

## Exploring the Impact of Socially Driven Projects in Developing Students’ Enterprise Skills

### 1.0 Introduction

The research aimed to explore the impact of socially-driven projects in developing students’ enterprise skills. Previous research has explored the link between enterprise education and social enterprise. For example, in a paper on the challenges and future direction of enterprise education, Rae (2010) argues that the global financial crisis led to an increased interest in ‘responsible entrepreneurship’ in which ethical and environmental concerns abound. It is further suggested that social enterprise should be considered an ‘integral aspect’ of enterprise education due its growing popularity, particularly amongst young people.

More recently, Bridge (2015) has directly explored the relevance of enterprise education to social enterprise. It is argued that if enterprise education is to encompass wider ‘life skills’ - and not focus solely on private sector venture creation - there is a need for social enterprise training to be integrated within enterprise education.

This research project attempted to build on these concepts by exploring the impact of socially-driven projects on the development of students’ enterprise skills, thus exploring whether such projects may belong within the enterprise education sphere. The project aimed to address the following research questions:

- Are there significant differences in the enterprise skills development of students engaging in entrepreneurship education compared to those engaging in socially-driven projects?
- Are there significant differences in motivations and future career aspirations for students engaging in entrepreneurship education compared to those engaging in socially-driven projects?
- Is there demand for specialist support for social entrepreneurs at UWE?
- What can be learnt about the language used by students, in the context of social enterprise, that could be utilised when attempting to engage others in enterprise education and socially-driven projects?

The project was also driven by anecdotal evidence of an increased interest in social enterprise and/or socially-driven projects within UWE Bristol. For example, in 2018 the Enterprise Skills team launched a new initiative to attract more students from the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences to its Summer Self-Employed Internship scheme, which had previously failed to attract sufficient applications from this faculty.

The Self-Employed Internship scheme is funded by each faculty and provides £1000 for 40 students (10 per faculty) to work on their own business idea over an eight-week period during the summer. In addition to the funding the students receive one-to-one coaching from the Enterprise Skills team, access to co-working space and a mentor with relevant industry experience.

In 2018 the Enterprise Skills team broadened the scope of the Self-Employed Internship scheme to attract a broader range of applications, including an increase in those from the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences which had previously been underrepresented, as mentioned. The scheme was rebranded to the Summer Enterprise Scholarships and was divided into two strands – the Start Up Scholarship, aimed at students with a business idea, and the Impact and Innovation Scholarship, aimed at students with ideas for enterprising projects that give back to the local community or society. The rebrand and broadening of the scope of the scheme appeared to have a positive impact, increasing the number of applications from the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences threefold, while also attracting a large number of applications from other faculties, with 40% of overall applications applying for the Impact and Innovation Scholarship.

Furthermore, at the time of initiating this project UWE Bristol had launched a new extracurricular activity called the Grand Challenges in which students would work in cross-disciplinary teams to find solutions to tackle homelessness in Bristol. This again represented a socially-driven project that requires enterprise skills and thus added further credence to the relevance of socially-driven projects within enterprise education. This research was funded by Enterprise Educators UK (EEUK) under the Enterprise Education Research Project Fund (EERPF).

## 2.0 Methodology

The research adopted a mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The research was conducted over four stages as follows:

### 2.1 Stage 1 – Pre and Post Scholarship Skills Audit

Participants of the 2018 Summer Enterprise Scholarships were invited to complete a self-assessment of their enterprise skills before and after the scholarship. The enterprise skills were based on the QAA Entrepreneurial Competencies (2018):

- Creativity and innovation
- Opportunity recognition, creation and evaluation
- Decision making
- Implementation through leadership and management
- Reflection/Reflexivity into action
- Communication and strategy
- Digital, data and media

This allowed us to measure and compare learning gain across the Start-Up Scholarship, which represented mainstream/traditional entrepreneurship education, and the Impact and Innovation Scholarship, which represented socially-driven projects. Of the 38 students that took part in the Scholarship overall, 33 completed the skills audit, with 21 having completed the Start Up Scholarship and 12 having completed the Impact & Innovation Scholarship.

### 2.2 Stage 2 – Online Questionnaire (Scholarship participants)

In addition to the pre and post skills audit on the Enterprise Scholarships, a qualitative questionnaire was conducted with 25 of the 38 participants to explore their motivations for taking part and the benefits they have gained from their involvement. The questionnaire provided open-ended questions allowing students to communicate in their own language the key achievements of the Scholarship and their motivations for taking part. The data was then analysed, grouping the responses into key themes which are highlighted in the findings.

### 2.3 Stage 3 – Online Questionnaire (participants in other enterprise activities)

Online questionnaires were distributed to students that have engaged in other activities at UWE that encompass enterprise and/or socially-driven projects, including:

- Students that applied for Pitch-a-thon – the UWE Enterprise team’s pitching competition. The competition attracted students with ideas for businesses, social enterprises and socially-driven projects such as mental health initiatives.
- Participants in the Grand Challenge – a cross-disciplinary project bringing students together to help tackle homelessness.
- Students that have engaged in entrepreneurship education across UWE including the Team Entrepreneurship programme within the Bristol Business School and UWE Enterprise’s business start-up related activities such as Dragons’ Den style competitions and business start-up workshops.
- Members of UWE’s socially-driven societies such as Enactus and The Green Team

### 2.3 Stage 4 – Focus Groups

Two focus groups were delivered using a semi-structured approach and based on the key findings of the questionnaire. The focus groups aimed to provide insight into the language that students use when talking about enterprise education and socially-driven projects, thus informing student communication tactics to benefit UWE and the wider sector, while also exploring the key findings of the online questionnaire in greater depth.

