'Social enterprise: evaluation of an enterprise skills programme'

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Abstract

Purpose – Evaluation of employment skills programmes (ESP) delivered by work integration social enterprises (WISEs) for the benefit of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) is often undertaken by the programme providers. This method of evaluation often lacks objectivity and academic rigour and tends to focus exclusively on *output*. The current study reveals programme *outcome* benefits for NEET participants after completing a six-week ESP, delivered by a WISE. The study highlights the participant perspective and adds an objective dimension to programme evaluation through an innovative, inductive evaluation process.

Design/methodology/approach - The research adopted an intervention method, within a qualitative paradigm, employing semi-structured interviews conducted pre-and post participant engagement in the ESP. NEET participants were also asked to complete questionnaires designed to measure general self-efficacy and attitude to enterprise. The questionnaires were introduced in order to test the suitability of this type of questionnaire with NEET groups in future larger-scale studies.

Findings - Analysis of the interview data revealed ten overall participant perception themes: 'experience', 'self-confidence', 'the programme', 'perceived barriers' and 'maturity' at Time 1 and 'experience', 'self-confidence', 'the programme', 'enterprise' and 'future' at Time 2. O*utcome* benefits are demonstrated through differences in participant perception themes revealed at Time 1 and Time 2. Relationships between participant perception themes and questionnaire constructs are discussed in the context of future larger-scale evaluations.

Originality/value – Adopting an intervention method employing semi-structured interviews, allowed the participant's to articulate the *outcome* benefits that were important for them rather than merely providing affirmation of programme provider's expectations.

Keywords – Evaluation, Validity, Enterprise Skills, Social Enterprise, NEETs

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Prior research has revealed that most young people do not consider themselves potential entrepreneurs (Athayde, 2009; Harding & Bosma, 2006) yet governments increasingly seek to empower young people to become more entrepreneurial (Hytti & O'Gorman, 2004; Matlay & Carey, 2007; Matlay, 2008), especially those young people not currently in employment, education or training (NEET). This drive towards entrepreneurship has produced an increase in enterprise skills programmes (ESPs) (Matlay, 2008), some of which are targeted at NEETs. However, this increase in ESPs has not been accompanied by the development of objective evaluation instruments designed to measure the benefits of these educational interventions on the young people involved (Athayde, 2009; Matlay, 2008). The evaluation of programmes designed to improve the enterprise skills of NEETs can be conducted on different levels, depending upon whether the focus of the evaluation is on *output*, *outcome* or *impact* as defined in the SIMPLE methodology (McLoughlin, Kaminski, Sodagar, Khan, Harris, Arnaudo & McBrearty, 2009). For the purpose of evaluating an ESP, o*utput* can be defined as the relationship between the number of unemployed NEETs accessing the programme and the number who subsequently start their own business, gain employment or return to education. Considering *output* as a method of evaluation is useful for tracking the success of a programme from this particular perspective. However, if *output* is employed as a singular measure, the evaluation will not include important longer-term participant benefits, i.e. *outcome*. An o*utcome* represents positive changes to participants' states of mind that will enhance their enterprise skills, future employability or foster a return to education. *Impact* is an even longer-term benefit and is the impact on society resulting from the reduction of NEET unemployment; for example, reduced unemployment benefit payments, lower costs to the criminal justice system, the health service and higher income tax receipts. *Impact* was not assessed in the current research as to do so would require the application of assessment techniques beyond the scope of this study; for example, Social Impact Measurement of Social Enterprises (SIMPLE)

(McLoughlin *et al.* 2009). The current research focuses on identifying the *outcome* benefits of engagement in the ESP specifically from the perspective of the unemployed NEETs. The research also seeks to identify relationships between these participant perceived *outcome* benefits and the constructs measured in the general self-efficacy (GSE) and attitude to enterprise (ATE) scales. If relationships between the *outcome* benefits and scale constructs can be established, we propose that GSE and ATE scales may be employed in future larger-scaled quantitative studies evaluating *outcome* benefits for NEETs after engaging in ESPs.

The paper begins by discussing the potential problems of programme evaluation and presents an outline of the need for objective evaluation of WISEs and their interaction with the NEET population. It continues with an examination of two psychological concepts, 'general self-efficacy' and 'attitude to enterprise', which are presented as potentially important *outcome* benefits of ESPs undertaken with NEETs. An overview of 'Grounded Theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is then provided as it informed the qualitative research paradigm for the current study, which revealed *outcome* benefits from the participants' perspective. Results of the study are then presented and findings are discussed in relation to future programme evaluation.

Overview

Securing robust, valid and reliable tools for the evaluation of work-integration programmes can present a range of problems. One major problem is that programme providers often base the content of their programmes around conventional, commonsense understandings of social problems and their treatments, without considering the appropriate social science theory (Chen & Rossi, 1980). This approach to programme design does not facilitate the application of effective evaluation procedures and can lead to the application of less rigorous forms of programme evaluation. Chen & Rossi (1980) propose the 'Multi-Goal, Theory Driven Approach to Evaluation', which advocates

that programme providers should collaborate with evaluators to agree the outcomes to be evaluated. These outcomes should be based on 'official goals', determined by the providers (i.e. *output*) and 'others', derived from social science knowledge and theory pertaining to the social problem in question (i.e. *outcome*), in the current study's case NEET unemployment.

