

Table 1 Outlines the scale of participation in the study, which was considerable, involving in excess of 2700 pupils and students counting both the survey and action science respondents. The specific profile of respondents follows.

Table 1: Study participation levels.

Research Activity	Participant Numbers
Interviews	15
Survey of Pupils and Students	2264
Action Science Participants (Sessions)	459(32)
Survey of Teachers and Lecturers	123

Respondent Profiles

A key to the success of the study was to ensure a strong participation rate from pupils and students, across all areas of Belfast and Northern Ireland, in the survey. It was also important to ensure a significant representation from EPF areas (Belfast North, Belfast East and Greater Shankill). When choosing the initial sample we selected a mix of co-educational and single sex schools to help ensure a gender balance. We also ensured that the overall school sample included a wide range of pupil ability and, as far as was possible, a balance of schools situated in working class and middle class catchment areas. Several schools from the initial sample declined the invitation to become involved and were replaced with other schools with similar profiles. During the course of the research a number of schools and colleges that had committed themselves to being involved subsequently found that they could not partake for a variety of reasons including industrial action by teachers, inspection requirements and other commitments that would have prevented staff from giving the required time to the research. Again we attempted to replace each of these schools and colleges with other schools and colleges with as close a profile as was possible.

This short chapter describes in more detail the profile of respondents and the form of analysis undertaken with the returns. We begin by reviewing respondents by age in table 2.

Table 2: Respondents by age.

Age	No.	%
14-15	461	20.4
16	481	21.2
17	590	26.1
18	363	16.0
19 & over	364	16.1
Not Stated	5	00.2
All Responses	2264	100

In terms of age 41.6% of the sample are aged 16 and under, 42.1% of the sample are aged 17 or 18 and 16.1% are aged 19 and over.

Table 3 which follows details the breakdown of our respondents by both gender and age.

- There is a small majority of male respondents in the 16 and under and in the 19 and over age groups with a larger majority of female respondents in the 17 or 18 age group which results in a fairly even balance of female (51.4%) and male (48.5%) respondents, broadly reflecting the gender mix within Northern Ireland.

Table 3: Survey respondents by age and gender.

Age	Female		Male		Not Known		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
16 and under	459	48.7	481	51.1	2	0.2	942	100
17 or 18	520	54.6	431	45.2	2	0.2	953	100
19 and over	180	49.5	184	50.5	0	0.0	364	100
Not Stated	4	80.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	5	100
All Responses	1163	51.4	1097	48.5	4	0.2	2264	100

Table 4: Survey respondents by age and EPF area.

Age	EPF Area		Outside EPF Area		Not Known		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
16 and under	318	33.8	624	66.2	0	0.0	942	100
17 and 18	292	30.6	660	69.3	1	0.1	953	100
19 and over	170	46.7	194	53.3	0	0.0	364	100
Not Stated	2	40.0	2	40.0	1	20.0	5	100
All Responses	782	34.5	1480	65.4	2	0.1	2264	100

- Just over 1/3 (34.5%) of all respondents live in one of the EPF areas. This strong EPF representation will allow us to compare areas of significant poverty, disadvantage and division, with other areas. This data will also be of interest to special programmes in this area and will be the subject of a separate report and briefing.

Table 5: List of surveyed schools by gender, education and library board area and EPF area, and whether or not they also participated in action science sessions.

School	ELB Area	Gender	EPF Area	Action Science
Enniskillen High School	WELB	CO-ED	NO	NO
St Cecilia's College	WELB	FEMALE	NO	NO
Lumen Christi College	WELB	CO-ED	NO	YES
St Olcan's High School	NEELB	CO-ED	NO	YES
Ulidia Integrated College	NEELB	CO-ED	NO	YES
Larne Grammar School	NEELB	CO-ED	NO	NO
Lagan College	SEELB	CO-ED	NO	YES
Regent House School	SEELB	CO-ED	NO	NO
Our Lady & St Patrick's College Knock	SEELB	CO-ED	NO	NO
Markethill High School	SELB	CO-ED	NO	YES
St Patrick's College Banbridge	SELB	CO-ED	NO	NO
Banbridge Academy	SELB	CO-ED	NO	NO
Corpus Christi College	BELB	MALE	YES	YES
St Malachy's College	BELB	MALE	YES	NO
Little Flower Girls School	BELB	FEMALE	YES	YES
Mount Gilbert Community College	BELB	MALE	YES	YES
Aquinas Grammar School	BELB	CO-ED	NO	NO
Royal Belfast Academical Institution	BELB	MALE	NO	NO
Belfast Royal Academy	BELB	CO-ED	YES	YES
St Dominic's High School	BELB	FEMALE	YES	YES
St Patrick's College Belfast	BELB	MALE	YES	NO

- This table indicates a balance of schools drawn from each of the Education and Library Boards with 3 from each of the 4 board areas outside Belfast and 9 from the Belfast Education and Library Board area. The larger representation from BELB areas is in part a reflection of the need to ensure effective EPF area representation.
- In terms of catchment areas, our sample of schools covers a wide socio-economic range, with some colleges situated in relatively affluent areas, and others in relatively deprived areas.
- The sample includes a good balance of male and female respondents from a range of single sex and co-educational schools.

- The sample reflects a balance of schools with pupils from a range of religious backgrounds.
- 50% of schools in the sample were invited to take part in the action science sessions, but due to a variety of internal and external demands, as discussed earlier, some schools were unable to be involved and other schools from the sample with as close a profile as was possible were invited to replace them in the sample.

Table 6: List of colleges by EPF area and involvement in action science sessions.

College	EPF Area	Action Science
Belfast Institute	YES	YES
Lisburn Institute	NO	YES
North East Institute	NO	NO
Newry & Kilkeel Institute	NO	NO
Limavady College	NO	YES
Causeway Institute	NO	NO
East Down Institute	NO	NO
Castlereagh College	YES	YES

All of the 16 Further Education Colleges across Northern Ireland were invited to take part in the research. The 8 colleges listed in table 6 took part in the student and staff survey element. As indicated, 4 of these colleges also took part in the action science sessions. In terms of religious background most colleges recruit a mix of students from across the community with a good gender balance. In terms of EPF catchment, both Castlereagh College and the Belfast Institute draw a substantial number of their students from the Greater Belfast area, including the EPF areas. Students' home postcodes were used to determine whether or not they came from an EPF area.

Scene Setting

Existing Research

There is much to suggest that Northern Ireland lags behind other parts of the UK in terms of a private sector entrepreneurial economy. For example, research from the mid-eighties onwards, shows that years of grant support to encourage enterprise in Northern Ireland had resulted in a dependency on external assistance. Businesses in Northern Ireland were as profitable as their foreign competitors, but were not as productive. Small businesses in particular were not investing in R&D, staff development, or product improvement and innovation. In essence, government grants were subsidising non-competitiveness – to the tune of 20% of GDP in 1980. Small business owners had become enterprising in acquiring grants, but were not helping the economy to grow⁶. In such a context, and with data demonstrating such, being increasingly available, a change of direction was needed.

Consequently, in the past two decades, interventions have moved away from capital grants for small business and toward efforts at removing dependency and learned helplessness. However, the economic history of Northern Ireland works against the empowering aims of such initiatives. The region has traditionally relied on a self-sufficient agriculture sector, a dominant public sector, and, in industrial areas such as East Belfast, large employing organisations in declining industries. The economy of Northern Ireland lacks a strong small business tradition. The people of Northern Ireland may according to some have a strong work ethic, but it is an employment-based ethic⁷.

⁶ Bridge, Simon, et.al. *Understanding Enterprise, Entrepreneurship, and Small Business*, London: MacMillan. 1998.

⁷ Ibid.

Business Birth Rates Compared⁸

To demonstrate the above point, in 2001 Northern Ireland had the lowest registration of new business at only 6.6% of stock. This compared with 10.5% for the UK as a whole. It was considerably below the next worst nation in the UK (Wales) whose business birth rate was 8.1%. These are broadly typical figures for recent years, demonstrating a relatively poor performance in Northern Ireland. To say, therefore that a keen focus on driving forward rates of business start-ups is needed is something of an understatement.

Government Interventions in Northern Ireland

Government interventions are increasingly turning to the development of skills seen as important for entrepreneurs, such as in marketing, management, and leadership. Sir Reg Empey, former Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment underlined this direction when he said in October 2000

“We are considering the steps that need to be taken to transform Northern Ireland into a high-growth, entrepreneurial, information-based economy that generates wealth for everyone.”

In terms of entrepreneurship, a starting point is upping the birth rate of micro and small businesses. Small businesses are often considered by development agencies as essential feeding ground for the development of indigenous medium and large businesses. Although medium and large-scale businesses are particularly significant in terms of employment, the small business sector provides by far the largest cohort of individual businesses, and small businesses are often considered to be essential components of communities. Assisting to develop an entrepreneurial culture is often high on political agendas, but what the key characteristics of an entrepreneurial culture actually are, are more difficult to pin down, although one aspect generally agreed is the welcoming and nurturing of “risk-taking”. This is in itself interesting from an educational point of view. In many fields of endeavour in modern society a strong focus on

⁸ For fuller comparisons of the relative performance of the nations within the UK see <http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwales/content/publication/economy/2003/sb32-2003/sb32-2003.htm#table1>

eliminating or reducing risk is often to the fore, yet in the area of entrepreneurship the willingness to take risks is seen as vital for the health of an entrepreneurial culture. Risk is therefore one of many features we have explored in this study.

Self-employment

Most economic development agencies focus on the numbers of VAT or PAYE registered businesses but this, arguably, actually misses the first rung on the business development ladder: the self employed individual who neither employs others nor has a business income above the VAT threshold of £56,000 per annum.

In Northern Ireland, some 98,234 of the economically active population were classified as self-employed in 2001. Of this total, no less than 57% were in effect freelancers: employed by no one but also employing no one⁹. However, despite the significance of freelancing in the local economy already, we have found in our desktop researches no significant effort at dealing with the particular needs of freelancers in entrepreneurship programmes. This seems to us a major weakness in current educational approaches to assisting the development of an entrepreneurial culture.

The Importance of Freelancers

The self-employed, including those working as freelancers, are increasingly important for particular parts of the economy, and there is evidence that this is particularly true for the new knowledge based industries. Take, for example, the recent workforce survey conducted into the audiovisual industries¹⁰. It has estimated that no less than 25% of all workers in the audio visual industries are freelancers, earning on average just over £30,000 per year, well below the threshold for registering for VAT, but higher than the average income for those in conventional employment.

⁹ See census2001 table Uv101 for further details.