## 3.0 Findings

### 3.1 Pre and Post Scholarship Skills Audit

Participants on the Start Up Scholarship and Impact and Innovation Scholarship were asked to rank each of the Entrepreneurial Competencies using a 1-5 Likert Scale. Table 1 indicates the average (perceived) change in score for each of the competencies across both the scholarship strands.

The table indicates that the skill with the lowest level of (perceived) increase in skills is creativity and problem solving. It is interesting to note that this skill was the highest ranking skill before the scholarship started for both the Start-Up and Impact and Innovation strands (Table 2). This suggests that students engaged in the Summer Enterprise Scholarship have high levels of (perceived) creativity and problem solving skills, thus the activity did not directly contribute to them developing this skill in a significant way.

The skill with the highest level of increase is in pitching ideas. Interestingly, this was the lowest ranking skill before the scholarship for those within the Start-Up strand and the second lowest (after resource management) for those on the Impact and Innovation strand (Table 2). It is thus unsurprising that this is ranked highest in terms of development during the activity as students were required to pitch their idea to gain a place on the scholarship scheme.

*Table 1 – Average Change in Skills during the Summer Enterprise Scholarship scheme*

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Average Change</b>
<b>Creativity &amp; problem solving</b>	0.3
<b>Recognising &amp; creating opportunities</b>	0.5
<b>Critical thinking</b>	0.5
<b>Resource management</b>	0.6
<b>Self-awareness</b>	0.4
<b>Pitching ideas</b>	0.9
<b>Digital awareness</b>	0.6

*Table 2 – Pre and Post Skills Audit Comparison of Start Up Scholarship and Impact and Innovation Scholarship*

	<b>Average - Start-up</b>	<b>Average - Impact &amp; Innovation</b>	<b>p value</b>
<b>Creativity &amp; problem solving pre-scholarship</b>	4.2	4.4	0.4091
<b>Creativity &amp; problem solving post-scholarship</b>	4.6	4.5	0.7061

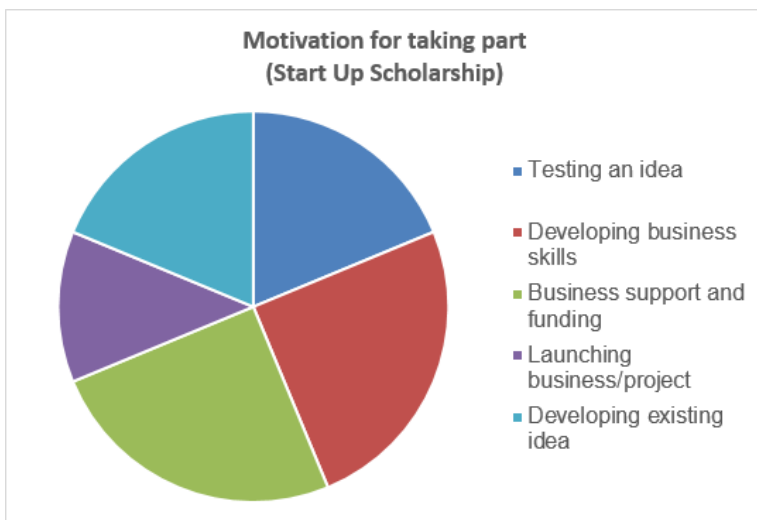
<b>Recognising &amp; creating opportunities pre-scholarship</b>	3.9	4.1	0.4318
<b>Recognising &amp; creating opportunities post-scholarship</b>	4.4	4.7	0.1479
<b>Critical thinking pre-scholarship</b>	4	3.9	0.9008
<b>Critical thinking post-scholarship</b>	4.5	4.2	0.3461
<b>Resource management pre-scholarship</b>	3.8	3.3	0.2739
<b>Resource management post-scholarship</b>	4.4	3.8	0.0912
<b>Self-awareness pre-scholarship</b>	3.9	4.2	0.2475
<b>Self-awareness post-scholarship</b>	4.3	4.4	0.7535
<b>Pitching ideas pre-scholarship</b>	3.2	3.7	0.1426
<b>Pitching ideas post-scholarship</b>	4.2	4.3	0.6948
<b>Digital awareness pre-scholarship</b>	3.8	4.2	0.2635
<b>Digital awareness post-scholarship</b>	4.4	4.7	0.2794

Table 2 indicates the average score for each skill pre and post scholarship across both the Start Up Scholarship and the Impact and Innovation Scholarship. The p values were derived using the t-test to compare the average score for each skill across the two strands. The t-test did not yield any statistically significant results, suggesting that any observed differences between the two strands are down to chance and not a result of inherent differences between the two strands in terms of their contribution to students’ skills development. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the scholarships were delivered in the same way with the same level of support across both strands.

### 3.2 Online Questionnaire (Scholarship participants)

The key themes that emerged from the qualitative questionnaire for Scholarship participants are highlighted in the charts below and the findings were used to inform the design of our broader online questionnaire that encompassed students engaged in other enterprise education activities and socially-driven projects.

