

EDITORIAL

The Enterprise in Higher Education initiative (EHE) was launched by the Secretary of State for Employment in December 1987 and was subsequently introduced into the University of Ulster (UU) in October 1990. "The main aim of EHE is to assist institutions of Higher Education develop enterprising graduates in partnership with employers" (Training Agency, 1989). The UU welcomed the initiative and has proceeded to integrate in an explicit way the concept of enterprise in the educational and learning experiences of students undertaking undergraduate degree courses.

This special issue of IBAR is the end result of a conference – Enterprise in Action – held one year into the Enterprise in Higher Education initiative at the University of Ulster. The majority of the articles in this issue were originally presented as conference papers. The articles may be categorized into two groups. The first group, articles 1–5, are concerned with the fundamental principles of EHE. Articles 6–10 are more specific and deal with the operating of particular EHE strategies and projects.

Ann Tate's article begins by rehearsing some of the more common connotations of "enterprise". It then goes on to analyse the factors which encourage the development and promotion of the Enterprise in Higher Education programme in general, and in the University of Ulster in particular. In so doing a context is set for the remaining articles.

Jeanette Harrison and Roger Stuart deal with a key issue in management education in their discussion of generalisable versus specific competency frameworks. They anticipate that the outcome of a project aimed at senior management of small to medium-sized companies (SMEs) will be a framework that is generalisable to SMEs in Northern Ireland.

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The company perspective presented in Ann Bailey's article is essential for the overall understanding of the EHE initiative. The article begins by explaining why industry, business and commerce are interested in the development of personal transferable skills and continues by giving an appreciation of the meaning of the word "skills" in the context not only preparation for work but also preparation for life. The article highlights how higher education through the EHE initiative can aid students to develop their personal transferable skills and concludes that it is imperative that "Higher Education and Industry work closely together to the benefit of all three partners – HE, Industry and, most importantly, the students."

Nial Cairns examines some implications of the EHE tripartite partnership of staff, student and employer. The article focuses on the opportunities that EHE provides for three groups of students, and the ensuing challenge for staff of a shift towards an action learning perspective.

Richard Harrison and Janet Leckey outline the evaluation strategy for EHE in the University of Ulster. They do so with reference to the discussion document on local evaluation strategy for EHE prepared by the Tavistock Institute. The article sets the evaluation strategy for EHE in the University by i) examining the concept of local evaluation at HEI level, ii) identifying the need for a framework in which to set local evaluation and iii) relating what is happening in the University of Ulster.

Dan Fleming's well focused article examines how competence is defined in an educational framework in terms of vocational, academic and higher education. It is cogently argued that higher education needs, as a matter of urgency, to think about how its definitions of competence differ from those now being defined in a new framework and examines this in relation to the humanities. The author concludes by offering five suggestions for appropriate styles of learning in the humanities.

Paula Durkan *et al* describe how the need for a new approach to management education and development is being met in the University of Ulster through the development of an innovative International Directors Programme in Executive Leadership. They elegantly interweave the empirical findings and theoretical insights that led to the implementation of the programme. They focus on the design of an assessment centre most appropriate and relevant to senior executives in a predominantly small and medium-sized company environment in Northern Ireland.

John Thompson reports the findings of two surveys carried out by the

University of Ulster to elicit not only the expectations and experiences of employers involved in graduate recruitment but also the experiences in the labour market of recent graduates. The objective of this very relevant work was to identify enterprise competencies and in so doing it contributed to the foundations of the EHE programme at the University of Ulster.

Donald Cullington has described how Enterprise in Higher Education enabled the Music Department of the University of Ulster to develop an Alexander-based training scheme. The use of the Alexander Technique is explained and the ways in which it may benefit a performer are outlined. The implementation of the scheme is described and the resultant outcomes are highlighted. Within the University EHE is helping student performers to take greater responsibility for their actions, to show more initiative in how music should be interpreted, and to become more enterprising in every way.

In the final article Neville Neill outlines how the Faculty of Informatics has interpreted the Enterprise philosophy. He details projects for which funding has been obtained from the Enterprise in Higher Education Unit. These projects are related to both student-centred and staff development activities. A high level of awareness of the Enterprise initiative within the Faculty is evident with over 60% of all undergraduates not on placement being involved in at least one Enterprise related event.

The agenda of the EHE programme within the University of Ulster is derived from its aims and objectives as defined in the Tate article. The current strategy for achieving these aims and objectives has been through curriculum development, staff development and employer development. A most important role of EHE has been the part it has played in stimulating, sponsoring and supporting innovation and development. It acts as a catalyst and its success to date may be measured in terms of how it has promoted University-wide change. EHE may have heralded the systematic integration of action-based skills into knowledge-based educational institutions. The ultimate hope is that through EHE we will develop enterprising graduates more attuned to the needs of a changing environment.

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