¹⁰ *Skillset: Workforce Survey 2003* The Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries (2004)

Entrepreneurship

A major study in 2001 into entrepreneurship was undertaken for Enterprise Northern Ireland by Professor Mark Hart of Kingston University. This study surveyed over 5,500 households in Northern Ireland of which 889 were in Belfast (which included the EPF areas of Belfast that are an important focus for this study). The report¹¹ was published in May 2003. Defining entrepreneurs as people who were,

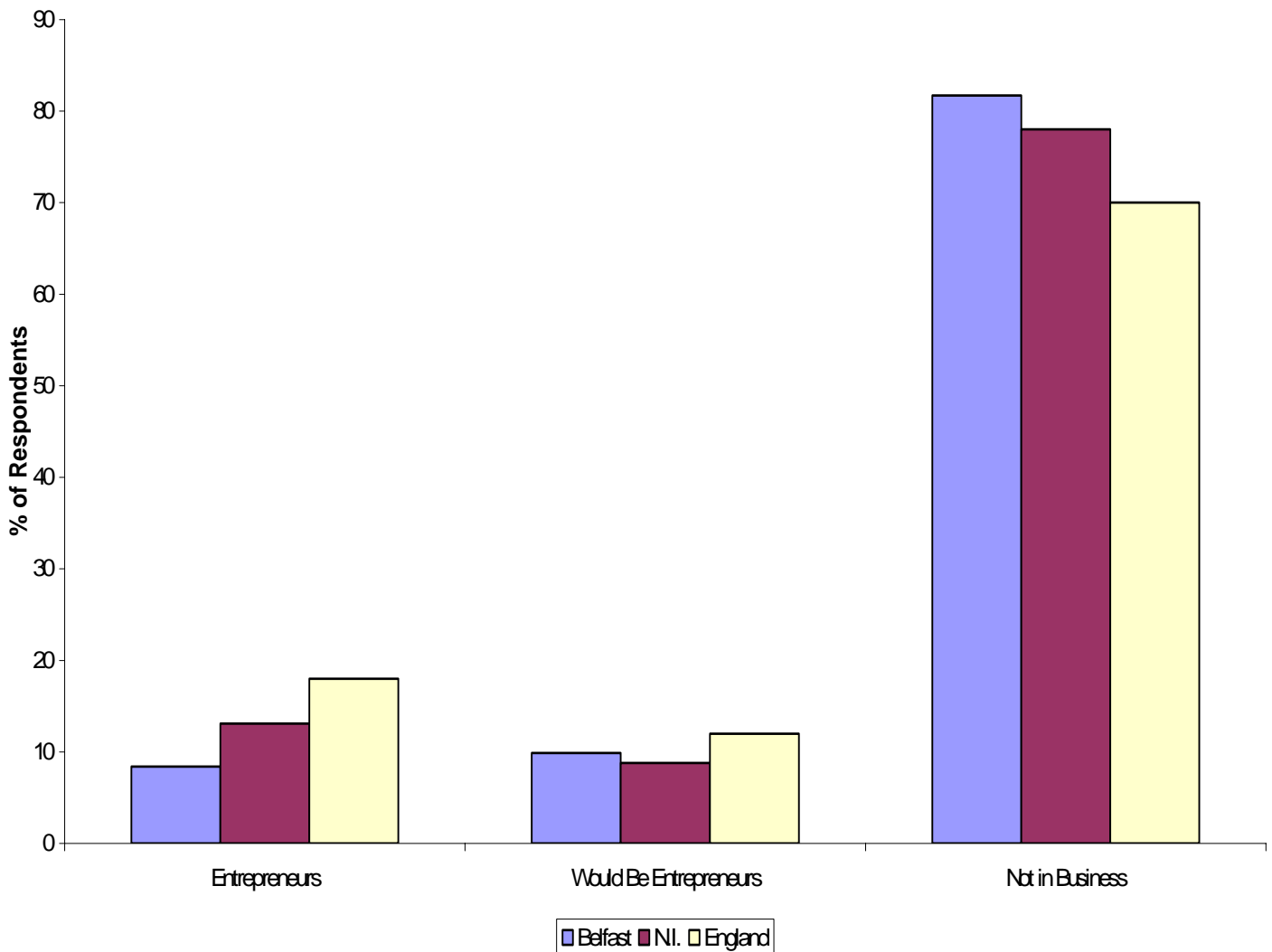
- owning or part-owning a business, either full-time or part-time
- self-employed
- and/or deriving a secondary income from being self employed

The study described how, "Overall, 8.4 per cent of respondents were classified as entrepreneurs and 9.9 per cent as "would be" entrepreneurs in the Belfast District Council area." As can be seen from Figure 2.1 the figure for entrepreneurs is significantly lower than for Northern Ireland as a whole (13%) and for England (18%). However, the number of "would be" entrepreneurs was slightly higher in Belfast than for Northern Ireland as a whole: 9.9 per cent compared to 8.8 per cent. However, the proportion of "would be" entrepreneurs in Belfast still lags behind the average for the English regions, which was 12 per cent. This leaves just over 8 in every 10 individuals in Belfast who were not considering "entrepreneurship" at all which is a higher proportion than in Northern Ireland overall". The report's figure 2.1 referred to in the citation was as follows.

¹¹ M.Hart *Household Entrepreneurship Study 2001: A Belfast Perspective* for Enterprise NI May 2003

CHART 1: ENTREPRENEURS AND WOULD BE ENTREPRENEURS IN BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND AND ENGLAND

Figure 21: Entrepreneurs and Would Be Entrepreneurs in Belfast, NI and England



As can be seen, Belfast performs poorly in terms of Northern Ireland as a whole, and Northern Ireland performs poorly compared to England. Put bluntly there is a huge challenge to create a more entrepreneurial culture in Belfast and in Northern Ireland as a whole.

By also reviewing VAT data and DTI data from recent years it is clear that Northern Ireland has a particularly weak base of entrepreneurship compared to all the nations of the UK.

There, therefore, seems no reason to doubt that more needs to be done to create an entrepreneurial culture in Northern Ireland.

International Research into Entrepreneurship

International research into entrepreneurship suggests attitudinal and behavioural characteristics are of great importance, as is exposure to entrepreneurs who can provide meaningful and personal role models. More than 20 years ago, Marilyn Kourilsky, one of the world's foremost authorities on entrepreneurship, identified the psychological attributes that are predictors of entrepreneurial behaviour. She suggested the most relevant include: need for achievement; creativity and initiative; risk taking and setting objectives; self confidence and internal locus of control; need for independence and autonomy; motivation, energy, and commitment; and persistence¹². Research before and since has identified the same attributes among aspiring and successful entrepreneurs, informing the development of some (not all) enterprise education curricula and providing models for enrichment programmes that are intended to foster an entrepreneurial spirit amongst young people.

Nineteen years later, Kourilsky and her associate, William Walstad, researched attitudes toward entrepreneurship amongst 14-19 year olds in the United States.¹³ They found nearly 70% of their respondents "*...want to control their own destinies by becoming entrepreneurs. Many of the same teens say they know little about how to become their own boss. But, if given the choice, a majority of youth would rather be the owner of a small business than the manager of a large corporation.*"

¹² Kourilsky, M.L. (1980). Predictors of entrepreneurship in a simulated economy. *The Journal of Creative Behaviour*, 14(3), 175-199.

¹³ Kourilsky, M. and W. Walstad. *Seeds of Success: Entrepreneurship and Youth*. Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 1999.

While youth who come from entrepreneurial families, or who have exposure to role models, are more likely to aspire to entrepreneurship, the authors found, “...*those that do not learn about running the business ‘at the dinner table’ typically do not perceive they have access through the school system to the skills and knowledge that would enable them to have a shot at ‘making a job’ rather than ‘taking a job.’ Many do not have a personal connection with a small business owner who might serve as a role model nor do they have a full appreciation for the challenges facing entrepreneurs.*”

We note here that later in this report we have recorded the views of many teachers in Northern Ireland who have called for greater use of guest speakers from the entrepreneurial community and, if possible, visits to the workplaces of entrepreneurs. Such calls echo the findings of Kourilsky and her associate, William Walstad, and suggest the need to develop a range of local entrepreneurs that can provide the human face of entrepreneurship to Northern Ireland’s young.

Unlike training for employment where the use of skills is dependent upon opportunities being provided by employers, self employment and starting up a small business provides a challenging avenue to alternative forms of employment which will also contribute to the economic regeneration of Northern Ireland. This is a mechanism by which local people can “make” a job, rather than simply seek to “take” a job. It is creative, challenging and relevant. But how do Northern Ireland’s young see the future? It is to address this question and others that we must now turn. We shall start by reviewing some of the curricula arrangements that are presented to young people in Northern Ireland.

Entrepreneurship in the Northern Ireland Curriculum

A review of the business curricula offered by the main examining boards from GNVQ and GCSE level to foundation degree level reveals a number of generic mandatory units that are offered across programmes. For example, most programmes have an introductory unit which deals with some or all of the following: structure and culture of organisations; motivation & leadership styles; size; goals; classification and stakeholders. Most courses also have a finance unit and a marketing/strategy unit. More than half of the courses have a unit dealing with professional/personal development, another dealing with legal issues and another examining the business environment. Other units are offered by a smaller number of courses including management processes, administrative systems and customer services.

In Northern Ireland the provision of business-related courses has expanded in recent years with considerable growth in the numbers taking Advanced Level Business Studies, GNVQ Intermediate and AVCE Business. GCSE Business Studies is also a popular choice at key stage 4 in nearly all post primary schools in Northern Ireland.

The terms 'entrepreneurship' and 'enterprise' are rarely used in the specifications although in one course there is a unit entitled 'Starting up a new business' covering areas such as:

- Market opportunities for a new venture
- Legal and financial requirements
- Draft business plan
- Personal qualities of a successful entrepreneur

A unit entitled 'Business Enterprise' is offered at another level and covers the following areas:

- Features of enterprise and the development of business ideas
- Enterprise and legal structure
- Marketing strategy and tactics for a new business
- Plan for a new business venture

A further unit entitled 'Check how successful your business idea will be' is offered on another course and examines the following areas:

- Business attractiveness
- Financial aspects
- Skills and abilities
- Market opportunity

At one level with one examining board candidates are required to know sources of finance including the Prince's Trust and Shell Livewire.

A knowledge of labour market trends is only specifically required on two of the programmes.

Many of the module outcomes and indicative content of mandatory units are set in the context of a business with more than one employee and although a discussion on size is part of some specifications, freelancing is not mentioned although sole trader is often mentioned with an emphasis on definition rather than skills, opportunities and issues.