*Figure 1 – Student’s Motivations – Start Up Scholarship*



*Figure 2 – Students’ Motivations – Impact and Innovation Scholarship*

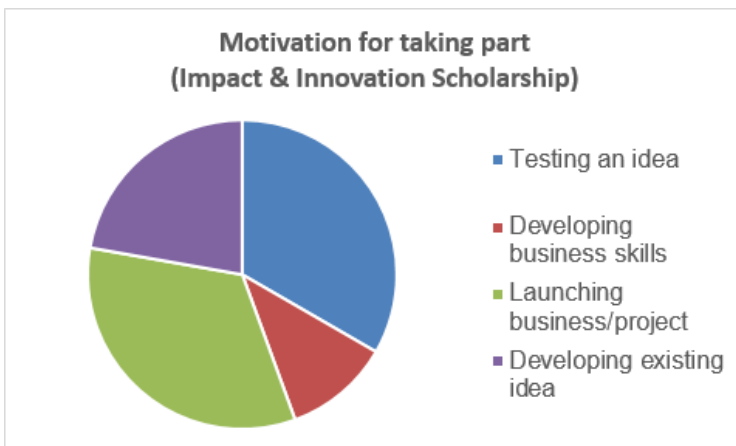


Figure 3 – Students’ Self-Identified Key Achievements on the Start Up Scholarship

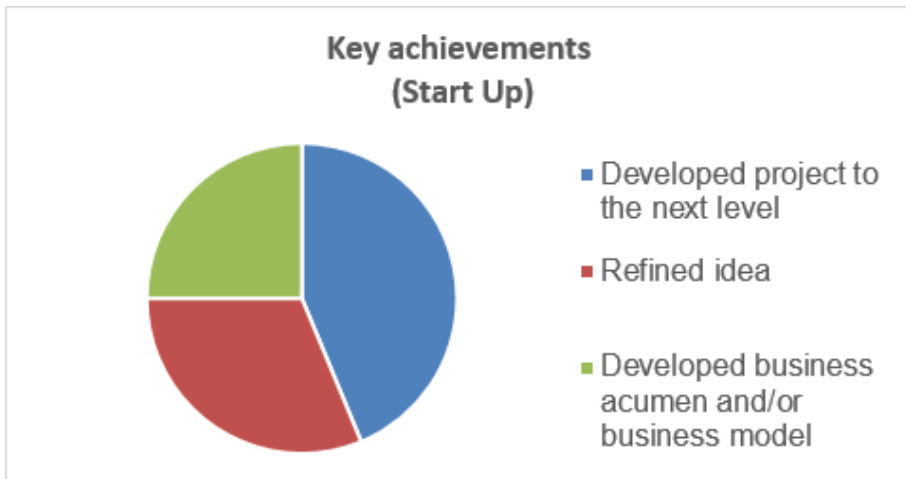
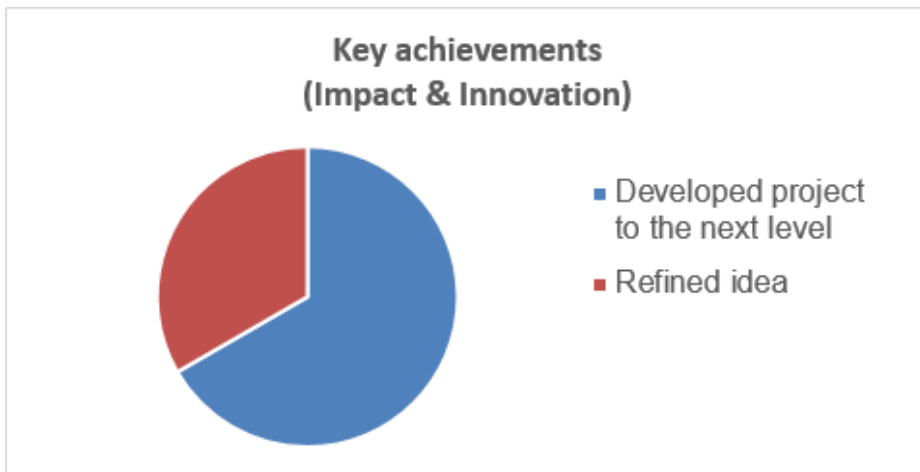


Figure 4 – Students’ Self-Identified Key Achievements on the Impact & Innovation Scholarship



The charts highlight several themes that overlapped across both the Start Up Scholarship and the Impact and Innovation Scholarship, including testing an idea and launching a new business or project. The main differences are that a smaller proportion of Impact and Innovation Scholarship recipients indicated that they were motivated by a desire to develop their business skills compared with the Start Up Scholarship recipients. Furthermore, when reflecting on their achievements during the scholarship the Impact and Innovation Scholarship recipients did not refer to the development of business acumen or developing a business model, while those on the Start Up Scholarship did. These variances are unsurprising given the differing nature of the two strands of the scholarships, however they provided useful insights that informed our questionnaire design.

