

Introduction: “the internationalisation of enterprise and entrepreneurship education”

The current double special issue is the 18th consecutive annual publication, to appear continuously and without interruption since it was first published in the year 2000. It represents the latest and much anticipated addition to a long and successful series of specialised articles that focus upon emergent and rapidly developing educational topics related to entrepreneurship. It complements, to a large extent, other general and specialist issues to appear in *Education+Training*, as part of a valuable collection of offerings that contribute to the growing reputation of this premier education journal, in its 59th year of publication.

The international context of the double special issue is important in relation to the need to compare and contrast as well as generalise research results, their discussion and application in practice. This is particularly relevant to most aspects related to education and training, in itself an international topic of considerable local, regional and global importance. In the emergent field of enterprise and entrepreneurship education, the special issue has acquired a well-deserved reputation for quality and empirical rigorousness. It adds continuity and impact to a rapidly developing body of knowledge on entrepreneurial education and training, aimed specifically at the interrelated areas of entrepreneurship, new venture creation and small business management and development.

Every year, I receive numerous telephone calls and e-mail communications from a wide and growing range of stakeholders, across industrially developed and developing nations as well as countries in transition. Similarly, the number of academic, research and practitioner contributions received for consideration in this reputable special issue has grown year by year, representing in itself ample evidence of academic interest, research reputation and practitioner impact. It is not only the number and range of contributions that have increased significantly over the ensuing years of continuous publication. Perhaps even more importantly, the quality, impact potential and empirical rigorousness of articles submitted for consideration have also improved accordingly. Obviously, we cannot publish all the articles sent to us by the many contributors that keenly pursue the dissemination of their research results. A number of innovative and influential papers on enterprise and entrepreneurship education have also found their way into general issues of *Education+Training*, adding further value and relevance to this fast-growing, subtopic of the field of entrepreneurship and new venture creation. Individually and cumulatively, the expanding mass of high-quality theoretical, practical and cross-disciplinary contributions that have been published in this journal cater specifically for the discerning needs of a wide and demanding range of stakeholders involved in teaching and developing more and better qualified entrepreneurs.

I genuinely believe that by providing a choice of high-quality teaching and training materials, readily accessible in one extended issue, we contribute to the entrepreneurial future of those individuals who are either “pulled” or “pushed”, by personal and/or socio-economic circumstances, into taking an alternative and arguably more rewarding route, which differs radically from more traditional employment or managerial careers. In aiming to, and actually becoming entrepreneurs, these individuals not only remove themselves from local and regional employment markets, but also contribute, on average, in excess of half of the new private sector subcontract and job opportunities. Employment contribution by entrepreneurs and their smaller firms is in addition to entrepreneurship



generated wealth creation, gross national product, innovation and research and development. Indeed, in a global context, most if not all governments perceive entrepreneurship and small businesses as the panacea to their countries' socio-economic, cultural and political challenges. It stands to reason, therefore, that encouraging and supporting new venture creation through enterprise and entrepreneurship education has recently benefited from a rise to political agenda, policy-making topicality and related official recognition of its personal and public benefits.

Whichever way we measure it, article and author citation rates in this area of research are high and steadily rising. Furthermore, judging by the number of downloads as well as enquiries and requests that I keep receiving, year by year, citation rates are likely to continue to climb even higher. An international success such as that gained over the years by *Education+Training*, within a highly competitive environment such as academic publishing, has been achieved and maintained by working diligently and in close collaboration with stakeholders, being keenly aware of their specific needs and by publishing a range of relevant articles and impactful special issues. Within the wider publication portfolio of this journal, the double special issue on enterprise and entrepreneurship education has played, and I can confidently predict that will continue to play, an important role. As its long-term Guest Editor, I am always pleased to receive constructive feedback and suggestions about future directions and emergent themes that might be of interest to stakeholders. It is good to hear just how highly respected this journal is, and how much its readership is looking forward to perusing the contributions published in both general and special issues.

The 18th double special issue in *Education+Training*, which continues its long-term focus on enterprise and entrepreneurship education, contains 16 articles which, individually and collectively, present a set of critical contributions in a range of themes, concepts and contexts associated with this rapidly expanding topic of research. True to its mission and objectives, this special issue is meant to be convergent rather than divergent in its approach, and sets out to make an empirically rigorous addition to the growing body of knowledge in this field of research. I believe that there are still many gaps in our knowledge relating to education in an entrepreneurial context. This is largely evidenced by innovative and emergent approaches to, and the development and consolidation of, both the theory and the practice of enterprise and entrepreneurship education, taking place across national borders and continents. Research in this topic should not be viewed as fixed or stationary; over the last few decades, it has gathered depth and breadth at the same breathtaking speed as the development of related modules, courses, internships and student spinoffs. It is my genuine belief that enterprise and entrepreneurship education will continue to develop and grow rapidly as well as internationalise widely, until the maturity of its theoretical and practical base will approach its research saturation point.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all contributors, referees and advisors who have worked with me on this double special issue. I am grateful to Dr Martin McCracken, Editor of *Education+Training*, Louise Lister, Publisher and Adam Griffiths, Content Editor, as well as the production team at Emerald Publishing, for their support and hard work in delivering this special issue.

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About the Guest Editor

Professor Harry Matlay is currently the Dean of Research at the Global Independent Research in Coventry, UK. He specializes in Entrepreneurship Education, Training and Learning. Previously, he held senior positions at the SME Centre and the Warwick University Business School, and professorial positions at Birmingham City Business School and the University of the West of Scotland Business

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656

School. Prior to gaining his PhD Degree in Vocational Education and Training from the University of Warwick, he worked in senior positions in industry and commerce, as an Entrepreneur and an International Business Consultant. He is the long-term Editor of the *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development (JSBED)*, Guest Editor of an annual double special issue in *Education + Training* and special issue on *Entrepreneurship Education* in the *Industry and Higher Education* journal. He serves on the Editorial Advisory Board of several international journals and has refereed articles, books and research monographs for all major publishing houses in Europe, including Edward Elgar, Routledge, Sage, Palgrave and Oxford University Press. Professor Matlay has written, presented and published over 650 refereed journal articles, practitioner features and conference papers and won several prestigious national and international awards. In 2003, he was awarded the Golden Page Award in the research relevance category for his editorial work on *JSBED*. Currently, he is working and collaborating with colleagues at various universities in the UK and abroad on research linking enterprise and entrepreneurship education to entrepreneurial outcomes and stakeholders' expectations. Professor Harry Matlay can be contacted at: harrymatlay@btinternet.com