Edexcel GNVQ Business offers an optional unit – "Setting up in business" which examines sources of help and assistance. At AS level, candidates are required to understand the role of the entrepreneur. Enterprise and entrepreneurship are mentioned briefly in the GCSE and A level business syllabi of both CCEA and AQA.

Although there are optional units which allow students to investigate certain aspects of entrepreneurship or understand the role of the entrepreneur, it could not be argued that entrepreneurship is an integral or pivotal element of the business syllabi offered by the main examining boards in Northern Ireland.

However, CEA does recognise the need to develop an enterprise culture and following the Curriculum Review intends to promote enterprise in primary schools. They also introduce entrepreneurship and enterprise at key stage 3 and 4 as part of the Education for Employability programme. There are also plans for a new AS

qualification that will incorporate an enterprise dimension. A “Certificate of Business Enterprise” is currently being trialled and is aimed at post 16 students as part of their main programme of study. The draft specifications include the following units:

- The Business Idea
- Business Finance
- Marketing
- Legal Aspects of Business

Student progress will be assessed based on the generation of a business plan related to their vocational area and preferred career planning option.

The other main examining boards in Northern Ireland were contacted with regard to standard entrepreneurship provision and new initiatives but no details were made available to us.

It is interesting to note that nowhere is the issue of risk taking addressed, despite this being a key component of Kourilsky’s agenda, and a widely accepted issue within the business community. It is also important to emphasise that there is no coherent approach offered with regard to freelancing as distinct from setting up a business with employees, despite the importance of freelancing for the modern economy.

Entrepreneurship in Northern Ireland

There are a number of organisations and initiatives in operation in Northern Ireland designed to promote and support entrepreneurship and business start-up. A selection of those which are currently on going or which were in operation in the recent past are outlined below.

[Invest Northern Ireland](#)¹⁴ was formed in April 2002 by the Northern Ireland Government as their main economic development organisation. Its aim is to add value to the economy and create wealth. The organisation offers information, useful contact details and assessment tools on the web site as well as the chance to take part in a programme.

Its key objectives are:

- To promote Innovation in all its aspects, stimulate higher levels of R&D, design and improve knowledge transfer.
- To achieve higher levels of growth by indigenous and externally-owned businesses.
- To promote a more enterprising culture in Northern Ireland so as to raise overall level and quality of business starts.
- To attract high quality, knowledge-based investment from outside of Northern Ireland.

There are various aspects to the service provided including support for businesses that are set up to meet a local need and for those with the potential to trade outside Northern Ireland or on the world market. There is also an advice and information service to help women set up their own businesses.

¹⁴ www.investni.co.uk

The Start A Business Programme (SABP)¹⁵ falls into the first of these categories and is jointly funded by local councils, Invest NI and the European Union. The programme is designed to help people start a business, providing a package of advice, training and support. It offers participants the opportunity to market their business on the Internet and is part of Invest NI's goal of making Northern Ireland an exemplar location for starting and growing a successful business.

Enterprise Northern Ireland¹⁶ is the association of Enterprise Agencies in Northern Ireland. It has 1,538 business units in 40 locations throughout Northern Ireland. It exists to make Northern Ireland more enterprising and innovative and aims to achieve this through its members by:

- Supporting business and community enterprise at local, regional and international level;
- Focusing on business and community customer needs and articulating them to organisations which can command the resources required for local development;
- Ensuring a high and consistent quality of service is provided by all active Enterprise Agencies;
- Working with Government and its agencies, local authorities, businesses and communities to target resources on local needs;
- Providing a preferred, effective and cohesive route to market for services to business and community enterprise offered by Government and its agencies and local authorities;
- Promoting the continued development of active Enterprise Agencies and of the network as a whole and addressing the issue of the sustainability of the services offered by agencies and by the network;
- Providing development services to the Enterprise Agency network.

¹⁵ www.sabp-web.co.uk

¹⁶ www.enterpriseni.com

[The Start a Business Show](#)¹⁷ is organised in partnership with Invest NI and Enterprise NI. The show aims to increase entrepreneurial awareness in Northern Ireland and is targeted at people who are thinking about starting their own business. The Start a Business Show uses accessible community venues as well as larger city centre venues with a large selection of business advisors under one roof. The objectives of the Start a Business Show are to provide the information and motivation to the visitor and to progress their business idea to the next stage. The event is staffed by the local Enterprise Network plus a wide range of public and private sector organisations such as banks, solicitors, accountants and the Inland Revenue.

[The Enterprise NI Small Business Loan Fund](#)¹⁸ was established as a result of a review of Loan Funds carried out in 2000. The study identified a number of potential improvement areas in current provision including the need for standardised interest rates and loan amount across Northern Ireland. In response, Enterprise NI established a steering committee to develop a new loan fund which would implement the study findings. The £4.2 million fund was launched in April 2002 and is made up of the collective resources of existing Local Enterprise Agencies (LEA) and Belfast 1st Stop Shop loan funds and grant assistance from the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and Invest NI.

The Loan Fund can be accessed in each Local Council area through the Local Enterprise Agency. The fundamental aim of the Loan Fund is to make funding more accessible to those starting or operating a small business and in support of the loan, to provide advice on cash-flow and other business advice.

[The Enterprise Northern Ireland E-Commerce Programme](#)¹⁹ commenced at the beginning of December 2000 with funding secured from the Information Age Initiative, Invest NI, the International Fund for Ireland and Local Enterprise Agencies. The main aim of the project was to ensure connectivity and services for the tenant businesses within the 31 participating agencies.

¹⁷ www.startabusinessshow.com

¹⁸ www.enterpriseni.com/seedcapital.htm

¹⁹ www.enterpriseni.com/ecommerce.htm

The project was carried out in two phases – Hardware Procurement; and Cabling Configuration and Installation of the Network and Support Service. Now that the project is completed, approximately 350 tenants' small businesses have internet access and 1,750 email accounts have been set up. Over 1,500 tenants units have been cabled in 30 Enterprise Agencies and 32 sites across Northern Ireland thus enabling widespread small business Internet connectivity. In addition, approximately 350 PCs have been allocated to tenant small businesses and a further 150 PCs have been allocated amongst the 30 participating Enterprise Agencies. Already a number of tenant businesses are benefiting from the high-speed Internet Access and support services which the project offers.

The aim of the [Exploring Enterprise Programmes](#)²⁰, another initiative of Enterprise Northern Ireland, is to help foster a culture in which starting a business is a realistic, desirable and attainable proposition for participants. The proposed benefits include an opportunity to:

- Investigate your future prospects;
- Obtain a variety of relevant skills;
- Meet other similar people;
- Make use of one-to-one specialist advisory support;
- Identify and check out ideas for business;
- Collect information/direction to start-up grant programmes.

The support includes one-to-one mentoring, training, exploration of market research, networking, use of IT and financial planning.

²⁰ www.enterpriseni.com/exploring1.htm

[The Prince's Trust](#)²¹ offers start-up support to United Kingdom residents aged 18-30 who are unemployed and have a business idea but not the financial backup. The organisation offers low interest loans, on-going business support and specialist advice. Through practical support including training, mentoring and financial assistance, the Trust focuses its efforts on young people who struggle at school, are in or leaving care, are long-term unemployed or have been in trouble with the law.

[Youth Business International \(YBI\)](#)²² is a unit of The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum that helps disadvantaged young people realise their ambitions to become entrepreneurs. YBI brings together people in the corporate sector, civil society and government, who make their skills, expertise and facilities available on young people's behalf to provide access to finance, business mentoring and support to young entrepreneurs during the start-up and early development of their businesses. YBI is the co-ordinating body of a global network of organisations that deliver its programme of support to young people and who share common principles and working practices.

The YBI programme aims to deliver a huge range of benefits, from building the employability of young people to generating a culture of entrepreneurship and dynamism in the local economy.

[Shell Livewire](#)²³ is an international programme which encourages young people (16-30) to explore the self-employment option and provides free advice and support. Its main objective is to improve the opportunities available to young people, to help them develop and to realise their potential. Each year it runs competitions to identify role models and raise awareness of enterprise and young people in business.

²¹ www.princes-trust.org.uk

²² www.youth-business.org

²³ www.shell-livewire.org

[Unlock Your Potential](#)²⁴ is another programme designed to help young people to think through their ideas for business and test their commitment before taking the step of starting their own business. It involves the sharing of information that will help young people to decide whether or not they want to proceed with starting their own business. It outlines a list of qualities that might be important when starting your own business so that young people can compare their qualities to the list. Young people are encouraged to evaluate themselves honestly in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses and what they need to learn.

[Young Enterprise Northern Ireland \(YENI\)](#)²⁵ offers 14 programmes to different age groups and with different time scales and is currently piloting a fifteenth – “Business Venture” which is geared to 11-13 year olds. It offers for delivery in schools a range of enterprise promotion programmes, effective in developing enterprise attributes.

The programmes include:

A Company Programme for students aged 14-19 who set up and run their own real-life business.

A Graduate Programme geared towards 17-24 year-old students in higher education who set up and run their own business with an emphasis on the promotion of the SME sector.

A Team Programme designed for students with special needs.

A Project Business Course which offers a comprehensive insight into the world of business and economics for 13-17 year-olds.

A Primary Programme which contains 6 individual programmes for students aged 4-12 delivered in a sequential approach year-on-year, showing the relevance of education to the workplace.

An Entrepreneurship Master Class – one-day class promotes entrepreneurship and business operation among 13-18 year-olds.

Success Skills which includes a range of activities which develop interpersonal effectiveness among 14-18 year-olds.

²⁴ www.shell-livewire.org/unlockyourpotential

²⁵ www.yeni.co.uk

E-Commerce – Company, Team and Graduate Enterprise achievers aged 14-19 create their own e-commerce site and trade on-line.

Learning To Work is an enterprise training programme for young people aged between 14-16. Students are introduced to enterprise and business concepts through a variety of fun and interactive methods.

Travel & Tourism – promotes enterprise opportunities in the travel and tourism sectors to 14-17 year-olds.

GLOBE – allows 14-18 year-olds to learn about international trade by forming import/export companies with other nations.

Young Enterprise attempts to inspire and equip young people to learn and succeed through enterprise, it operates a number of programmes for young people on a learning-by-doing principle. Young Enterprise Northern Ireland has numbers greater than anywhere in Europe. In terms of participation as a proportion of population, Northern Ireland had a total of 32,000 participants in a population totalling 1.6 million.