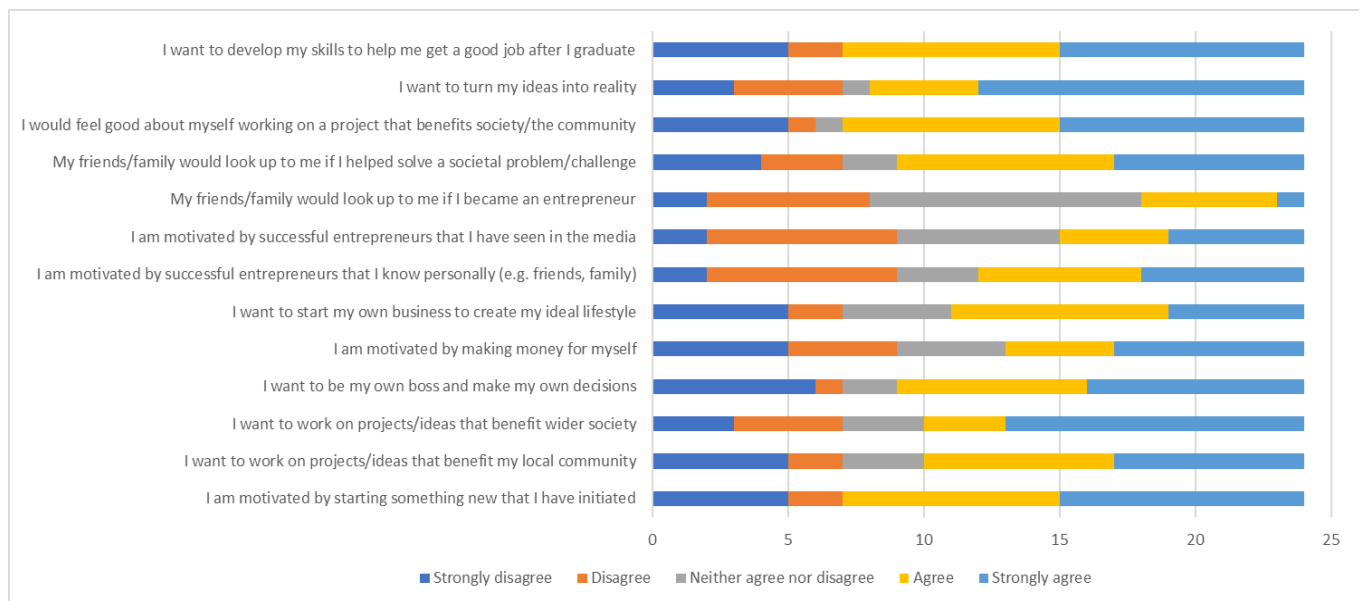
### 3.3 Online Questionnaire (participants in other enterprise activities)

The online questionnaire received 24 responses in total. The small sample size makes it difficult to draw too many conclusions from the results and impossible to generalise the results more broadly. However, the results informed the design of the focus groups and allowed the identification of some key themes to be explored in greater depth within the focus groups.

*Table 3 – Respondent Profile*

Gender	
Male	10
Female	14
Age Range	
18-25	15
26-35	5
36+	4
Level of study	
1 <sup>st</sup> year	5
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	4
Final year	14

*Figure 5 – Online Questionnaire Results – Students’ Motivations for Engaging in Enterprise Activities*



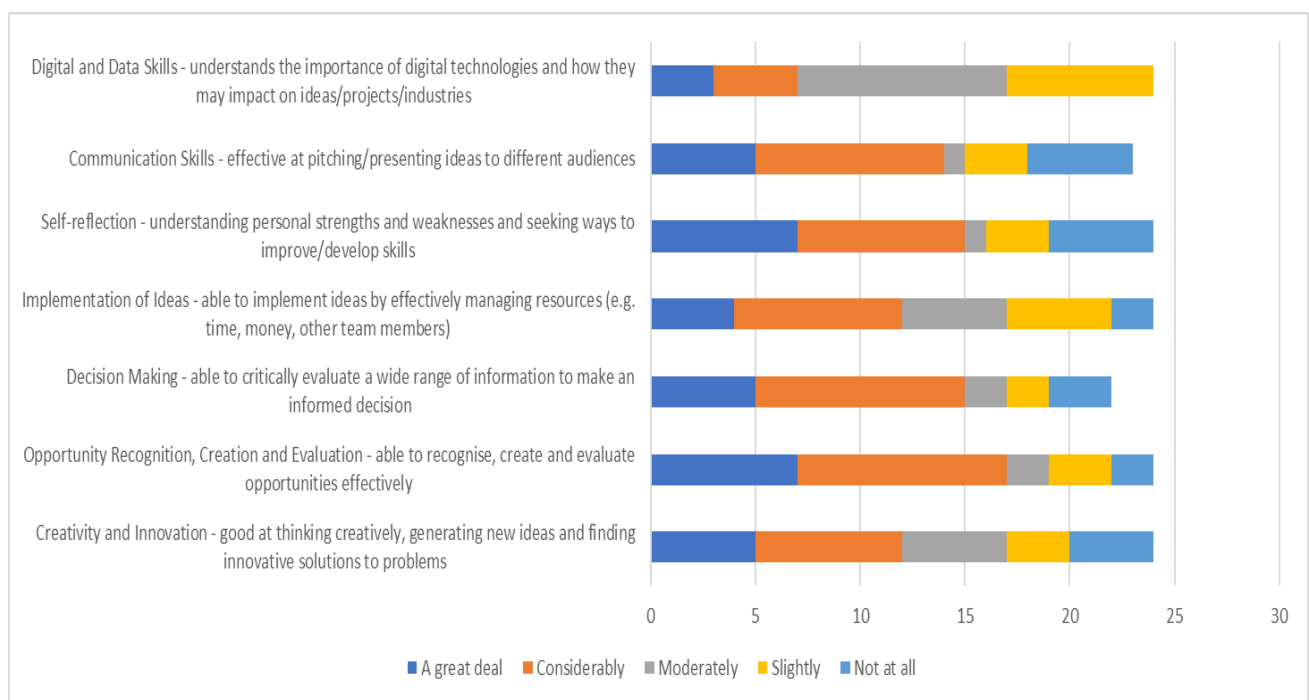
The chart highlights that the most motivating factor for students engaging in the specified enterprise activities and socially-driven projects were to develop their skills to secure a good graduate job, feeling good about themselves working on a project that benefits society or the community and the motivation to start something new that they had initiated. In contrast, the least motivating factors were that friends and family would look up to them if they became an entrepreneur, being motivated by successful entrepreneurs they have seen within the media and being motivated by making money for themselves.

