

## The future of enterprise and entrepreneurship education

### Introduction

With the publication of this feature, we celebrate the 20th double special issue published in *Education + Training*, under my guest editorship. These special issues aimed to publish empirically rigorous articles that focussed exclusively upon emergent, evolving and controversial aspects of small business and entrepreneurship development research. The series commenced publication in 2000, at the beginning of the New Millennium, and continued to feature every year without interruption and to great acclaim, recognition and success, ever since. The importance, contribution and impact of this annual, double special issue has been recognised widely, both in the UK, as well as in industrially developed and developing countries. In addition, it has played a significant role in the inception and development of entrepreneurship and enterprise education in emergent economies and nations in transition. I am reliably informed that individual articles as well as whole issues continue to be used as learning and training tools by a wide range of stakeholders including educators, local and national agencies, policy makers and government representatives, in a variety of socio-economic, political, educational and developmental contexts.

From an academic and applied research perspective the success, longevity and impact of these special issues represent ample and irrefutable evidence that Higher and Further Education Institutes across the world could and should contribute to economic development and wealth creation on a national and international basis. During a 1999 Vocational Education and Training (VET) conference in Leeds UK, I was approached by the then Editor of *Education + Training*, Dr Rick Holden, and offered to guest edit a double special issue on VET in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The first special issue appeared in 2000 and included 14 papers focussing on VET in the SME sector of the UK economy. It met with resounding success and it was aptly named, for the obvious reasons, “the professor maker” (Matlay, 2008). For those who might be interested in the background, beginning and development of these special issues, I will outline below a brief summary of its origins and development.

I first encountered *Education + Training* during my undergraduate studies at the University of Warwick Business School (UWBS UK), in the early 1980s. Later on, I used extensively the content of this journal for my MEd and PhD studies, both of which focussed upon (VET) in SMEs. It followed logically that I should also contribute articles and disseminate my research results in this long standing, international journal. Consequently, as an early career academic and researcher, I first published in *Education + Training* in 1997 and in 1999 I won the Best Research Paper Award in this journal, for my article “Vocational Education and Training in Britain: A Small Business Perspective” (Matlay, 1999). Other single authored, as well as collaborative articles followed, and these built up, over the years, to a critical mass of publications in emergent SME research (see, e.g. Matlay, 2000, 2001, 2002; Matlay and Addis, 2002). Collaborative projects with overseas colleagues resulted in several articles that focussed on international aspects relating to VET in SMEs (Matlay *et al.*, 2003; Matlay, 2004, Matlay and Hussain, 2007; Jones and Matlay, 2011; Jones *et al.*, 2012). In 2008, I was invited to explore and comment on the role of *Education + Training* in promoting quality research focussing on VET in SMEs (see Matlay, 2008). This topic and the impact of *Education + Training* on it, also resulted in a number of prize winning contributions to specialist conferences, journal articles and research volumes.



Beginning with 2005, I became aware of the rise of Entrepreneurship as an applied research topic and its direct and indirect link to small business and enterprise development. As part of the international activities and events related to the Entrepreneurship Forum, lead by my former colleague and long standing collaborator, Professor Jay Mitra, I began a research project exploring the impact of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education (E&EE) on entrepreneurial outcomes. In two “cornerstone articles”, both published in *Education + Training*, I set out a tentative agenda for the future direction of research in E&EE (see Matlay, 2005, 2006). The impact of these two publications has been widely acknowledged and lead to a substantive increase in high quality submissions to the double special issue and general issues in *Education + Training*. Importantly, most of these articles focussed on E&EE as well as research related to aspects of entrepreneurial learning and new venture creation. There can be little doubt regarding the impact that these special issues have had upon the development and growth of research focussing on VET in SMEs and E&EE. As far as the future of this double special issue is concerned, I would like to reassure stakeholders that we will continue to attract and publish high quality, empirically rigorous and original articles in these and other emergent topics of entrepreneurship research. Although a great deal has been achieved in the past 20 years, much is still to be done and we should not rest upon our hard earned successes: the future of this double special issue is both bright and challenging.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to all our contributors, including authors, evaluators and referees, without whose hard work and commitment this double special issue would have not come to fruition. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Martin McCracken, Editor of *Education+Training*, and the production team at Emerald Publishing Group, for their continuing support in delivering this double special issue.

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**Further reading**

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