[Northern Ireland Centre for Entrepreneurship \(NICENT\)](#)²⁶ was established as a result of a competitive bid made to the Science Enterprise Challenge (SEC) initiative. This was led by the University of Ulster in partnership with Queen's University Belfast and Loughry Campus. The primary aim of NICENT is to drive, promote and support entrepreneurship in science and technology subjects. The partners are committed to embedding a culture of entrepreneurship within the University community through:

- Integrating entrepreneurship training in programs of study.
- Supporting potential entrepreneurs in science and technology.
- Establishing national and international networks with leading best practice exemplars.
- Engaging with other stakeholders in all sectors.
- Recognising and rewarding achievement.

²⁶ www.nicent.ulster.ac.uk/profile.html

The majority of the programmes and support systems on offer are specifically targeting people who have already decided that they want to start their own business rather than offering the option to a wider group who may not yet have considered this option, or who may have considered it but are not intending to take this option at present.

The above represents a wide range of interventions to specifically support entrepreneurship. Much of the focus is on supporting the establishment of small businesses and their expansion. Such is the range of support services available, we considered it important to test out the extent to which both students and teachers were aware of the support available. The results as we shall see later are highly instructive.

College/School Initiatives

Within the Belfast Institute there have been a variety of initiatives in relation to the promotion and support of entrepreneurship. These include the following:

Entrepreneurship Unit

The Department of Business and Management was funded by Executive Programme Funding (EPF) to design an Entrepreneurship curriculum unit. This unit was designed to provide students with an introduction to entrepreneurship and the skills required to take advantage of business opportunities. It examines the characteristics of the entrepreneur and the main support services available. The outcome of this unit may be summarised as follows:

- Explain the contribution of entrepreneurship to the economy
- Develop selected personal entrepreneurial skills
- Apply key entrepreneurial skills to idea generation.

27 students started and completed the pilot between January and June 2003.

The unit was then made available to all HND Business and Marketing students in September 2003, a further 51 students chose this unit. The unit was offered to all

HND programmes across the Belfast Institute, but there was no take up in the other vocational areas. This being the case, we were keen to find out the extent to which there was or was not an interest in entrepreneurship among the young. As shall be seen, despite the above experience of the Belfast Institute our survey suggests that, if approached effectively, there is a very high demand among students for entrepreneurship studies.

The senior staff in the Department of Business and Management had planned to work with the Belfast Institute Senior Management Team to develop a strategy to encourage business start-up and to take student ideas a step further, this role has now been taken on by the new Department of Workforce and Economic Development which is currently being established within the Belfast Institute.

[Enterprise Link Project](#)

This project is funded through EPF, the Student Transfer Programme Area. It is a tripartite arrangement with the BELB, 6 North and West Belfast secondary schools and the Belfast Institute. Four members of staff from the Department of Business act in a business advisory capacity in the schools visiting 1 or 2 hours per week per school. The 6 schools are in partnership with Canadian and American schools and it is to these schools that the pupils will sell some of their produce. The aim is to give secondary school pupils experience and knowledge of owning and running their own business and to develop the skills associated with this.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Improve participation rates of 14-16yr olds in education and progression rates to FE
- Increase the number of young people achieving an element of external accreditation
 - AVCE Business Planning unit (Level II)
 - Start up Your Own Business (1st Dip Level II)
- Increase the opportunity for employment through broadening the skills base and encouraging local enterprise.

Hospitality Clinic

A Hospitality Clinic was set up by the Belfast Institute as a vehicle to support SMEs in the hospitality and catering industry and was an attempt to recognise and address the problem of small business failure and was a Department for Employment and Learning funded project. This is a specialist programme to help new and existing hospitality providers in Northern Ireland who wish to improve their competitive edge and business performance to adopt a more strategic approach to running their business. It offers the HCIMA quality marque for service excellence. The main elements of the clinic include:

- Business Needs Assessment
- Action Planning
- Business & Hospitality Training
- On-line Learning
- Mentoring & Support

30 Businesses signed up for the pilot, 17 completed and 11 achieved – hospitality assured. The project team won a BT ILT award and a Beacon award for Blended Learning. This initiative has the potential to be rolled out into other vocational sectors if the funding is made available.

Women Into Self Employment (WISE)

A team of staff are currently being appointed to facilitate the “Women Into Self Employment (WISE)” project, which is a new two-year project designed to encourage women students at the Belfast Institute who are taking vocational courses such as Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy, Fashion, Holistic & Sports Therapies and Soft Furnishings to consider and prepare for self-employment or work in a small business. The project will help women who are seeking to return to the labour market to prepare for, and overcome the barriers to, the economic opportunities in self-employment.

Early Staff Interviews

Our early staff interviews were very fruitful and insightful from a variety of standpoints. In this scene setting introduction we focus on a few of the key features to emerge.

First, there was widespread welcome for research into the attitudes of the young. Many commented that while much was known about the views of some key groups, such as business leaders and academics, much less was known about the views and perceptions of the young. It was recognized that this lack of understanding of the views of the young was a weakness within some programmes.

Second, some interviewees readily agreed that established programmes often take no account of perceptions of risk. Furthermore, it was widely accepted that if risk was considered it was likely that risk was associated with being entrepreneurial, but not with seeking conventional employment. It was accepted in discussion however that this was illogical and that risk needed to be better understood, and seen as present in all aspects of personal and career decision-making.

Third, the majority of those interviewed conceded that entrepreneurship programmes were often based on the assumption of setting up a business with the prospect of employing staff. No programmes could be recalled where the focus was on freelancing, and this despite the fact that the majority of self-employed in Northern Ireland are, as we have already seen, freelancers.

Fourth, it was widely accepted that, despite much public rhetoric, and despite the existence of a wide variety of initiatives over many years, the Northern Ireland economy was much less enterprising and entrepreneurial than is needed.

Fifth, it was widely accepted that the development of entrepreneurial skills among the young will be very beneficial, and not least from a personal development point of view, even among those young people who will never go on to be entrepreneurs.

Sixth, most interviewees considered the “soft skills” involved in entrepreneurship to be a key, and some suggested that it would be useful if perceptions of soft skills could be involved in our research. We have been able to do so, and we would argue to very interesting effect.

Overall most interviewees were keen to see new avenues being explored and used to influence the development of future curricula.

Findings

Before examining our findings from both the survey and action science sessions we conducted, we note in the following paragraphs some issues which influenced the focus of our study.

Contextual Comment

We have already noted above from our initial interviews a recognition that freelancing is often ignored. This was confirmed by aspects of our desk-top review. Studies of business start-ups and of entrepreneurship often do not distinguish between simple self-employment and running a business with one or more employees. Self-employment is for example, where an individual freelances, in many cases works from home, and has therefore in the language of Marilyn Kourilsky “made a job”. As we argued earlier when setting the scene, this is an important but oft-ignored feature of the modern economy. We also noted many thousands of people work from home in Northern Ireland.

In studies conducted by Inter-ed in Scotland in 2000 and 2003²⁷, the researchers thought it likely that young people discounted simple self-employment from their considerations when asked about views on running their own business. Although this could not be proved at the time, we chose in this study to explain to respondents what was meant by self employment and running their own business, and encouraged them to consider both as “entrepreneurial” and distinct from being in conventional employment. This seems, as we shall see, to have been an important innovation in this study, as there are some significant differences of view dependent upon the focus taken.

²⁷ Inter-ed Ltd *Youth Enterprise Strategy Attitude and Awareness Study* (Unpublished, for Careers Scotland Renfrewshire, 2000 and study repeated in 2003)

In our survey we wanted to test out if young people could discriminate between self-employment and running a business in responding to questions, and if so what the differences were. We believe our findings in this regard are particularly revealing and important for the provision of effective entrepreneurial education.

Furthermore, recent research from The University of Paisley²⁸, also in relation to Scotland, has suggested that a significant majority of school pupils have part-time work and are therefore becoming personally familiar with conventional forms of employment while still young and at school. This, arguably, may influence their perceptions of the labour market. We therefore sought to find the extent to which our young respondents had experience of paid employment, and through action science sessions within classes, sought to measure their perception of the Northern Ireland labour market.

Thus, although this study is about attitudes towards entrepreneurship, we have sought to use the lessons of recent research to ensure the study explores new issues often set aside in research into entrepreneurship.

Part-time working

We start by considering the number of respondents who claim to have experience of part-time employment within the month previous to their completing the questionnaire. The specific question set was,

“In the last month have you done any work for which you have been paid? (For example, working in a shop, in a burger bar, a paper round, child minding or other paid activity).”

The results are very much in line with the findings from recent research in Scotland, confirming that the majority of young people from the age of 14 upwards will have current or very recent part-time work experience.

²⁸ Our thanks to Dr Jim McKechnie for briefing us on his forthcoming study for Careers Scotland in relation to school pupil employment.

Table 7: Recent part-time work by age.

	All		14–16years		17-18		19 and over		No age stated	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Had worked	1599	70.6	587	62.3	719	75.4	292	80.2	1	20.0
Not worked	640	28.3	346	36.7	223	23.4	67	18.4	4	80.0
No response	25	1.1	9	1.0	11	1.2	5	1.4	0	00.0
Totals	2264	100	942	100	953	100	364	100	5	100

No less than 70.6% of respondents claim recent involvement in part-time work, the percentage rising in line with ages. Even amongst 14-16 year olds, the great majority at 62.3% claim to be engaging in some form of part-time employment.

However, although this is clearly a major feature of the life of young people, we found little evidence that part-time employment is used positively within the curriculum.

It is interesting to note that more extensive recent research from The University of Paisley has concluded that there is a positive correlation between many forms of part-time work and academic attainment in schools.

Perceptions of the labour market

We explored during action science sessions with a sample of respondents perceptions of the labour market. First, we asked them how many adults they thought were in part-time employment in Northern Ireland. We presented them with five options and allowed group discussion before inviting them to make a selection. (We used the most current data available at the time of the study to include the best estimate of 118,000). In addition we presented them with additional information, such as the number of people in full-time employment, thus giving them a broader sense of the labour market prior to asking them to come to some conclusion as to the likely number of part-time workers. The results reveal a considerable over-estimate of the numbers in part-time employment. The following table reveals the distribution of judgments.

Table 8: Estimates of Northern Ireland adults employed part-time.

Estimate	%ge of participants
62,000	2
118,000	12
176,000	21
231,000	48
297,000	17
Total	100

With some 458 young people taking part in discussions before choosing, it is interesting to note a significant over-estimate of the number of people in part-time employment. Using the above data the mean estimate of the group is 213,730 a figure very considerably in excess of the actual situation.