There is insufficient data to make comparisons between those engaging in mainstream entrepreneurship education compared with those engaging in socially-driven projects or developing a social enterprise idea

through entrepreneurship education activities. It is interesting however that with both groups represented within the sample, feeling good about oneself for working on projects that benefit society or the community emerged as a key motivator. This suggests that this is something that motivates those engaged in socially-driven projects or developing their own social enterprise, as well as those engaging in commercial entrepreneurial endeavours. Given that the majority of respondents were aged 18 to 25, this perhaps reflects a broader trend of an increased interest in social enterprise amongst young people as highlighted by Rae (2010).

It is also noteworthy to highlight that starting something new that the respondent had initiated emerged as a key motivator, suggesting that this appeals to students engaging in commercial entrepreneurship education as well as those engaging in socially-driven projects. Likewise, for developing skills to help secure a graduate job, suggesting that both types of activities may appeal to students looking to develop their employability skills.

*Figure 6 – Online Questionnaire Results – Students’ Perceived Skills Development through Enterprise Activities*



The skills included were based on the entrepreneurial competencies from the QAA 2018 Guidelines on Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education, mirroring the approach used within the pre and post skills audit for the Enterprise Scholarship scheme. The chart highlights that the biggest perceived skills increase was in self-reflection and opportunity recognition. The competencies of self-reflection and opportunity recognition are quite broad, thus it is unsurprising that these skills appear to have been developed by students engaging in both commercially-focused entrepreneurship education and socially-driven projects/social enterprise development. It can be argued that both types of activities require students to find, create and evaluate opportunities and both also encourage students to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and to seek ways to develop themselves.

The smallest increase appears to be in digital and data skills, a new addition to the entrepreneurial competencies in 2018. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the activities included do not have a strong digital focus and thus may not have directly contributed to students developing skills in this area.

Overall, the online questionnaire has resulted in limited data for this study given the small sample size, however the questionnaire was a useful way to recruit participants for the focus groups and provided some insights to be explored further.



### 3.4 Focus Group – Thematic Analysis

Five participants took part in two focus groups (three in one and two in another) lasting an hour. Three out of the five participants have undertaken activity relating to social enterprise/socially-driven projects, the remaining two pursued commercial ventures. The two groups were asked to expand on their answers to the survey question regarding their motivations to take part in enterprise activity. A number of other factors arose in the natural course of the discussions. All participants are referred to using pseudonyms.

#### 3.3.1 Question 1 ‘Motivations to take part’

Overall the participants did not necessarily have anything to add to their original answers. In addition, where motivations or skills were not deemed as relevant, this was verbalised. In this sense, they weren’t forced to reflect if it wasn’t important to them. At times, despite being asked directly to consider a particular motivation, the participants veered back to those that were most relevant, or potentially, the ones they were most consciously aware of. As such, only the following motivations were considered in detail.

#### *Key Enablers for the participants’ engagement in enterprise*

Before asking about the specific motivations of the participants, they were each asked to talk about the enterprise activities they have been, or are, involved in. This conversation identified a number of key enablers to their involvement, which are useful when considering university enterprise support. Two out of the five participants explained that the Enterprise Scholarships – constituting £1,000, desk space, a mentor and UWE Enterprise Team over eight weeks of the summer vacation - was the catalyst to starting their business. Similarly, one attendee was able to push their business forward using an award of £500 and the opportunity to gain a mentor through the UWE Summer Scholarships, and another explained that they *“...decided to work on the Start-up Scholarship programme to kick-start my own business”*.

Workshops delivered by the UWE Enterprise team were also highlighted by three members of the focus groups as being particularly useful in developing their business skills. Phillippe is an international PhD student with a business based in his home country. For him, the support available provided guidance on establishing his business in the UK market. Rose, a mature student with many years of business experience still appreciated the opportunity to gain new up-to-date information on legislation, regulations, licences and new ways in which companies are recruiting. Interestingly these participants had established businesses, illustrating that support for students is not necessarily for those for whom enterprise and entrepreneurship is an unknown, or for those at the beginning of their business journey.

