

Gower College Swansea
Leading the South /west Wales Regional Hub.

Response to the Welsh Government's
Enterprise and Business Committee's Inquiry
Into Youth Entrepreneurship in Wales
May 2013

I will be completing this report in 2 sections, firstly as the Enterprise Education Manager at Gower College Swansea a Further Education institution, secondly as lead institution for the South West Wales Regional Enterprise Hub (*this section will be presented in italics for your ease of reading*)

Gower College Swansea has enterprise at the heart of its strategy, it sees enterprise as one of the key areas of high importance within the college and therefore is one of the cross cutting themes. Since merger 2 years ago we have been striving towards embedding enterprise into all curriculum areas.

Gower College Swansea is committed to providing opportunities for learners to develop generic employability and entrepreneurial skills alongside their academic and vocationally specific skills. The College will ensure that these opportunities provide transferable skills that will prepare learners to enter and sustain employment whether that is immediately after their time in College or at some point in their future.

All full time learners should have adequate opportunities to develop the full range of employability/entrepreneurial skills during their time in College. This will be achieved through a combination of the following approaches:

- Embedded into the main qualification, using and building on naturally occurring opportunities.
- Through the core elements of the Welsh Baccalaureate.
- Through the delivery of additional qualifications such as Essential skills, Key Skills, Work Skills or entrepreneurship qualifications.
- As part of the tutorial programme.
- Enterprise activity that is embedded in the learners' programme or as an extracurricular activity e.g. enterprise competition, workshops with visiting entrepreneurs.
- Work experience in real work and business environments
- Involvement in College commercial activities
- Involvement in other extracurricular activities e.g. voluntary work, competition work, charity work, social enterprises.

All full time learners will:

- Complete the Enterprise Catalyst during induction to assess their entrepreneurial skill level and provide them with helpful guidance on what areas they need to improve.
- Take part in round one of the Enterprise Challenge and be encouraged to take part in round two.
- Be involved with at least one other entrepreneurial activity that is either embedded into or bolted onto their programme of study.

All full time learners will also have the opportunity to benefit from:

- Talks and /or activities with business/industry role models e.g. Dynamo role models.
- Bespoke enterprise sessions designed for specific area of the curriculum
- The 'Money for Life Challenge' or similar competitions
- The 'Lions Lair' Business plan competition.
- Other ad-hoc enterprise activities that are developed as project money becomes available.

From the perspective of South West Wales Entrepreneurship Hub the group is made up of partners from 4 FE colleges and 3 HE institutions who are working together as a region with the aim of increasing the levels of enterprise delivery to improve the quality of enterprise delivery/support, ensure the best use of financial resources, and provide a wider number of opportunities for students to engage with enterprise activities and build their entrepreneurial skills across the region.

How effective is the Welsh Government's approach to promoting youth entrepreneurship?

Through the YES strategy and the associated funding allocated to institutions this has given the college the opportunity to support the growth of enterprise across all curriculum areas. The support from the Youth Entrepreneurship team under the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport has provided the necessary expertise, guidance and support, financially and physically to enable the college to expand and embed enterprise within the institution. Providing evidential facts and figures showing the benefits such as a rise in the GDP for the Swansea area from this increase in enterprise activities is not an easy one as the results could be long term gains within the Swansea area. However we know from experience that the increase in support from Welsh Government has provided numerous

benefits to students from across Swansea. From all the evidence undertaken and research has shown that young people up to age 24 are the most entrepreneurial minded from across the age range.

Gower College Swansea promotes a wide range of enterprise opportunity for students within the college from awareness raising sessions, workshops to highlight the opportunities for self employment, local and national enterprise competitions, role model talks, guest speakers. IN 2012 we launched The Entrepreneurship Academy Wales which is a 1 year course aimed at budding entrepreneurs across Wales with sponsors and mentors from a wide range of businesses in Swansea. There are other opportunities for students to engage with enterprise which are too many to list here but the funding provides us with the opportunities that we would not be able to offer if this was not allocated to us.

An area for development could be in awareness raising activities/marketing material from Welsh Government's perspective as the main marketing tool Big Ideas Wales does not seem fit for purpose at the moment.

From the hub perspective the new funding structure means that we work together as a region to promote youth entrepreneurship. One of our first year priorities was to organising a national conference to look at regional, national and international policy and to share best practice to ensure we provide the best possible opportunities for students. This conference has been confirmed for 12/13th June 2013.

What steps can be taken to improve or strengthen support for potential young entrepreneurs in Wales?