We undertook with the same participants a similar activity, this time estimating the number of self-employed in Northern Ireland (at the time of this study estimated at around 98,000). The following table reveals the distribution of estimates.

Table 9: Estimates of Northern Ireland adults self-employed.

Estimate	%ge of participants
23,000	9
41,000	29
69,000	34
98,000	19
137,000	9
Total	100

In this situation, there has been a very considerable under-estimate of the number of people in self-employment. Using the above data the mean estimate of the group is 68,370 a figure very considerably less than the actual situation.

Thus it would appear perceptions of the labour market underestimate the numbers in self-employment, and overestimate the numbers in part-time employment. This has occurred despite being informed of the actual numbers in full-time employment, and unemployed, which should have provided an accurate basis for making estimates against. Furthermore, that such estimates should follow a process of peer discussion, suggests that as a group, young people in Northern Ireland have an inaccurate

perception of the current state of the labour market. This in itself may be a matter worthy of addressing in education programmes.

Perceptions of Preferences

Keeping in mind that the action science sessions suggest that young people may have misperceptions about the nature of the labour market, we turn to consider survey findings relating to future perceptions.

We invited all our survey respondents to rank order their ambition preferences for 10 years into the future. This allowed individuals to present their ideal, as against their expected, future. The results present a very interesting picture, as the table makes clear.

Table 10: Ambition for self in 10 years time.

Option	%ge of first choices
a. Being in a job which gives you security	48.8
b. Being self-employed (working for yourself)	9.6
c. Running your own business where you employ people	29.8
d. Being well paid, but changing jobs regularly	8.5
e. Working to make ends meet, but with a lot of spare time	3.4
Total number of 'first preferences'	100

Based on first choices, we can see that the most popular first choice is being in a job which gives you security. Interestingly, the second most popular choice is running your own business, with a smaller percentage for being self-employed and working for yourself. Indeed the exact same pattern is found when the analysis is disaggregated by age, and by whether or not individuals live in an EPF area or not. Furthermore, the rank order mirrors findings from similar research in Scotland among young people. Therefore, there appears to be a strong preference for being in a job that provides security, but this should not obscure the fact that a very strong 39.4% have a preference for either self-employment or running their own business.

We pursued this theme within the action science session from a slightly different focus. Participants discussed with their class peers what they expected them to be doing in 10 years' time. They were given a range of possibilities and asked to estimate the percentage of their class ending up in each destination. As will be noted, in this exercise we placed self-employment and running your own business in the same category. Following this, they were asked to reflect on discussions and indicate what they expected themselves to be doing. The results are as follows.

Table 11: Employment expectations for class in 10 years time.

Options for class	%ge estimate
a. In full-time employment	51
b. In part-time employment	19
c. Studying full-time	7
d. Self-employed or running your own business	13
e. Doing something other than any of the above	10
Total	100

Table 12: Employment expectations for self in 10 years time.

Options for self	%ge estimate
a. In full-time employment	66
b. In part-time employment	4
c. Studying full-time	3
d. Self-employed or running your own business	20
e. Doing something other than any of the above	6
Total	100

Comparing the above two tables demonstrates that full-time employment is the dominant expectation, and particularly so when individuals reflect on themselves. However, there is a significant minority expected to be self-employed or running their own business, and more so when reflecting on themselves.

Recalling that this covers, in the majority of cases, those in the age range 14-21, we can compare these expectations with the actual circumstances of young adults as found in the Census of 2001²⁹.

Table 13: Employment expectations compared to census data.

Options	Census data 2001	Expectations for class	Expectations for self
a. In full-time employment	56.5	51	66
b. In part-time employment	10.4	19	4
c. Student	1.5	7	3
d. Self-employed or running your own business	8.3	13	20
e. Doing something other than any of the above (including economically inactive)	23.3	10	6
Total	100	100	100

The above reveals that young people expect a higher percentage of their class peers to be self-employed or running their own business in 10 years time than is the case today, and that an even higher percentage expect themselves to be self-employed or running their own business than is the current situation. Taken together with the survey results on future preferences, where a total of some 39.4% hoped (very different from expected) to be either self-employed or running their own business, this suggests that among the youth of Northern Ireland there is a significant percentage who either want or expect to be self-employed or running their own business in ten years time.

Although a majority still targets full-time employment, this nonetheless suggests that there are many with a positive attitude towards making the choice of becoming an “entrepreneur” and making a job rather than taking a job.

²⁹ For comparisons, we have used Theme Table 58 from the recently published Census publication at http://www.nisra.gov.uk/census/pdf/theme_tables.pdf (April 2004). This is based on the age range 25-34.

Education and Entrepreneurship

In our survey we asked a series of questions relating to education and entrepreneurship. We started by asking respondents if they could recall ever having attended a class “*where you have been taught about what is involved in becoming self-employed or running your own business*”. Our expectation was that the older the respondent, the more likely they were to have experienced such entrepreneurship related education, and therefore the more likely they were to recall it. The results from the survey show precisely the reverse as the following table indicates.

Table 14: Education and entrepreneurship.

	All	16 and under	17 or 18	19 and over
	%	%	%	%
Been taught	58.3	68.5	53.2	45.9
Not taught	41.3	31.0	46.6	54.1
No response	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.0
Totals	100	100	100	100

As the above table reveals, the older the young people the less likely are they to recall having attended classes of the type described. Our research did not allow us to find an explanation for this unexpected situation. However, it seems safe to conclude that there is considerable scope for ensuring larger numbers of young people are given the opportunity to undertake classes related to entrepreneurship.

However, a key issue from a motivational point of view is whether or not young people would actually want such classes. We therefore asked our respondents if they wanted to “*be given the opportunity to attend classes to learn about being self-employed or running your own business*”. It might have been expected that the numbers actually wanting such an educational opportunity might relate to the numbers wanting or expecting to be self-employed or running their own business one day. However as the following table reveals, there is in fact a much stronger demand for such classes among young people of all ages.

Table 15: Demand for education in self-employment or running your own business.

	All	16 and under	17 or 18	19 and over
	%	%	%	%
Should have classes	90.7	91.4	90.7	89.0
Shouldn't have classes	9.0	8.5	9.1	9.9
No response	0.3	0.1	0.2	1.1
Totals	100	100	100	100

It is clear from the above that across all age groups in our study, approximately 90% of pupils and students actually want classes which deal explicitly with self-employment and running their own business. This is significantly greater than the percentages recognising they have had some exposure to such classes. Furthermore, it raises questions as to why some currently available programmes, such as the one developed under the EPF initiative by the Belfast Institute, have not attracted stronger levels of participation.

Perceptions of Current Programmes

We asked our respondents to rate some of the entrepreneurship programmes currently available, if they had participated in them. The results summarised in the following table seem to further confirm a positive attitude towards such programmes of learning. We presented respondents with a short list of entrepreneurship programmes, and asked them to rate them using a 0-10 scale with the higher the number the more positive they were about the programme.

Table 16: Entrepreneurship programmes rated.

	All		16 and under		17 or 18		19 and over	
	No.	Mean	No.	Mean	No.	Mean	No.	Mean
Young Ent (Start Own Business)	634	8.09	258	8.19	296	8.07	78	7.90
Young Ent (Global Project)	335	7.36	149	7.28	144	7.40	41	7.54
Shell Livewire	338	6.43	133	6.26	156	6.43	49	6.92
Invest N.Ireland Programme	294	7.21	128	7.05	125	7.34	41	7.32
The Prince's Trust in N.Ireland	261	6.51	118	6.22	102	6.75	41	6.76
Other enterprise programme	153	7.27	91	7.27	45	6.91	17	8.18

The above table was taken from survey respondents. Although over 2000 respondents took part in the survey, not all had attended such programmes, while some had attended more than one. We have therefore stated the number of respondents involved in each area. The numbers responding with experience of the programmes stated are sufficiently large for the above table to provide a meaningful insight into perceptions.

The first matter to note in general is that all stated programmes achieved positive ratings, and indeed no programme achieved a rating of less than 6 from any age group. This also held good when data was disaggregated by whether or not respondents came from an EPF area. Thus entrepreneurship programmes of the type stated above are generally highly valued by participants, again confirming real scope for developing the entrepreneurship agenda, and achieving good levels of participation.

An issue which might be relevant in the construction of curricula relates to the perceptions pupils have regarding the importance of different types of generic or soft skills associated with being entrepreneurial. It is to assess this that we now turn.

Emotional Intelligence

We used a well-researched model of personal and interpersonal competencies to explore perceptions of the importance of specific skills required to run one's own company, or being self-employed, compared to the importance of those same skills for general employment. Goleman's³⁰ inventory of "*emotional intelligence*" competencies may draw criticism for its use of a controversial term such as intelligence, but it is widely regarded as a valid and reliable inventory of capabilities in the areas of self awareness, self management, social skills, and social awareness. Furthermore, these competencies cover many of the so-called soft skills our interviewees claimed to be of particular importance in developing enterprising and entrepreneurial behaviour.

Goleman's research indicates these are the skills required for effective workplace leadership, and the responses of our Northern Ireland informants support the idea that emotional competencies are perceived as crucial to any employment, but even more so – across each and every competency – to being self-employed and starting and running a business.

Goleman's work on emotional intelligence is sophisticated and written in sophisticated language. We sought to take his 20 emotional intelligence competencies and write them in accessible language for the young person and the young adult layman.

We wanted then to test the extent to which respondents thought these important for employment, for self-employment and for running your own business. Our hypothesis was that some would be seen as more important for running your own business (such as leadership), some more important for employment (such as honesty), and some more important for self-employment (such as knowing what you are good and bad at). However, this is not confirmed by the responses. For each and every emotional competency, respondents have rated them as more important for running your own business, next for being self-employed and finally for being in employment. The systematic nature of responses is particularly telling in our judgment.

³⁰ Goleman, Daniel. 2000, 1998, 1995. *Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam and the Harvard Business Review.

We asked them to rate each competency for importance using a 0-10 scale where 5 is the neutral pivot and the higher the number the higher the importance. As can be seen, every competency is viewed as of some real importance whether for those in employment or for those who run their own business. Some are considered more important than others. We start by considering all respondent views.

In the following table the number of each skill is the order in which they were presented to the respondents for rating. The mean summary scores are the mean scores of the skills for that area of capability.

Given the number of respondents, the differences among the summary scores for employment, self-employment and running your own business are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 17: Emotional intelligence competencies rated for importance.