Two participants were confused as to why the UWE workshops were not more popular, including Sophie, a mature Creative Arts student, who also suggested that peer-peer endorsement of the support available might help to engage new students,

*“...when I start talking to my cohort about it... I say, 'Wow, look at this, I've been given £1,000 and a mentor.' And they go, 'Oh, right.' And they apply for it. I think there are so many messages and so many emails, and if you want to read them you will. But other than that I think it's got to be some personal communication.”*

#### *Motivations*

##### *Benefit Community*

All of the participants referred to the chance to benefit their community as a motivation for taking part in enterprise activity, but in very different ways. For example, Sophie creates and sells sculptures and actively uses her business to give people from a wide range of incomes “an entry point” to this particular market, unlike galleries who add a large commission. Further, Sophie would like to use her business to contribute to the public discourse relating to the use of art as a method of healing trauma,

*"I've used art for my own healing. So, part of what I want to do is take this conversation into society and how we talk about art, and how we can use connection to our own feelings"*

Rose also referred to supporting the Arts, by providing young artists with secure part time work,

*"...it could be somebody who is just starting out in art, you know, a youngster, and they can't afford to do it full-time. But this gives them a job, an income, and something that they can trust, and also not compromise what they really want to do, and what they're passion is, and I think that's important. A lot of them don't get that opportunity, they have to work."*

Similarly Emma, a commercial business owner, wanted to use enterprise to *"...promote local businesses, like local artists, people that make their own food, their own teas and coffees."*

Pedro was also motivated to support his community, in this case in his home country,

*"I was able to go to university, but the people that were around, they don't even have the money to go to high school or anything. They live on less than \$2 a day. It was like, 'Okay, I have to do something that can integrate different farmers and different stakeholders so we can produce something together,' so that was my motivation"*

Here Pedro points to social conscience as a catalyst for starting his business, whereas Emma and Ben – a participant in various UWE Enterprise activities - talked about this also being a motivating factor for the market to engage in their products,

*"Emma: ...This massive social conscience thing that's being pushed forward at the moment about being green, and being healthy, and being alternative, and saving the world. In order to do that, you can start really locally, and people can go in and do something as simple as buying a coffee from somebody around them, and feel like they've made an impact on their day. ...Money and local community development go hand in hand at the moment, especially in places like Bristol."*

*Ben: People want to feel positive about what they do. It's like a social behaviour of, 'I'm better because I'm doing this.'*

*Emma: Social status, yes.*

*Ben: Exactly, and brands are getting pulled by that right now. Even if you don't want to make money by doing that, you will make it, because I was reading something I studied. Some people, even if the product doesn't taste better than the other one, because you have a claim that says that it's social conscious and blah, blah, blah, you get more attraction to it."*

Emma also commented on social conscience being a factor in employee satisfaction, which it is noted here could be an issue for entrepreneurs who end up in a position to employ others,

*"You want to believe that all the work you do matters. It's very easy to sign up, get involved, be employed by somebody and get swallowed up in this massive machine. Some people go through an identity crisis, because they don't know what the point is of them being here, 'What am I doing? What am I contributing? Why do I matter?' So, yes, you inadvertently would like to believe that what you do has an impact to some degree, I think that's why impact within businesses has always been pushed on 'make your staff feel valued"*

## Own Boss

Overall, the participants were not motivated to get involved in enterprising activity in order to 'be their own boss'. Emma explained that, although being an entrepreneur has provided her with *"the freedom to make my own decisions"*, she did not like the idea of *"being in charge"*. Similarly, Pedro spoke of the pressure of making the right decisions; that *"knowing what changes you have to make for your business, what sacrifices you have to make... those weigh quite heavily on a person as well. I think, yes, you want to be your own boss. ...It's a tough path."*

In contrast however, Sophie referred to the creative freedom her business has provided her, something that she feels is compromised when she works for someone else,

*"...I've got a very expansive way of thinking, and when I get told, 'You have to do this this way,' ... it comes to a point where I can't stand it. I have to be able to engage my unusual way of thinking ...it*

*doesn't fit into some predesigned box. It's only really going to work well for me if I can have a large degree of freedom."*

#### Motivated by friends and/or family "looking up to me as an entrepreneur"

The participants were asked whether their friends and family were a motivating factor, with respect to their opinion of them as an entrepreneur or as someone 'solving a social problem'. None of the participants felt this had influenced them directly, but Sophie and Rose described how their experience with enterprise has allowed them to positively influence others,

*"No, I don't want people to look up to me, but I am interested in leadership, in a way, of saying, 'Look, this is possible.' I hate it when you want to find something or you want to resolve something but you don't know what to do, and so, if I find someone in that situation, I can say, look, here's an idea, or, let's think about this" (Rose)*

*"I'm not motivated to impress my family, but they will be impressed anyway. It's that sort of thing, but, it's also to encourage the youngsters in the family, to say you have choices ...that not to be worried if they come up with a great idea or a good business, see it through, and see if it will work. Don't just dismiss it and think it'll be too hard. I think its setting examples as well. That's more important to me, to show what can be done." (Sophie)*

Ben explained that his involvement in social enterprise gave him a new and positive shared experience with his family,

*"...for my family, it'd be, like, 'Welcome to the club.' ... we have more understanding of one another, and we talk about the pressures of a management role, which have been an interesting turn of events. It was, like, 'Oh, yes, when you were stressed about that, I kind of get it now.' It's more of an understanding between us."*

#### Other motivations

Ben and Pedro indicated that a number of other factors also influenced their decision to take part in enterprising activity, including the opportunity to create security, and the opportunity to upskill for the graduate labour market,

*"...my motivation was to have something permanent for myself, so that's why I decided on agriculture. So, I think for me, agriculture was like an anchor because it's going to be there." (Pedro)*

*"...being able to do things and upskill yourself in any place is always good for when you want to graduate. [It} helps you tell a story about who you are, and how you work, that can help [the company] best decide whether or not you'd be good for whatever job it is they're interviewing for." (Ben)*

#### Key conclusions

We need to create a language around social enterprise/socially-driven projects that engages people at different stages of their journey. It's not just about engaging people who've never thought about social enterprise, but also those further down the path.