We would like to see more contact made to the business start ups to see what value they can put on the support available to them, there is a gap at present between those having an idea and the number of companies being formed. Having some pre start incubation space/advice areas/test trading spaces are essential to help these potential entrepreneurs take that first step into taking their idea forward. Having a bank of mentors available to young entrepreneurs, will enable these potential entrepreneurs to tap into the experience on what to do and what not to do, this would be an invaluable resource. There needs to be more research to find out which support mechanisms would have helped those who have already started up and struggled and could have helped create a better business and also to find out which initiatives they have benefitted from. There are a number of companies providing support under the Business Advice contracts but we need more people who are out there running their business day to day who are willing to give their time and energy to supporting these young people.

Gower College's Entrepreneurship Academy has, as part of the programme, allocated a mentor/supporter to each student who has worked with them during the year to help motivate them and be a sounding board during their journey to start up. We need more of these business men and women to offer a similar level of support to potential young entrepreneurs, students get fantastic support for their business ventures but the company also gets to work with and have first choice from a high quality pool of talent.

We suggest having some kind of forum/meeting area possibly via social media for young entrepreneurs, this will help them support each other and gain inspiration to overcome problems and take their ideas forward.

What are the experiences of young entrepreneurs in Wales?

Frustration mainly that there seems to be no road map of advice, guidance, support, financial help available for them to see at a glance. I think this is the starting point for us to provide the young entrepreneurs a road map/guide of where to go for help at whatever stage they are before they get to the Business in Focus style workshops etc.

The successful Dynamo project opens the young people's eyes to the world of self employment; however this is only a small taster of the realities of working as an entrepreneur. As stated previously a system whereby we could match a potential young entrepreneur to an existing entrepreneur would be extremely beneficial, it would be like having a business angel on your shoulder to support you when things go wrong and help and guide you along the journey. Work experience is getting much more difficult to organise and the government could offer support for those interested in self employment as a possible option with the idea above with a mentoring, business angel style facility.

We would like to see a structured monitoring of the student journey to track them and follow their enterprise learning experience. This would help us evaluate the effectiveness of our programs and look at the long term impact.

What is the scale of Welsh Government resource and funding targeted at the promotion of youth entrepreneurship? Is it sufficient?

Please see above.

Within Gower College the funding has we bid for and were successful in achieving has allowed us to provide a high level of support to staff/students and also to the partners across the region who are part of our SWW Regional Entrepreneurship group. We have also applied for and been successful in

receiving other funding from local authority and local and National businesses to enable us to undertake a variety of other activities to raise the entrepreneurial skills across Swansea schools and the college. We have taken advantage of opportunities for the college to be involved in free enterprise workshops delivered by National organisations under the UK Government funding.

The new hub funding structure introduced last year seems to be working well in the SWW region, however some institutions do feel that due to the time pressure in completing their strategy and budget requirements they underestimated the amount of money certain aspects of their plans would require. Previously we have been able to bid for unspent money during the academic year but under the new funding round this is not possible and we feel that there should be some flexibility perhaps in increasing their bid or if there is an under spend across Wales being able to bid for small pots to complete activities. As you can appreciate It is difficult in completing your plans for 3 years especially as the group are keen to expand what they have done previously within their institutions (this seems to be the result of the collaborative working we have in the group and the ideas that have been generated) they wish to increase the delivery within institutions but the lack of funding does not allow them to do so.

What progress has been made in implementing the Welsh Government's Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy and Action Plan?

Speaking from Gower College Swansea perspective we have moved forward considerably in delivering our part of the strategy, we are the leading college in the completion of the Enterprise Catalyst, we have consistently over achieved on our targets for student engagement, we have been asked to showcase the work we have done in embedding enterprise into the curriculum , we have delivered best practice sessions to staff within Swansea schools with staff development opportunities on embedding enterprise into the curriculum. We have been asked to delivery staff training on the Dynamo material at other in partner colleges across Wales. We have had the largest number of student engaged with the Welsh Government Global Challenge competition as this has been embedded into our tutorial programme across the college which enables all students to take part in Round One and give them their first flavour of enterprise skills.

Outside Further Education we have been the trail blazers in primary enterprise education and have worked with over 600 hundred primary children at a large number of local primary schools and have organised a "Mini Business Dragons" competition in the previous academic year working with 9 schools to build their enterprise skills. These schools each choose a winning team to send to our Mini Business Dragons final at The Liberty Stadium. This year we have been engaged in the planning and development of the National Primary Enterprise Competition

due to be launched in Ponttliw Primary School who won the final of the Mini Business Dragons.

We have also been working with a number secondary schools to help them embed enterprise across the schools with staff training events, workshops, competitions and have set up and run enterprise after school clubs and half term boot camps from funding obtained from Local Authority budgets. .