Skill	Mean scores		
	Employed	Self-employed	Run own business
Self awareness			
2 Being confident	8.22	9.18	9.42
5 Knowing what other people think about you	6.47	7.60	8.00
9 Knowing what you are good and bad at	7.81	8.87	8.90
Summary	7.50	8.55	8.77
Self management			
4 Flexibility (able to change to new circumstances)	7.64	8.38	8.54
6 Being honest	8.61	8.96	9.06
10 Keeping yourself from losing your temper	8.65	8.77	8.99
13 Being keen to do well	8.44	9.27	9.39
15 Always trying to be successful	8.12	9.18	9.46
18 Good at taking any chances that come along	7.76	8.82	8.97
Summary	8.20	8.90	9.07
Social awareness			
1 Looking after customers	8.53	9.30	9.45
7 Understanding the other person's point of view	8.08	8.40	8.87
11 Understanding your workplace	8.54	8.90	9.16
Summary	8.38	8.87	9.16
Social skills			
3 Getting the co-operation of people	7.89	8.49	9.26
8 Thinking up new ideas	6.52	8.97	9.31
12 Being a good listener and talker	8.20	8.70	9.14
14 Being a good leader	6.86	8.57	9.54
16 Being good at changing people's opinions	6.95	7.96	8.46
17 Being good at making friends	8.11	8.13	8.39
19 Good at getting people to agree rather than argue	7.82	8.38	9.07
20 Helping people to become better at work	7.42	8.08	9.36
Summary	7.47	8.41	9.07

As can be seen from the above the perception of young people in Northern Ireland is that in all areas the skills are most important, and therefore present the greatest challenge, in the context of running your own business. They are seen as next most challenging in the context of self-employment or freelancing. Although employment is perceived as posing the least challenging context, it is nonetheless important to note

that even here all skills are rated above the neutral pivot of 5, thus confirming they are seen as important.

We note in particular that the difference in ratings is particularly pronounced in the areas of self-awareness and social skills. For example with a mean rating of 7.5 for self awareness in the context of employment, and 8.77 in the context of running your own business, this equates to self-awareness being seen as 17% more challenging in the context of running your own business compared to employment.

Given the remarkable consistency in pattern of responses across all respondents, we sought to disaggregate results by a range of variables. The results show that although there are variations among different groups, the general pattern remains remarkably consistent. We present the mean scores for a range of variables in the following tables, starting, on the following page, with the difference between EPF based and non-EPF based respondents.

Table 18: Emotional intelligence competencies rated for importance by EPF area.

Skill	Mean scores					
	EPF area			Non-EPF area		
	Em- ployed	Self empl'd	Run own business	Em- ployed	Self empl'd	Run own business
Self awareness						
2 Being confident	8.42	9.21	9.40	8.12	9.17	9.43
5 Knowing what other people think about you	6.75	7.77	8.17	6.32	7.50	7.90
9 Knowing what you are good and bad at	7.95	8.90	8.98	7.73	8.86	8.86
Summary	7.71	8.63	8.85	7.39	8.51	8.73
Self management						
4 Flexibility (able to change to new circumstances)	7.81	8.43	8.65	7.54	8.36	8.49
6 Being honest	8.68	8.97	9.09	8.57	8.96	9.04
10 Keeping yourself from losing your temper	8.75	8.81	9.05	8.60	8.74	8.97
13 Being keen to do well	8.51	9.27	9.38	8.41	9.26	9.40
15 Always trying to be successful	8.18	9.22	9.45	8.08	9.16	9.47
18 Good at taking any chances that come along	7.93	8.78	8.95	7.67	8.85	8.99
Summary	8.31	8.91	9.09	8.15	8.89	9.06
Social awareness						
1 Looking after customers	8.61	9.29	9.41	8.49	9.30	9.47
7 Understanding the other person's point of view	8.21	8.49	8.94	8.01	8.36	8.84
11 Understanding your workplace	8.55	8.91	9.19	8.53	8.90	9.15
Summary	8.46	8.89	9.18	8.34	8.85	9.15
Social skills						
3 Getting the co-operation of people	8.04	8.49	9.26	7.82	8.49	9.26
8 Thinking up new ideas	6.64	8.96	9.33	6.46	8.98	9.31
12 Being a good listener and talker	8.14	8.76	9.13	8.23	8.67	9.15
14 Being a good leader	7.19	8.64	9.53	6.68	8.53	9.55
16 Being good at changing people's opinions	7.11	8.08	8.52	6.87	7.90	8.43
17 Being good at making friends	8.31	8.21	8.47	8.01	8.09	8.35
19 Good at getting people to agree rather than argue	7.98	8.56	9.14	7.74	8.29	9.04
20 Helping people to become better at work	7.55	8.20	9.35	7.34	8.02	9.37
Summary	7.62	8.49	9.09	7.39	8.37	9.06

Both EPF and non-EPF area respondents follow the general pattern described earlier. However, we also note that those living in EPF areas, characterised by relatively high levels of deprivation, see all areas in all contexts as a little more important and therefore more challenging than those living in non-EPF areas.

Furthermore, although the differences are comparatively small, we also note that for EPF area respondents the scores across the three work contexts are more tightly clustered than for non-EPF respondents, largely due to significantly higher scores in the context of employment. Thus this seems to suggest that young people within EPF areas see the sets of skills as particularly important and challenging in all work contexts, although still viewing running your own business and self-employment as the two most challenging contexts.

Turning now to both age and gender, we produce below summary tables for each area of capability, which reveal some interesting patterns.

Table 19: Summary of emotional intelligence competencies rated for importance by age.

Domain	Employed			Self employed			Run own business		
	16 and under	17-18	19 and over	16 and under	17-18	19 and over	16 and under	17-18	19 and over
Self awareness	7.48	7.43	7.73	8.48	8.57	8.69	8.73	8.77	8.88
Self management	8.15	8.24	8.24	8.79	8.96	8.99	8.95	9.14	9.19
Social awareness	8.30	8.45	8.42	8.75	8.89	9.13	9.04	9.23	9.30
Social skills	7.44	7.43	7.66	8.34	8.41	8.59	8.98	9.14	9.13

Table 20: Summary of emotional intelligence competencies rated for importance by gender.

Domain	Employed			Self employed			Run own business		
	Female	Male	Sig.	Female	Male	Sig.	Female	Male	Sig.
Self awareness	7.63	7.37	<0.001	8.64	8.45	0.001	8.86	8.68	0.001
Self management	8.39	8.00	<0.001	9.04	8.74	<0.001	9.24	8.89	<0.001
Social awareness	8.63	8.12	<0.001	9.01	8.71	<0.001	9.31	9.00	<0.001
Social skills	7.64	7.29	<0.001	8.55	8.26	<0.001	9.18	8.94	<0.001

The above tables make interesting reading. The general pattern of ratings already discussed holds good regardless of age group or of gender. However, it is also possible to detect other interesting features.

For example, with only one small exception, we can see that across all domains the older the respondent the more likely they are to give higher ratings in the contexts of

self-employment and running your own business. Thus the older the student, the more challenging they are likely to view these skills in the contexts of self-employment and running your own business.

We also note a very significant gender divide. This confirms that in all domains and across all contexts, females are likely to rate these skills as more important, and therefore as more challenging. We have added significance levels to this table to demonstrate that comparatively small rating differences can nonetheless be significant, given the scale of our survey.

In summary, young people in Northern Ireland view “soft skills” as defined by Goldman’s emotional intelligence framework, as important for all aspects of the labour market under investigation. However, they saw the context as particularly challenging in the context of running your own business, suggesting therefore that they may be viewing traditional employment as the easiest of the options available to them.

We would also argue the above data confirms the importance of dealing explicitly with such skill areas if the confidence of young people is to be raised in relation to their capabilities as budding entrepreneurs. We note that this confirms the views of those professionals we interviewed as part of this study. There is a recognition that so-called “soft skills” are important. Our research confirms not only that young people agree that soft skills are important, but that this is particularly true in entrepreneurial contexts. Thus raising both skills levels and the confidence of young people in their skills is an important issue which must be addressed in effective entrepreneurship programmes.

Rating Agreement

In addition to all the foregoing, we also presented our survey respondents with a series of statements and asked them to rate them for agreement using a 0-10 scale, where 10 indicates complete agreement, 0 complete disagreement and 5 neutral. The results provide further insights into the perception of young people in Northern Ireland.

We start by reviewing questions relating to the issues of risk and the future.

Table 21: Risk and the future.

Statement	All	16 and under	17 or 18	19 and over
I care more about having free time than about earning money	4.02	3.87	4.18	3.94
I would like to be self-employed one day	6.01	6.08	5.71	6.65
I want a good steady job in the future	9.17	9.14	9.23	9.11
Being your own boss sounds good but its very risky	7.51	7.50	7.63	7.25
I would like to run my own business one day	6.94	7.11	6.58	7.43
I wouldn't know how to go about starting my own business	6.23	6.05	6.46	6.09
I would rather be employed than self-employed or run own business	5.52	5.36	5.79	5.14

The above table is entirely in tune with earlier findings, but provides further insights and alternative measures. Note the remarkably strong positive ratings to the statement “*I want a good steady job in the future*”. The mean score of 9.17 is of a much higher order than any other factor. It confirms the dominance of a search for stability in employment.

Compare this with the strong sense of “*Being your own boss sounds good but it's very risky*”, and once more we find a clear sense of perceived risk being a deterrent, while the certainties afforded by a “*good steady job*” are highly attractive.

This raises a number of important issues. First, it suggests a generally risk averse approach to decisions regarding future careers. Second, this and other findings, including qualitative discussions, suggest that risk is seen as associated with self-

employment or running your own business, but certainty is more likely to be associated with conventional employment.

This, of course, is hardly an accurate perception of the modern labour market. The increasing rate of technological and social change is increasing the turbulence of the labour market, and reducing the extent to which any young person can expect to enter employment and remain in undisturbed employment for their working life. Indeed, some have argued³¹ that the majority of young people entering the labour market today can expect on average around 10 career or job changes in their working life.

Risk has two components. Firstly, the probability or chance of an event occurring, and secondly the qualitative nature of the event. Thus a relatively high probability of running a business that fails would be construed as a “*risk*”, whereas a relatively high probability of running a business that was successful would more likely be described as “*chances of success*”. Decision analysts, such as Professor Jack Dowie³², are therefore critical of the unhelpful and unreflective way in which the term “*risk*” is often used in decision making.

Indeed, some of the other mean scores suggest that our respondents are positive in some regards towards self-employment, suggesting that there is no cultural antipathy towards successfully being self employed or running your own business. This further suggests that the component of risk that is causing a risk averse reaction relates to the chances or probability of not being successful.