Although overall motivations to take part in enterprise activity differ, there is some commonality, particularly around a desire to benefit community or wider society. Other, outlining motivations, are also clearly articulated and reference to them may motivate or engage others to take part for similar reasons.

### 3.3.2 Question 2 ‘Skills Development’

Participants were asked to consider each of the skills listed in the online questionnaire (the QAA Entrepreneurial Competencies) in relation to whether the activities they had been involved in had directly contributed towards them developing each skill. Similarly to the question on motivations, despite being asked about these specific skills the participants sometimes referred to other skills not explicitly mentioned and so the key themes that emerged have been discussed.

#### Confidence building

While participants were not asked to consider “confidence” as a skill, this emerged when discussing other skills. For example, students spoke about confidence in terms of pitching when discussing pitching and presentation skills and they reflected on having the confidence to make decisions when discussing decision making as a skill.

*“But it’s also a confidence thing I think, decision making. Like, when you’re dealing with something that’s new, or something you personally don’t understand that well, or you’re still learning about. It can be very difficult to know what decision to make.” (Emma)*

Confidence building also emerged in terms of feeling that the activities allowed a ‘safe place to fail’ and gave students confidence in what they could achieve.

*“I think something that has been valuable has been each point that I’ve engaged with something with enterprise, it’s looked to be before I’ve done it as something just beyond what I’m comfortable going for. Each thing I applied for I thought that looks interesting, but it’s more than I could do, then I’d applied and thought, ‘Oh, I can do that.’ Also it’s been held and contained, so although it was scary to apply to the Dragon’s Den, it’s been well held. So, there wasn’t any greatest risk, I could try it and it was a safe space.” (Sophie)*

#### Skill: Implementation/Business Knowledge

Several of the students mentioned that the activities helped to develop their skills in implementing their ideas and/or their practical business knowledge and skills. In the online questionnaire digital and data skills ranked lowest in terms of perceived development but in the focus group it emerged that several students had developed their knowledge of and skills in digital marketing, such as the delivery of social media campaigns.

Students also spoke of developing their business knowledge to make their idea/passion a viable business.

*“I’ve been identifying areas that I don’t know much about and having arts training, we get a lot of training about art and virtually none about business. I could see there was a gap, how am I going to run a business if I know about art but not business? So, I’ve been absorbing everything I could get.” (Sophie)*

This is an interesting quote from Sophie as it indicates her using the Enterprise activities to fill the gaps in her knowledge around business. Not all students will have the foresight to engage in extracurricular enterprise activities however, nor will all students be able to from an inclusivity perspective (e.g. those that work alongside studying, those with caring responsibilities). This highlights the importance of embedding business knowledge into the curriculum for subjects such as Fine Art in which graduates often work self-employed.

Other students spoke of the importance of developing specific business knowledge, such as IP, and of the value of attending workshops on this.

*“So, having that contact and saying that we’re offering this on how to manage your IP, how to manage your company name, trademarks, whatever, I thought that is amazing, because I would have just looked that up and been self-taught.” (Rose)*

### Skill: Creativity & Innovation

As with the online questionnaire and skills audit results, creativity, problem solving and innovation appeared to be less directly developed through participation in enterprise activities. Students indicated that they felt they already had high levels of creativity and had engaged in the activities with an idea already formed. The activities appear to have developed their ability to test out and/or turn those ideas into reality or to apply their creativity in a different context.

*"All the stuff I've encountered here has really broadened my scope, so I'm thinking more creatively about the business, but it's not new to me to be thinking creatively." (Sophie)*

This was an interesting discussion point as Sophie is a Fine Art student and thus views herself as a highly creative individual. This opens up an interesting discussion point into how we perceive the word 'creativity' and whether using this wording in promotional materials for enterprise activities may attract or deter certain groups of students. The example that Sophie gave about thinking about her business creatively is an interesting one but this emerged after further clarification and reflection, while her initial reaction was that the activities had not contributed to developing her creativity.

Other comments were around problem solving and thinking creatively about how to implement the ideas that participants already have. Most of the participants of the focus group had engaged in activities with a well-formed business/social enterprise idea so they felt the activities had been more useful in allowing them to develop their ideas further.

*"I think it definitely gives you tools to test the ideas that you come up with. We wasted a lot of time for various different reasons so it took me a while to learn those lessons. But, now that I've learnt them, we can go through different ideas quite a lot quicker. So, it's more about testing the ideas rather than necessarily getting the ideas." (Ben)*

### Key conclusions

The focus groups allowed a deeper exploration into the reasons behind the data highlighted in the questionnaire and skills audit which helped to explain why some skills such as creativity ranked lower in terms of perceived development.

