



Exploring the need and options for building K-12 Entrepreneurial Education in Western Australia



Scope of Work

Enabling entrepreneurship education in Western Australian schools and universities to achieve a diversified and future focused workforce is a driving force behind the work of Curtin University, St Catherine's College and Bloom, in partnership with the Malka Foundation which has been providing funding to both institutions for this purpose for the past three years.

The Malka Foundation's primary focus is to support the development of young entrepreneurs and to contribute towards the creation of a more diverse economy in Western Australia.

The Fogarty Foundation has a similar focus on education helping to build stronger communities – and thus a stronger economy – in Western Australia. As a social venturer, the Fogarty Foundation works to advance change through education and has supported a wide range of educational programs for many years.

The work undertaken by the two Foundations and by Curtin and St Catherine's College has identified there is an increasing interest in entrepreneurial education in Western Australia and that several schools are already offering these kinds of programs. However, we have identified that there is no structured way that those schools, and the people leading these programs, can connect and learn from each other.

It is also not clear how the value chain works in terms of how high school students who show promise or interest in the area of entrepreneurship are able to continue to grow and develop their skills and initiatives, either through further education or other pathways. Additionally, understanding the barriers to, and needs of, current providers in achieving successful outcomes would assist with determining suitable interventions to build a productive and effective eco-system for entrepreneurship and innovation education.

With support from the Malka and Fogarty Foundations, Curtin University, via consultant Edstemic, was recently tasked with the following scope of work;

1. Review international best practice in support of building entrepreneurship capability in secondary schools and beyond through identifying programs and models that might be adapted for delivery in the WA context.
2. Understand the landscape of existing programs currently being delivered in primary and high schools in WA, and pathways immediately post high school including:
 - a. in curriculum and extra curricula support available
 - b. levels of engagement and impact, where available
 - c. assessment of limitations to broader adoption of existing programs and additional content
 - d. current constraints in the system that might impede delivery at scale.
3. Provide a set of recommendations for short, medium and long term actions that can be taken to increase the quality and availability of educational programs for entrepreneurial skills and mindset, and how awareness of entrepreneurial career pathways and the numbers of students that pursue these pathways could be increased.

Three reports were subsequently completed, each focussing on the above scope. The summaries of the three reports are to follow.

Report 1 Findings

Scope: Review international best practice in support of building entrepreneurship capability in secondary schools and beyond through identifying programs and models that might be adapted for delivery in the WA context.

Three 'best practice' case studies were selected and examined, including the Danish Foundation for Entrepreneurship, the Entrecomp Framework and Community and the South Australian Public Education (although acknowledging that the implementation has had some barriers to adoption) and summarised below are the factors that can impact on the success of different approaches to entrepreneurial education:

- The need for a shared understanding of entrepreneurial education including its objectives; standards of practice for design and delivery; standards for measuring impact and outcomes; and, standards for assessment and certification
- The importance of community and leadership support for entrepreneurial education within the specific learning contexts it is delivered
- The organisation of resources to ensure effective delivery and cultivation of a collaborative community network
- The importance of cross-organisational collaboration and networks of stakeholders
- The importance of sustained funding to ensure viability of entrepreneurial education initiatives
- The importance of research to provide evidence of best practice to improve quality and outcomes
- The importance of teacher training to improve the quality of entrepreneurial education
- The need for a lifelong learning approach at all levels of education that embeds entrepreneurial education

Report 2 Findings

Scope: Understand the landscape of existing programs currently being delivered in primary and high schools in WA, and pathways immediately post high school.

On Tuesday 25th October a workshop was convened and facilitated by Bloom. The workshop was attended by key influencers and educators who are participating in entrepreneurial education in WA. The workshop was an opportunity for networking and to provide initial insights of some of the positive and negative experiences of educators. The initial findings were collated from the discussion on the challenges of teaching innovation and enterprise in WA and exploring what resources and support are needed.

Positives

- Student centred approaches are most successful
- Impactful programs are connected across the ecosystem (schools - parents – industry - government)
- Flexible delivery is key in adapting programs for cohorts
- Sustainability is gained when we focus on building mindsets and skill sets, creating future-ready skills and attributes.

Challenges

- Connection and access to resources
- Collaboration needed not competition
- More time provided and value placed on this type of learning
- Access to teacher training and support
- Importance of centring the voice and leadership of young people when developing innovation and enterprise skills.

In addition to the above workshop, a survey was released to West Australian schools and accompanying qualitative interviews took place by EdStemic.

The survey feedback from educators provided some broad insights into the current landscape of entrepreneurial education in schools. Some insights that emerged from the feedback indicated that each school is unique with complex interrelating factors that can influence the success of entrepreneurial education initiatives including whether there is:

- an explicit reference within the school strategic plan
- an appropriately planned for and clear implementation strategy including the resources allocated
- prioritisation and support by senior leadership
- support from middle leaders toward time allocation and promotion

- adequate timetable or calendar space provided
- appropriate learning spaces and physical resources made available for the activities
- professional development and upskilling of teachers who facilitate the learning
- a clear understanding by students of the initiative and that they see relevance in this type of learning
- a clear understanding by parents around the value of this type of learning
- access to community resources including industry mentors and professionals
- adequate and planned for financial resources to support the initiative

Each school has a unique organisational context with a constellation of interrelating factors that influence the organisation. Schools are situated within a value network of multiple stakeholders with competing value propositions, financial and funding constraints, physical and human resource capacity limits and embedded cultural processes and practices that all impact on why and how entrepreneurial education is taking place.

Report 3 Recommendations

Scope: Based on the research, provide a set of recommendations for short, medium and long term actions that can be taken to increase the quality and availability of educational programs for entrepreneurial skills and mindset, and how awareness of entrepreneurial career pathways and the numbers of students that pursue these pathways could be increased.

The overarching recommendation is that there is an identified need to establish an entity / organisation that can act as a central hub to provide strategic direction and coordination to accelerate the entrepreneurial education ecosystem in WA. This entity would provide increased visibility and awareness of entrepreneurial education and its value and benefits to all stakeholders in the community. It could provide advice on the suitability and implementation strategies of entrepreneurial education programs in schools to improve quality. It could also provide micro-funding for schools to improve availability of programs. These initiatives would in turn create awareness, inspiration, skill development and ultimately increase the number of students that pursue entrepreneurial career pathways.

Key recommended short term actions (2023)

There are four key recommendations based on the research. The key recommendations are ones that should be considered a priority if they decide there is feasibility in further investment:

1. Establish an entity for innovation and entrepreneurial education including its mission, values, stakeholders and governance structure
2. Position the entity as the main activity hub that the entrepreneurial education ecosystem in WA can connect with and arrange around through consultation and engagement with all ecosystem stakeholders
3. Use the entity to provide teacher professional development and consider learning from / partnering with existing programs to develop a prototype for the delivery of educator training. Scholarships may also be provided to access the professional learning
4. Use the entity to provide networking and ecosystem building professional events for entrepreneurial educators and school leaders. In addition to community building via in person events, it is recommended to also implement a virtual community hub / forum to connect educators and support their development

A reference group has been established that consists of the Malka Foundation, Fogarty Foundation, Curtin University and St Catherine's College and the above recommendations 3 & 4 have been highlighted as an immediate priority.

The reference group will continue to meet to progress the other 20 medium to long term recommendations in this important piece of work.

To register your interest in being part of this community of changemakers – please email entrepreneurship@curtin.edu.au