At the very least, our findings suggest that education programmes should directly address the concept of risk; should consider the chances of success as much as the chances of failure, and should consider the risks associated with conventional employment as well as the risks associated with self-employment or running your own

³¹ This claim was made by Chancellor Gordon Brown in a speech at Babcock Rosyth in Scotland in 2001 when launching a pilot programme of Individual learning Accounts.

³² Professor of Health Impact Analysis at London School of Tropical Medicine, and a long term critic of the use of the word risk in many circumstances, because it obscures rather than clarifies an effective understanding of the issues.

business. Indeed, in more advanced programmes of learning there may even be a case for introducing the skills of decision analysis.

The above table also reveals that there is a positive rating of 6.23 for the statement “*I wouldn't know how to go about starting my own business*”. This suggests that for many there is a lack of clarity in terms of who is in the marketplace providing advice and support. This was further tested, by asking respondents to state where they thought advice and support could be found. Respondents were encouraged to state as many sources as possible. In the following table we indicate the number and the percentage of respondents naming particular bodies. Note that we have not assumed the right to edit or amalgamate the list in any way. We also note the lack of awareness related to many of the programmes reviewed earlier in this report.

Table 22: Sources of help – student perspectives.

Source	No.	%
Invest NI	746	32.95
Bank/building society	233	10.29
LEDU	230	10.16
Business owner	166	7.33
Go for it	149	6.58
Job Centre	111	4.90
Livewire	68	3.00
Citizens advice bureau	60	2.65
Princes Trust	45	1.99
College	38	1.68
Careers Officer	38	1.68
Young Enterprise	35	1.55
Careers teacher	28	1.24
Local enterprise centre	26	1.15
Careers advisor	21	0.93
GO	20	0.88
Job agency	18	0.80
Learn Direct	16	0.71
IDB	16	0.71
Accountant/financial advisor	16	0.71
Enterprise NI	12	0.53
Local Council	12	0.53
T&EA	11	0.49
Lawyer	10	0.44
EU	10	0.44
European Union	9	0.40
Other sources (41)	85	3.75
Respondents who made a suggestion	1411	62.32
Respondents who did not make a suggestion.	853	37.68
Total respondents	2264	100

In total, 62.32% of respondents named 1 or more bodies. We do not claim all those named would in fact be appropriate bodies. However, perhaps of greatest significance is the fact that over 37% of respondents were unable to suggest even one potential source of advice or help. Of those bodies that were named, none achieved a

recognition factor even approaching 50%, and indeed, the great majority of bodies named were stated by less than 10% of respondents. We also note that some of the programmes that do exist and that were discussed earlier in this report received no recognition at all among young people.

This table therefore confirms the significance of the positive rating given to the statement “*I wouldn’t know how to go about starting my own business*” as recorded in the earlier table.

Turning now to consider a series of related perceptions, we again find some interesting insights into the views of the young adult in Northern Ireland.

Table 23: Mean ratings of statements by age.

Statement	All	16 and under	17 or 18	19 and over
There is more opportunity to enjoy work in established companies	6.08	6.16	6.03	6.01
I like the idea of working in a small company	5.39	5.36	5.36	5.53
I would like a job with the freedom to make my own decisions	7.95	7.95	7.91	8.02
Being self-employed would mean not having anyone to help me	4.34	4.41	4.40	3.96
Running your own business would involve a lot of extra work	8.41	8.35	8.45	8.44
Being self-employed would develop a lot of my skills	8.25	8.18	8.29	8.34
Running my own business would develop a lot of my skills	8.38	8.32	8.41	8.46

Notice the strong perceptions that both self-employment and running your own business are options where young people perceive a lot of skills would be developed, arguably a positive view of this aspect of self-development. This again suggests that being an entrepreneur is seen as having positive potential. It also is a rational response given earlier findings on emotional intelligence skills where we noted that both self-employment and running your own business were seen as more challenging in these “soft skills” areas.

Other features of interest from this table include the fact that most agree that running your own business would involve a lot of extra work, which might be construed as a negative feature of being an entrepreneur.

The only other area where strong views are evident is in regard to wanting the “*freedom to make my own decisions*”. This is an area which might also be explored in entrepreneurship programmes, not least because, arguably, there is more scope for personal decision making while either self-employed or running your own business, than in a work context where you are working for someone else.

Finally, we note from the above two tables, that the general interpretations we have drawn hold good for all respondents, regardless of age. We also wish to note that when disaggregating by whether or not respondents were from an EPF area, the same broad patterns were evident.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Being an Entrepreneur

We explored in some detail during action science sessions, the perceptions young people have of the main advantages and disadvantages of running your own business. They were provided with 10 possible disadvantages and then 10 possible advantages. These were then used as a focus for peer discussion, prior to individuals selecting the three from each category they considered most important. The results as we shall see are very interesting, and confirm some of the key conclusions thus far drawn from our survey data.

We begin by considering perceptions of the main disadvantages of running your own business. Since individuals were asked to select the three main disadvantages from a list of 10 that was not mutually exclusive, the numbers do not add to 100%, but rather indicate the percentage of respondents selecting particular reasons.

Table 24: Disadvantages of running your own business.

Disadvantages	%ge of all respondents
1. Its much riskier than being in a job	67
2. You need to spend too much time working	39
3. You have too many responsibilities	52
4. Its too difficult	11
5. I don't think I'm suited to being my own boss	10
6. It wouldn't be enjoyable	6
7. Its bad for your health	21
8. Most people who start a business fail	18
9. You need to have a lot of experience and money to start with	52
10. I just don't like the idea of running my own business	10

The first and most important observation is that no less than 67% of respondents see as a major disadvantage the risk being much greater than being in a job. This is very strong confirmation of earlier findings that perceptions of risk among the young (and as we shall see shortly, perceptions reinforced by the attitudes of teachers) are a key barrier to entrepreneurship.

The next two most frequently cited disadvantages relate to having too many responsibilities and to the perception that a lot of experience and money is required from the outset. Arguably, the latter is a misperception. Although a lot of experience and money would no doubt be useful, it is not a pre-requisite for starting a business. The perception that running your own business brings too many responsibilities, echoes with some of the emotional intelligence findings we reported on earlier.

Encouragingly however, we find further confirmation that there is no strong ideological or cultural resistance to entrepreneurship. Only 10% of respondents indicated they just did not like the idea of running their own business, and only 6% thought it would not be enjoyable.

There are signs of some misperceptions among significant minorities of our respondents. For example, some 18% think that the majority (50% +) of people who start a business fail, which of course grossly exaggerates the rate of business failure. This suggests another aspect of misperception of the labour market.

Thus we have strong confirmation of earlier findings and particularly in the area of risk.

In terms of advantages the following table records further interesting insights into the perceptions of the young in Northern Ireland.

Table 25: Advantages of running your own business.

Advantages	%ge of all respondents
1. You have a chance of making more money than being in employment	59
2. It would be enjoyable	22
3. It would be good to be your own boss	49
4. It would be an interesting challenge	43
5. It would give you more control of your life	41
6. People would respect you more	18
7. It wouldn't be as stressful as working for someone else	8
8. I just like the idea of running my own business one day	12
9. It gives you more power	31
10. It would be good for your health	8

The strongest advantage is seen as the chance of making more money than in conventional employment. This is very interesting in that it is arguably the positive side of risk - risking success.

Following this, we find the perception that it would be good to be your own boss and that it would be an interesting challenge are the next most regularly favoured advantages. Notice here too we are presented with the other side of the responsibility coin. While having too many responsibilities was seen as a major disadvantage, the perception of an interesting challenge is seen as a positive advantage.

Thus when we compare disadvantages and advantages we can see a strong relationship. The most widely viewed disadvantage and advantage relates to issues of chance and outcomes. This further strengthens earlier calls for this to feature in entrepreneurship programmes.

We can also see a similarity between responsibilities (seen as a disadvantage) and interesting challenge (seen as an advantage). Again, there is an opportunity to deal with such matters in entrepreneurship programmes.

Having examined in some depth the views of the young, we turn, briefly, to consider some of the related views of their teachers.

Teacher Perspectives

Although this study has been primarily concerned with the views of the young, we took the opportunity to survey the views of a sample of teachers in the schools and colleges taking part in this survey. A total of 123 staff generously gave of their time to take part, 59 from the college sector and 64 from schools. Some 63% were female and 37% male, and they taught across all age groups involved in our study. School teachers were spread across a wide range of secondary subjects, and college lecturers were in the main involved in vocational education programmes at various levels. In total 64 separate subjects were identified as taught by our teacher respondents (some teachers teaching more than one subject, such as Key Skills and Business Studies, or French and German). This survey therefore captured responses from a wide range of teaching staff.

We asked staff if they discussed labour market issues with their students, and as is evident from the following table, some 86.2% of all respondents claimed that they did. This attests to the importance of understanding the labour market among teaching staff.

Table 26: Labour market discussed in class.

Discuss	All		College		School	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	106	86.2	52	88.1	54	84.4
No	15	12.2	6	10.2	9	14.1
Unknown	2	1.6	1	1.7	1	1.6
Total	123	100	59	100.0	64	100.0

We asked teachers if they were for or against classes specifically dealing with entrepreneurship. The results were as follows.

Table 27: Need for entrepreneurship classes.

Attitude	All types		College		School	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
For	113	91.9	54	91.5	59	92.2
Against	9	7.3	5	8.5	4	6.3
Unknown	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	1.6
Total	123	100	59	100	64	100

It is interesting to note that from our sample the vast majority were in favour of entrepreneurship classes, with less than 10% of respondents in both colleges and schools against. The general message is therefore of very strong support for entrepreneurship based studies.

When disaggregated by gender we find that there is no significant difference between the sexes in their attitudes towards entrepreneurship education as the following table reveals.

Table 28: Need for entrepreneurship class by gender.

Attitude	All		Female		Male		Not stated	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
For	113	91.9	71	91.0	41	93.2	1	100
Against	9	7.3	6	7.7	3	6.8	0	00.0
Unknown	1	0.8	1	1.3	0	00.0	0	00.0
Total	123	100	78	100	44	100	1	100

We presented our teacher respondents with a series of statements and asked them to rate them for agreement using a 0-10 scale. The following table lists mean score responses to all statements, disaggregated by college or school.

Table 29: Staff opinions – college and school.

