

# Special Issue of the Irish Journal of Management *Entrepreneurship Education: The Path to Entrepreneurial Mindsets?*

Editorial

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## INTRODUCTION

This special issue considers how entrepreneurship education is responding to current social, environmental and technological challenges by fostering more collaborative, inclusive and sustainable approaches to developing entrepreneurial mindsets in higher education. We are delighted to present eight papers on this topic across two issues of the Irish Journal of Management, including one opinion piece on the role of the educator. The centrality of the role of the educator emerges as a common theme in the development of entrepreneurial mindsets at the personal, student and interdisciplinary level. Five papers are included in this present issue, with the remaining papers appearing in issue 43(2) of the Irish Journal of Management, continuing this important special issue focus in the next issue.

Overall, this special edition considers the importance of the path to entrepreneurial mindset development. Papers by Murphy et al. and Tiernan et al. consider student-focused interventions, addressing learning from failure and digital tools to enhance entrepreneurial mindset development, while those by McQuillan et al., Zherdeva et al., and Botelho Jnr. et al. focus on pedagogy and cross-disciplinary approaches to sustainable entrepreneurship. In the next issue, the three papers by O'Dwyer, O'Brien et al. and Lyons et al. shine a light on the role of the educator in developing their own entrepreneurial mindset, the educator' learning journey and influencing student interest in entrepreneurship education.

Collectively, the papers presented in this special focus on entrepreneurship education successfully shed light on entrepreneurship education's role in entrepreneurial mindset development. Entrepreneurship education plays a vital role in fostering an entrepreneurial culture and is crucial for preparing students and graduates for the challenges of an increasingly complex global economy. Key benefits include developing essential skills in creativity, innovation, problem solving, resilience, and collaboration. By providing these benefits, entrepreneurship education not only prepares students for success in business but also equips them to become adaptive, creative leaders ready to face the dynamic realities of the modern workplace.

## TRENDS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

This special issue on entrepreneurship education explores important trends that have emerged in entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial mindset development over the last decade. These include:

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1. *Experiential project-based learning*: There is a growing emphasis on hands-on, practical experiences in entrepreneurship education, which facilitate students' understanding of the entrepreneurial process, from idea to execution (Motta and Galina, 2023). Such experiences include the development of business plans, simulations, projects, hackathons, accelerator initiatives, providing consultancy services, and mentoring programmes that allow students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios and in doing so develop practical skills and build confidence (Bell and Bell, 2016). In this edition, the article by Botelho Jnr. et al. provides a focus on hackathons as an education approach in entrepreneurial mindset development.
2. *Interdisciplinary approach*: Entrepreneurship education is increasingly integrating knowledge from various disciplines, fostering collaboration between business schools and other departments such as engineering and technology (Walsh et al., 2021).
3. *Sustainability focus*: There is an increasing emphasis on sustainability challenges as a context for entrepreneurship (Pardo-Garcia and Barac, 2020), preparing students to address global challenges and create entrepreneurs and initiatives with positive environmental and social impacts. The importance of sustainability is evidenced in this special issue, addressing sustainability literacy (see Zherdeva et al., this issue), university-wide approaches (McQuillan et al., this issue) and individual initiatives (Botelho Jnr. et al., this issue) in response to these challenges.
4. *Entrepreneurial mindset cultivation*: There is more emphasis on developing psychological traits associated with the entrepreneurial mindset, such as creativity, risk-taking, and opportunity recognition (Larsen, 2022). Murphy et al. contribute to the discussion of mindset cultivation by shining a light on learning from failure in this issue.
5. *Technology integration*: The use of technology in entrepreneurship education is expanding, with digital tools, serious games and simulation platforms enhancing learning experiences and preparing students for the digital business landscape (Fox et al., 2018).

These trends have had, and continue to have, significant implications for the role of educators. The teaching role has transitioned from traditional lecturing to facilitating learning, where teaching effectiveness is increasingly dependent on the ability of educators to facilitate learning and the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support entrepreneurial action (Neck and Corbett, 2018). The interdisciplinary approach requires educators to collaborate across disciplines and integrate entrepreneurship education into different subjects, while the sustainability context requires integration of sustainability concepts into their curricula. Educators have become more proficient using digital tools, including leveraging technologies such as artificial intelligence into their teaching methods, and they are required to develop new assessments that effectively evaluate entrepreneurial skills and mindsets, moving beyond traditional testing approaches.

The educator's role is clearly a lynchpin in entrepreneurship education, with most entrepreneurship education frameworks recognising this role. For example, Todding and Venesaar (2018) propose a teaching and learning model of entrepreneurship education highlighting "teacher factors", which include teaching and learning approach, competencies and experiences, teaching goals, objectives and assessment. They argue that teacher factors interact with the learning environment and student factors leading to teaching and learning activities and learning outcomes. However, the model does not reflect on how these teacher's factors are shaped. Jones and Matlay (2011) find that the educator orientation directly shapes knowledge of entrepreneurship education curricula, student understanding of entrepreneurship education, instructional strategies and assessment. More recently, Brush et al. (2024) note that the factors influencing the educator role are not as well understood and suggest that role identity is a significant influence on how effectively entrepreneurship educators develop their own entrepreneurial skills as well as the overall learning experience of their students. Their research finds that the role identity of entrepreneurship educators is significantly influenced by their self-efficacy, job satisfaction and personal values. The centrality of the educator in the development of entrepreneurial mindsets emerges as a theme of interest in the next issue (issue 43(2)), where O'Dwyer, O'Brien et al. and Lyons et al. each delve into the entrepreneurship educator role in some depth.

