



Enterprising Minds

Enterprise, further education
and the UK economy



Jim Metcalfe

Executive summary

Enterprising Minds is a Carnegie UK Trust research project that explores the attitudes of young people to enterprise, education, and the future in a changing economy. It focuses on how students view practical enterprise - starting a business or working self-employed - and the contribution education systems make to the understanding of these work types.

Students were surveyed in early 2012, across the four jurisdictions of the United Kingdom. The respondents were enrolled in a variety of courses at general and specialist further education colleges, and were aged between 16 and 21.

Most of the participants were surveyed by peer-to-peer researchers. We recruited and trained 51 research

interns for this purpose, FE students who worked in small project teams on campus to identify and survey their contemporaries. This technique generated interesting and original research findings and also made a practical contribution to the enterprising, work-ready skills of the interns themselves. Additional students were able to participate at other colleges, through an electronic version of the survey. This produced a whole research network of 17 colleges, and 1602 student responses to the 45 question survey model.

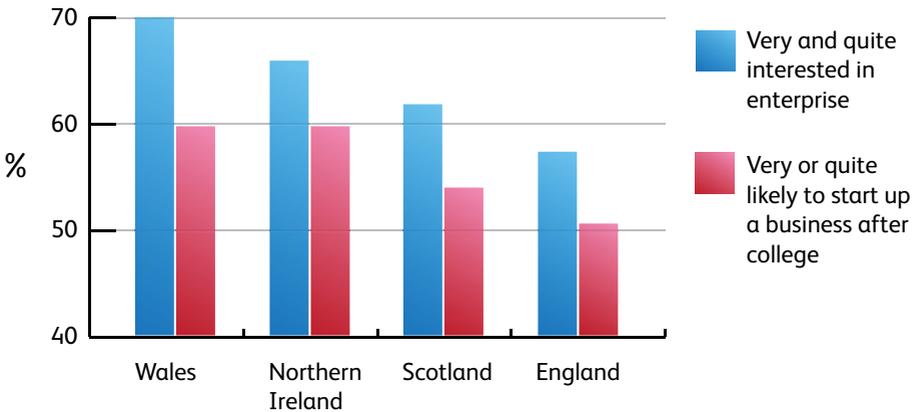
The information collected from our survey respondents suggested **four principal research findings:**

Attitudes vary between jurisdictions

On most measures within our survey, students in Wales and Northern Ireland rated as more 'pro-enterprise' than their contemporaries in England, and slightly more so than those in Scotland. They were more likely to see themselves starting businesses after college, were generally more confident that enterprise had been incorporated into their educational experiences, and were

more inclined to admire and seek to follow the examples of enterprising people.

Welsh respondents were also the most likely to rate their courses highly, and to have recognised and valued enterprise-related activities provided for them by their colleges. They were more interested in practical business startup grants being provided to help them after college than those in other jurisdictions.



Enterprise in education has an impact

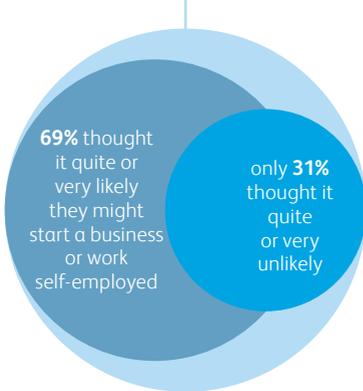
Across the UK, where students had been involved in an enterprise activity, event or course at college and school, a substantial majority had found it useful.

Those respondents who had been exposed to enterprise education in and around their courses were generally more likely to think in enterprising

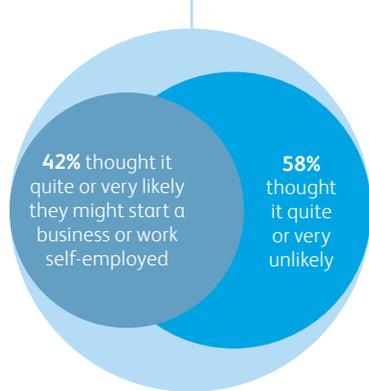
ways about their own futures. They also found it easier to consider setting up a business in their own working lives, or working self-employed. This was particularly true when looking at respondents by courses of study: those studying beauty and technically applied courses (like plumbing or car maintenance) were most likely to have chosen their courses with enterprising outcomes in mind, to have engaged

with enterprise education at college, and to then expect an enterprising future in work.