The students spoke more about qualities such as 'confidence' and the benefits of engaging (such as enhanced business knowledge) rather than the specific enterprise skills that were identified (the QAA Entrepreneurial Competencies). This raises the question of whether students are always aware of how their skills have developed and/or whether the language used in such sector documentation resonates with students and reflects the way in which they see their skills development.

Despite opportunity recognition and self-reflection ranking highest in the online questionnaire, these did not emerge strongly in the focus groups. A key theme from the focus group was that the activities allowed students a 'safe space to fail' and to test out and implement their ideas, developing their confidence along the way.

## 4.0 Conclusions

This research has explored the impact of socially-driven projects in developing students’ enterprise skills and compared their motivations for taking part in social enterprise activities and/or socially driven projects compared with commercially-focused entrepreneurship education. The research questions that were established at the start of the project will be addressed individually.

### 4.1 Are there significant differences in the enterprise skills development of students engaging in entrepreneurship education compared to those engaging in socially-driven projects?

The small sample size of the online questionnaire has not allowed meaningful comparisons to be made in terms of the skills development of students engaging in entrepreneurship education compared with socially-driven projects. Furthermore, the pre and post Enterprise Scholarship scheme skills audit did not yield any statistically significant results in terms of the differences between the two groups in skills development. As previously discussed, this is perhaps owing to the similar nature of the two strands of the scholarship scheme.

The focus group discussions suggest that the skills development has been similar for those engaged in socially-driven projects and those with commercial ventures, with both highlighting the value of the Enterprise activities in providing a safe place to test out and implement their ideas, developing their practical business knowledge and improving their confidence overall.

Given that both groups of students seem to have developed similar skills through their engagement in these activities, this suggests that socially-driven projects could be an important element of enterprise education.

### 4.2 Are there significant differences in motivations and future career aspirations for students engaging in entrepreneurship education compared to those engaging in socially-driven projects?

As with the first research question, the small sample size did not allow a meaningful comparison of motivations between the two groups, however the key themes emerging from the focus group suggest that motivations for engaging in enterprise activities were similar between both groups and that benefiting the community was a common theme for all participants – those engaged in social enterprises and/or socially driven projects and those running commercial ventures. Future career aspirations were not explored in great detail within the focus group, however within the online questionnaire the majority of participants indicated that they were motivated to take part in order to develop their skills to get a good graduate job.

### 4.3 Is there demand for specialist support for social entrepreneurs at UWE?

The results are inconclusive regarding whether there is demand for specialist support for social entrepreneurs at UWE. The challenge in attracting sufficient respondents for the online questionnaire and focus groups suggests that there is not enough interest in social enterprise to warrant specialist support. However, this may be more indicative of the challenges of recruiting students for research more broadly. It is also worth noting that during the data collection stage of this research project the principal investigator moved roles within the university from a professional services role within the Careers and Enterprise department to an academic role within the Business School. This may have impacted the scope of the research with this particular research question being less directly addressed. Furthermore, this may have also impacted on the data collection due to the principal investigator no longer having access to student groups to communicate the research opportunity on a regular basis.

#### 4.4 What can be learnt about the language used by students, in the context of social enterprise, that could be utilised when attempting to engage others in enterprise education and socially-driven projects?

The findings have not been particularly revelatory in terms of the language used by students around social enterprise given the small sample size within the focus groups. However, some interesting findings have emerged particularly around the development of creativity as a skill. The findings of the focus group suggest that students do not view enterprise activities as being particularly effective at developing their creativity as they already consider themselves creative individuals. However, with further reflection some of the students did recognise that engaging in these activities had helped them to develop their creativity in different contexts or their ability to develop ideas as opposed to generating new ideas.

Another interesting finding was that the term 'being your own boss' did not appear to resonate with the focus group participants as they seemed to associate this with being 'in charge' and spoke about the pressure of being responsible for others. Given the small sample size however this finding cannot be generalised to a wider population. Indeed, within the focus group there was one participant that found 'being their own boss' a positive motivator due to the freedom it offered them. It is interesting to note that this individual was a sculptor selling their own work while the two participants that identified negatively with this phrase were those running a venture with employees. This suggests that the term 'boss' may have different connotations for different types of entrepreneurs and thus may resonate more with particular groups.

### 5.0 Limitations and Future Research Directions

As discussed, the small sample size for the online questionnaire and the focus groups has resulted in limited findings for this research, however some interesting insights have been explored. The motivation to have a positive impact on community and society was consistent across the two groups – those with commercial businesses/ideas and those engaged in social enterprise and/or socially-driven projects. Future research could explore whether this would be the case with a much larger sample.

Further research could also include case study research specifically on socially-driven projects, such as the UWE Grand Challenges referred to within the introduction. This would allow a greater depth of analysis into the motivations and skills development of student engaged in a socially-driven project specifically.

A further direction could be a comparative analysis across different contexts, for example with another institution. This would provide a larger sample size and allow a greater depth of analysis by comparing the findings across different settings.

In summary, the research findings have suggested that socially-driven projects have a place within enterprise education and appear to be effective at developing students' enterprise skills. Exploring this topic in greater depth with a larger and more specific sample (e.g. participants of the UWE Grand Challenges as discussed) would allow a greater depth of analysis that offer a valuable contribution to the literature on social enterprise within enterprise education.

### 6.0 References

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