## SPECIAL ISSUE CONTRIBUTIONS

Given these trends in entrepreneurship education, which have seen a transformation of educational approaches and challenges for educators, it is not surprising that there has been a proliferation of research in this area. At

this point, there are a multitude of published systematic literature reviews of entrepreneurship education research, including Rideout and Gray (2013), Hägg and Gabrielsson (2020), and Talukder et al. (2024). This special issue further contributes to the development of this field, by considering entrepreneurship education through educator, sustainability and pedagogy lenses:

“Awakening the entrepreneurial mindset” by Breda O’Dwyer is a discussion piece which considers how we as educators can nurture entrepreneurial mindsets in our students. Contributing to our understanding of teacher self-development factors, she argues that we as entrepreneurship educators should be authentic and awaken our own entrepreneurial mindsets, asking what it means to be entrepreneurial in both a personal and professional context. This involves packing and repacking our entrepreneurial suitcases as we move through our own journey of discovery.

“Knowing the dancer from the dance – Exploring the influence of teaching portfolios in entrepreneurial education” by Emma O’Brien and Gavan Cleary maintains the focus on the role of the educator by exploring their importance in the learning process. This paper shines a light on educator practice by investigating the influence of educator teaching portfolios in entrepreneurial education as a demonstration of individual learning philosophy. This tool, they argue, can enhance the professional and personal development of the educator.

Demonstrating the value of the educator in entrepreneurship education is the focus of the article by Roisin Lyons, Ciarán Mac an Bhaird and Eoghan McConalogue. Their article titled “The importance of creativity and self-efficacy in enterprise education”, investigates the importance of creativity and self-efficacy in enterprise education. By applying Social Cognitive Career Theory, they examine the factors affecting students’ entrepreneurial tendencies and corresponding module satisfaction, using a pre- and post- module survey. The crucial role of the educator in developing student interest is an important finding from the study.

Sustainability is addressed in several articles in this special issue. Exploration of this concept as it relates to entrepreneurship education is led by Deirdre McQuillan and Sylvia Gavigan in their article, “The impact of climate entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions: a university-wide climate entrepreneurship programme”. Given that universities have an important role in contributing to Sustainable Development Goals, through both education and research, this paper examines pedagogy which can impact sustainable entrepreneurship. The authors question both how students are impacted by pedagogy and how different interventions influence student impact.

Anna Zherdeva, Intesar Madi, Abrar Alzakawani, Deirdre McQuillan and Lucia Morales argue for interconnected pedagogical approaches in their article, “Developing entrepreneurial mindset through sustainability-informed entrepreneurial education”. They argue for the need to increase sustainable literacy within universities by embracing relevant learning theories in entrepreneurship education. The article calls for collaborative, multidisciplinary and experiential approaches, which will assist in the design and development of dynamic, agile, flexible and adaptive learning environments.

The use of hackathons is considered by Sergio Botelho Jnr., Sharon O’Brien, John Organ and Bill O’Gorman in their article, “Hackathons: a challenge-based learning (CBL) tool in entrepreneurship education”. This case study of a residential hackathon suggests that hackathons provide a vehicle for alignment of entrepreneurship education with social, ecological and environmental systems. The study found that hackathons improve collaboration and provide practical experiential learning for real world challenges. The authors argue that hackathons as a CBL learning tool enables the development of important competencies aligned with EntreComp.

Linda Murphy, Ilka Heinze and Karl-Florian Platt address the topic of failure in entrepreneurship education in their article, “Ready to fail? An exploratory study of perceptions of learning from failure of entrepreneurship education students in Ireland”. The article argues that entrepreneurship education needs to balance individual learning preferences (personality and learning styles) with the need to generalise in a learning setting. As a way forward, the authors present a framework, which focuses on the relational dynamics of learning from failure.

Peter Tiernan and Enda Donlon explore digital storytelling and entrepreneurship education, “Digital storytelling and enterprise education: A creative tool for presenting entrepreneurial ideas”. Taking a student perspective, digital storytelling in both learning and assessment is studied in this article. This qualitative study presents encouraging findings around the use of digital storytelling in the development and presentation of students’ entrepreneurial ideas. Notwithstanding challenges in upskilling students’ digital skills using new tools, digital storytelling also offers avenues for creativity in communicating those entrepreneurial ideas in engaging ways.

In addition to author contributions, this special issue could not have been delivered without the significant efforts of our dedicated paper reviewers who diligently and expertly guided the enhancement and refinement of the

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## CONCLUSIONS

While entrepreneurship education has seen significant attention in the last twenty years, it is certain to remain important in the future as higher education institutions are charged with preparing students for increasingly complex challenges and a more rapidly evolving enterprise and employment landscape. At a European level, the importance of development of entrepreneurship competences is reflected in the rollout of EntreComp, the European Entrepreneurship Competency Framework as part of the New Skills Agenda for Europe (Bacigalupo et al, 2016). The importance of entrepreneurship education has also extended beyond students in higher education and is now firmly established among lifelong skills development priorities. The papers in this special issue provide an important contribution to the understanding of the path to entrepreneurial mindset development and provide useful insights to the role of the educator. While these topics will undoubtedly require further investigation, the research presented here enriches ongoing conversations and opens new avenues for inquiry. The guest editors extend their gratitude to each contributing author for shedding light on diverse facets of entrepreneurship education, advancing our collective knowledge, and inspiring future research in this dynamic and ever-evolving field.

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