When survey participants agreed that colleges had built enterprise learning into their courses:



When survey participants did not agree that colleges had built enterprise learning into their courses:



‘The power of the Celebrenour’: celebrity and role models matter

More than half of students visualised enterprise in a way defined or communicated by the media, with a strong emphasis on celebrities, TV competition shows like Dragons’ Den and The Apprentice, and tycoons with high public recognition. A third of respondents thought that Alan Sugar was the clearest embodiment of enterprise, in person. Less than one in ten saw enterprise as a positive trait, like success, independence or problem-solving.

When thinking about what their colleges could do to improve enterprise education, the largest proportion of students wanted more opportunities to interact with successful businesspeople and social entrepreneurs on campus.

29% of respondents named Lord Sugar as the embodiment of enterprise; and **59%** visualised enterprise in a way communicated by the media



- × Tough economy for the young
- × Uncertain about growth
- × Not enough jobs in the area



BUT:

- ✓ Expect to do better financially than parents
- ✓ Expect full time job straight out of college
- ✓ Expect management level earnings within five years

A changing economy is confusing

Students could not decide whether the national economy would grow over the coming few years, with roughly a third each agreeing, disagreeing and being uncertain. Only one in five thought that their local area would get richer in the coming years, less than a third thought there were enough jobs and opportunities near to them, and a significant majority agreed that the overall economic situation was very challenging for young people.

Despite being aware of the economic difficulties facing them, respondents remained optimistic about their own prospects for achievement in work. More than half agreed that they would do financially better in life than their parents, and more still thought that they would do something in their working lives to be proud of.

Whilst recognising the lack of work available for young people generally, few students felt that this new reality would apply to them. Most still

expected that, straight after college, they would find a full-time job with one single employer. Almost all expected to be working full-time within five years. Salary expectations were modest however, with most expecting to earn at around minimum wage levels when finding a post-college job.

A panel of responses to key enterprise questions within the survey were taken and their answer values combined to produce the **Carnegie Measure of Student Attitudes to Enterprise**, a new composite measure. This measure provides an indicator of comparative enterprise comprehension, engagement, and preparedness to consider enterprising career paths.

The table overleaf presents the most significant measure findings, where 0 would indicate no interest whatsoever in enterprise or business and 10 would indicate very high likelihood of starting up a business or being self-employed.

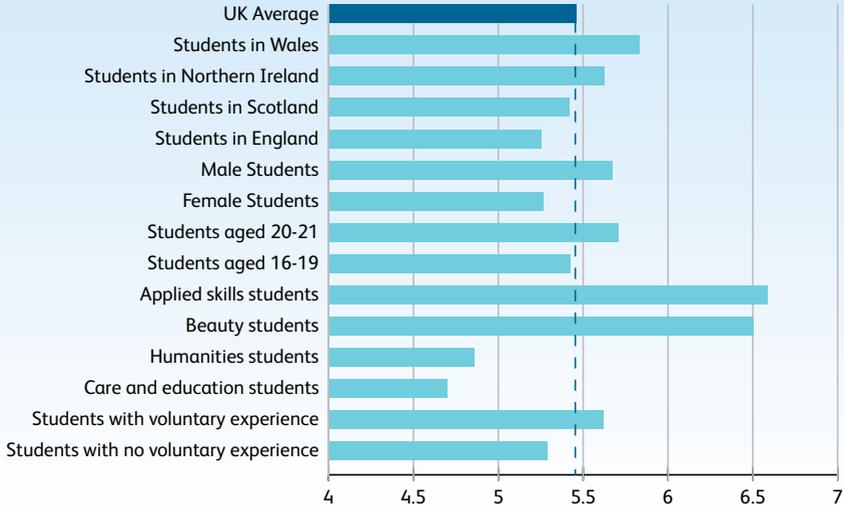
Based on these research findings and the more comprehensive information provided in the full research report, Carnegie UK is making **seven recommendations for the future** to help improve student engagement with enterprise and enterprise education. These include more collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries to learn from best practice, and partnerships between different education sectors to improve the consistency of enterprise education for learners through school, college and university. The Trust will

also pursue further development of its peer-to-peer research technique, and work with others to develop practical

enterprise opportunities for students that draw on existing experience and interests.



Carnegie Measure of Student Attitudes to Enterprise



0 = no interest whatsoever in enterprise or business
10 = very high likelihood of starting up a business or being self-employed.

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913.

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