From the SSW Regional Entrepreneurship Hub perspective we have developed our plans and strategy for the next 3 years based on the YES strategy and this application is attached is for your attention. We will be reporting at the end of July on targets achieved and areas we feel have to be developed moving forward.

How does the Welsh Government's approach to promoting youth entrepreneurship incorporate issues such as equality, social enterprise and regional variations in skills and training opportunities?

These key areas play a major part in the planned activities of the SSW Regional Entrepreneurship Hub and you will see from our application that we have incorporated equality into our strategy. All our events, training workshops are open to all students and are not restricted to any one social group.

As our region covers a huge part of South West Wales regional variations in skills plays a vital part in ensuring that the activity is designed to meet the needs of the region. During our regular hub meetings previous activities and planned activities for the future are planned with the regional variations in the forefront of our planning.

Social Enterprise is an area that we have engaged with as a hub and we will be looking to develop with the support of such organisations as Collaborative Communities and Wales Co-Op who we have been working with over the past year and who attend our regional hub meetings.

What opportunities are presented by increasing youth entrepreneurship as a means of tackling youth unemployment and inactivity?

Through our out of schools activities and community working we know that the use of enterprise workshops/activities/competitions helps engage and inspire those who are disengaged. Running their own small business could be a viable choice of employment for those who are unemployed, those with limited qualifications and/or those who have fallen out of the education system tend to

be natural entrepreneurs who just need leading up the right road to achieve a successful future. .

More entrepreneurship skills development not only helps to create more entrepreneurs, it can also improve the employability potential of young people.

To what extent is entrepreneurship embedded within secondary education, further education and higher education institutions in Wales?

Since the YES Strategy was launched there has been an increased focus on delivering and embedding entrepreneurial skills within Secondary, FE and Higher Education. The Welsh Baccalaureate has seen the growth of enterprise being embedded into the curriculum and with the changes in 2015 this will continue to see more and more students engaged with entrepreneurship across Wales. Within FE the Enterprise Champion network which was funded by previous Welsh Government enterprise strategy has supported each FE and HE institution in Wales to have a dedicated person driving enterprise within their institution. Secondary schools did not have this provision and I feel that this has been to the deficit of the young people within secondary education. We have tried to support our local secondary schools in Swansea with a range of resources which have included workshops and advice together with resources both physical and financial to help them deliver these opportunities to students. We have helped them look for other income streams to enable them to deliver these activities rather than using funds from their very tight financial budgets. Secondary Schools have a number of issues to deal with and do not have the flexibility that FE and HE institutions might have regarding delivering enterprise activities and embedding into existing curriculum but this again is down to staff issues such as no timetabled time to deliver, staff not trained or just staff not confident enough to deliver. These problems can however be overcome with support and training which is what we have been doing in Gower College Swansea.

We have also been working with those outside education on a number of initiatives and have received funding via outside agencies to work with long term unemployed to raise confidence develop enterprise skills and provide training in how to start a small business.

The development of these projects has improved significantly over the last few years. Teaching staff are acknowledging the value of entrepreneurship education, both through staff development sessions and their own experience of enterprise activities and are looking to build enterprise activity into their courses. The WBQ team enterprise element has helped to embed entrepreneurship in many courses.

What is the evidence base for the Welsh Government's approach to supporting and encouraging youth entrepreneurship?

Every quarter each regional hub lead has to complete a regional report to Welsh Government which details all the activity across the region under the new funding system. The areas we report on are such things as the number of students engaged with enterprise activities, the number of staff involved in training, how many business referrals, how many role model sessions and many other quantitative reports. We also have to provide a written report on results and outcomes of the activities; this provides the evidence base for Welsh Government's approach to supporting and encouraging youth entrepreneurship?

How does the Welsh Government monitor and evaluate its youth entrepreneurship activities? What impact has it had on the number of people starting a business?

Please see previous comments.

What examples of good practice in youth entrepreneurship policy can be identified within Wales, more widely within the UK and internationally?

The YES strategy has seen the growth of some excellent pockets of best practice across Wales, we feel in the South West Region that we have a number of excellent practices but we are not complaisant and are always looking to improve and adapt our plans based on evidence from national and international partners.

We have a conference organised for 12/13th June where will have partners attending from across Wales the UK and Internationally who will be sharing their best practice, hosting new ideas and inspiring us to do ever more for the young people of Wales.

Attendees include Senior Managers from the "Rotherham Ready" group who have been working for the past 10 years on ensuring that entrepreneurial skills are embedded in all the curriculum across the whole of city from primary to Higher Education, their goal was to make Rotherham The Most Enterprising City in the UK an accolade they won 3 years ago and which we are looking to replace in Swansea in 2014.

Completed by Sue Poole

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