Opinion	All types		College		School	
	No.	Mean	No.	Mean	No.	Mean
I think Northern Ireland has a very enterprising economy	121	5.69	57	5.61	64	5.75
I am familiar with the changing nature of the job market	123	6.66	59	6.75	64	6.58
Most of my pupils/students want a good steady job in the future	123	8.83	59	8.98	64	8.69
Being your own boss is risky	123	7.77	59	7.93	64	7.63
I would welcome short, regular briefings on the labour market	123	7.33	59	7.51	64	7.16
I do not think self-employment is a realistic option for my pupils/students	121	3.12	59	3.75	62	2.52
I would welcome more support for enterprise skills development	122	7.41	59	7.10	63	7.70
I do not think it is my role to advise students about their future	123	2.33	59	2.39	64	2.27
I do not think more time should be given to teaching enterprise skills	123	2.97	59	3.12	64	2.83
Knowing more about the job market is not relevant to my role	123	1.88	59	1.88	64	1.88

There are many interesting insights available from the above table that the reader may wish to linger on. However, in the context of this study, and in the light of the attitudes of young people, the following seem particularly important points to make.

- There is no strong belief that Northern Ireland has a very enterprising economy.
- Teachers are modestly positive about being familiar with the changing nature of the labour market, but there is considerable scope for improvement implied by the modestly positive score of 6.66.
- There is a relatively strong positive score, at 7.33, for welcoming short, regular briefings on the labour market. This is logical in the light of the point made above. Conversely, there was very strong disagreement, at 1.88, with the statement implying knowing more about the job market was not part of their role, and similarly there was disagreement, at 2.33, with the statement implying it was not their role to advise students about their future.
- Teachers are broadly positive, with a score of 7.41, in relation to welcoming more support for enterprise skills development. Interestingly, schoolteachers

are significantly more positive than college lecturers. Conversely, teachers disagreed strongly, at 2.97, with the statement implying no more time should be given to enterprise skills development.

- There was disagreement, with a rating of 3.12, to the statement “*I do not think self-employment is a realistic option for my pupils/students*”. Put more positively, self-employment is not dismissed as a realistic option, at least for some of the teachers, pupils and students.
- Intriguingly, and entirely in tune with their pupils/students perceptions, teachers believe most of their pupils/students “*want a good steady job in the future.*” Indeed the rating of 8.83 demonstrates very high levels of agreement with this statement.
- Finally, and once more entirely in tune with pupil/student perceptions, teachers, with a mean statement rating of 7.77, are strongly of the view that “*Being your own boss is very risky*”.

The above is very illuminating, and particularly in relation to perceptions of risk. We recall that pupil and student respondents gave a mean rating of 7.51 to the statement “*Being your own boss sounds very good, but it’s very risky*” and some 67% of action science participants considered risks associated with running your own business in comparison to conventional employment was a major disadvantage. Now we find teachers give a 7.77 agreement rating to the statement “*Being your own boss is very risky*”. Such near identical ratings suggest that both pupils/students and their teachers perceive risk as strongly associated with being your own boss. It may therefore not be unreasonable to suggest that teachers in addition to pupils/students need to develop their understanding of risk in relation to the labour market.

We also invited teachers to rate the same set of programmes as pupils and students, to assess whether or not there were strong differences of opinion as to their value. As the following table demonstrates, teachers, like their pupils and students, have a broadly positive view of the programmes selected for rating.

Table 30: Entrepreneurship programmes rated by staff.

Programme	All types		College		School	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Young Enterprise (Start Own Business)	35	7.89	5	7.00	30	8.03
Young Enterprise (Global Project)	6	6.83	2	7.50	4	6.50
Shell Livewire	14	6.43	2	8.00	12	6.17
Invest N.Ireland Programme	2	9.00	2	9.00	0	0.00
The Prince's Trust in N.Ireland	8	7.25	5	6.60	3	8.33
Other enterprise programme	6	8.67	1	7.00	5	9.00

The above data, combined with the earlier data from pupils and students, shows a clearly positive view of a number of existing programmes. This is further confirmation that this is an area likely to provoke a positive reaction amongst pupils, students and teachers.

We also invited teachers to list all those organisations or programmes from which advice and support could be sought for starting your own business. Teachers were more likely to be able to respond than pupils or students, and a number of organisations and programmes had much higher visibility amongst teachers than was the case amongst pupils and students. Thus while just over 62% of pupils and students were able to name at least one source of assistance, over 95% of teachers were able to name at least one.

However, teachers, like their pupils and students did not name some of the current support services available, suggesting real scope for developing staff awareness of support services for the budding entrepreneur.

The table which follows details the responses of teachers. Once more the percentages in this table are the percentages of teachers able to cite individual sources of assistance, and since teachers could name as many sources as they wished, percentages do not add to 100.

Table 31: Sources of help by staff.

Source	No.	%
Invest NI	66	53.66
Ledu	46	37.40
Bank	28	22.76
Princes Trust	19	15.45
Livewire	15	12.20
Local Enterprise agency	8	6.50
T&EA	8	6.50
Young Enterprise	8	6.50
IDB	7	5.69
Citizens advice bureau	5	4.07
Small Business Agency	5	4.07
Start up programme	5	4.07
Enterprise Ulster	4	3.25
Go	4	3.25
LEDCOM	4	3.25
Local Council	4	3.25
Someone in Business	4	3.25
DEL	3	2.44
Inland Revenue	3	2.44
Job Centre	3	2.44
College	2	1.63
Local Business Centre	2	1.63
Operation Ireland	2	1.63
University	2	1.63
Other sources (one mention each)	28	22.76
Respondents who made a suggestion.	117	95.12
Respondents who did not make a suggestion.	6	4.88
Total respondents	123	100

One matter we wish to bring to the reader's attention is that very few pupils, students or teachers named colleges or universities as sources of advice. Given the importance of the college and university sectors for the skilling of the general population, it could be this is an indication of the need to strengthen the role of colleges and universities in relation to providing entrepreneurship support.

Finally we invited teachers to add comments on entrepreneurship education. Following a content analysis of comments, the following summarises the key points raised.

- There is a need to ensure teachers are kept up to date on changing labour market conditions, and particularly in areas relevant to the subjects they teach.
- It would be very useful to have a dedicated information website and/or printed packs for teachers, pupils and students.
- Many teachers want more opportunities made available within the curriculum for enterprise type skills, but this has become more difficult in recent years because of assessment and curriculum pressures.
- Many teachers would like to see an increase in practical sessions, including visits to local businesses, expanded.
- There is a demand for more guest speakers from among local entrepreneurs.
- There was also a recognition of the need to develop more enterprising teachers.

In summary our researches have identified a series of key lessons. Such is the robustness of the research we believe it appropriate to draw a series of firm conclusions and to make some specific recommendations. It is to that task we now turn.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Northern Ireland is weak in terms of business birth rate compared to the rest of the United Kingdom.
2. Northern Ireland has ambitions to become an entrepreneurial and knowledge driven economy.
3. Some 98,234 people in Northern Ireland were self-employed in 2001 and 57% of this group were operating as freelancers.
4. The freelance self employed are increasingly significant in the modern economy.
5. International research confirms the importance of need for achievement; creativity and initiative; risk taking and setting objectives; self confidence and internal locus of control; need for independence and autonomy; motivation, energy, and commitment; and persistence for entrepreneurship.
6. Most current business courses focus on structure and culture of organisations; motivation & leadership styles; size; goals; classification and stakeholders. Most courses also have a finance unit and a marketing/strategy unit.
7. However, many current programmes of study do not deal with key issues such as risk and the labour market.
8. CEA are working to promote entrepreneurship from primary school through to higher education.
9. There is a wide range of agencies and programmes in Northern Ireland aimed at supporting individuals in developing their business ideas.
10. Interviews with stakeholders suggested that issues such as soft skills, risk and the changing nature of the labour market were important issues for entrepreneurship education.
11. More than 70% of pupils and students who responded to the survey worked part-time in addition to studying full-time.
12. Respondents significantly over estimated the scale of part-time employment in Northern Ireland and significantly underestimated the scale of self employment.
13. Almost half (48.8%) of all young people seek future employment that provides security but more than 1 in 3 have the ambition to be in some form of self employment in the future.

14. However only 1 in 5 individuals expect to be self-employed in the future.
15. Some 58.3% of young people could recall having been taught about entrepreneurship.
16. Some 90.7% stated a desire to be taught about entrepreneurship.
17. Current programmes of education dealing with entrepreneurship were positively rated by respondents.
18. Across each and every one of twenty emotional intelligence skills, respondents rated them as important for employment, self-employment and running your own business.
19. However, across each and every skill area the perception is that they are particularly challenging in the context of running your own business and self-employment.
20. In responding to detailed statements it became clear that young people highly value “a good steady job” in the future.
21. Young people perceive “being your own boss” as very risky and admit to not knowing how to approach starting your own business.
22. Most young people were able to name a source of help for those seeking to become entrepreneurs but many current programmes were not mentioned.
23. Young people would like a job that gave them the freedom to make their own decisions but perceive that running your own business would involve a lot of extra work.
24. Young people believe that self-employment would enable them to develop their skills.
25. The main disadvantage of running your own business according to 67% of our respondents is that it is much riskier than being in a job. Other disadvantages according to the majority of respondents included the perception that “you need a lot of experience and money to start with” and that “you have too many responsibilities.”
26. The majority of respondents identified as a main advantage of running your own business that “you have a chance of making more money than being in employment.”

27. Teachers claim to discuss labour market issues in class, but would welcome support in the form of regular briefings on the labour market.
28. Teachers gave strong support for classes dealing with entrepreneurship.
29. Teacher views mirror student views in that they see being your own boss as risky and believe that most of their students want a good steady job in the future.
30. Like students teachers give positive ratings to existing entrepreneurship programmes.
31. Teachers were more likely than students to identify sources of help in setting up their own business but like students were unable to identify all existing forms of support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a need for further research into the incidence of part-time employment amongst pupils and students. Such research should include a focus on how part-time employment could be integrated into programmes of learning.
2. There should be a policy review of entrepreneurship programmes in Northern Ireland, this should review the role and extent of entrepreneurship within the curriculum in schools and further education colleges.
3. Entrepreneurship programmes for young people in Northern Ireland should include:
 - a. Addressing the issue of risk as identified in this report.
 - b. Reviewing labour market trends including the incidence and role of all forms of self-employment.
 - c. Ensuring that freelancing in addition to establishing an employing business is specifically addressed.
 - d. Developing a wide range of soft skills including those identified within this report.
 - e. Using local role models to facilitate part of the delivery of entrepreneurship programmes.
4. Programmes of staff development for both school and college staff should be devised and should incorporate a-e above.
5. At the outset of the academic year teaching staff should be provided with a summary review of current trends in the Northern Ireland labour market.



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