Much of the prior research into the benefits of enterprise education has focused on *output* and has been conducted by university business schools with their own student population (Brown, 1990; Matlay, 2005b; Vesper and Gartner, 1996). To the authors' knowledge, there is little or no empirical research that focuses on investigating the *outcome* benefits of enterprise education from the participant's perspective, when delivered by WISEs for NEETs. The current study addresses this 'gap' in the literature.

Work integration social enterprise

As government policy increasingly looks towards organisations such as WISEs to provide ESPs, a need for the evaluation of ESPs and their delivery organisations arises. Evaluation is required to provide policy-makers with 'evidence' of the positive benefits of ESPs, provided by WISEs. Also, there is a moral and ethical imperative to evaluate the impact of these interventions on disadvantaged and often vulnerable young people (Peattie and Morley, 2008; Alter, 2006). At present there is very little academic research into the performance evaluation of social enterprises (Paton, 2003), with the notable exception of studies that promote 'business-like' evaluation tools for example, 'Balance' (Bull, 2007) and 'practical toolkits' such as 'Prove and Improve' (New Economics Foundation, 2008) and 'Outcomes Star' (London Housing Foundation and Triangle Consulting, 2006). Although these are examples of useful tools in the evaluation of social enterprise, they are either focused on *outcome* from the perspective of the social enterprise or are targeted at specific populations such as the homeless. The limited prior research available, has

reported some positive benefits of WISE interventions (Borzaga and Loss, 2006), but much of this prior research lacks academic rigour. This lack of academic rigour stems from a sub-optimal methodological approach to research that involves WISEs evaluating their own performance. These often subjective and anecdotal evaluations form the majority of research into WISE performance and tend to focus on overall unemployment interventions that fail to examine specific unemployed groups such as NEETs.

NEETs

Yates and Payne (2006) interviewed 855 young people through the Connexions agency and from these interviews concluded that NEETs are a more heterogeneous than homogeneous entity. Yates and Payne defined three potential NEET subgroups, (1) 'transitional' i.e. those who are temporarily NEET due to individual circumstances but who quickly re-engage with employment, education or training; (2) 'young parents' i.e. those who are young parents and make a conscious decision to disengage with employment, education or training in order to look after their children and (3) 'complicated' i.e. those young people who are NEET and who also exhibit a number of 'risks' in their lives that contribute to them being NEET, for example, being homeless, engaging in criminal behaviour, and/or having emotional/behavioural problems (Yates and Payne. 2006).

Prior research also provides strong evidence of a close relationship between 'social exclusion' and NEET status (Yates & Payne, 2006; Payne, 2002; Williamson, 1997). 'Social exclusion' can be predicated on poor academic achievement, low levels of school attendance, chaotic living arrangements, low socio-economic status and exclusion from school based on truancy or bullying (Payne, 2002). Prior research into general self-efficacy reports that, success in life; persistent positive vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and psychological states can augment general self-efficacy (Chen, Gully and Eden, 2001). The authors of the current study propose that the negative

influences of social exclusion reported above could similarly have a negative effect on general self-efficacy.

General self-efficacy

An individual's motivation, well-being and personal accomplishment are strongly associated with their efficacy beliefs, which influence their choices and resultant actions (Pajares, 1996). Individuals base their assessment of the achievability of specific goals in perceived self-efficacy related to past experience and anticipation of future obstacles (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). In the context of ESPs, it is critical to address issues of self-efficacy because highly efficacious individuals will have more confidence in their abilities to succeed in enterprising activities (Lucas & Cooper, 2005; McLellan, Barakat & Winfield, 2009). The Banduran concept of self-efficacy is related to task-centeredness and is domain specific but other self-efficacy concepts are more general and relate to an individual's level of confidence in performing everyday tasks (Sherer *et al.*, 1982). General self-efficacy is probably closer to self-esteem (Lucas & Cooper, 2005) but general self-efficacy (GSE) has been shown to be a reliable predictor of performance in educational and vocational activities (Locke, Durham and Kluger, 1998).

Delmar & Davidson (2000) report that self-efficacy has been shown by previous research to be an important component in self-employment as a career choice (Krueger & Dickson, 1993, 1994; Chen *et al*, 1998) and thus as an indicator of a positive attitude to enterprise. Increasing attention is being paid to investigating the impact of ESPs on changes in the attitudes of students to the ideals of enterprise and self-employment. This attention suggests that ESPs should foster awareness of enterprise and provide students with positive role-models to enhance their desire to become self-employed in the future (Curran & Blackburn, 1989; Lewis, 2005).

Attitude to Enterprise

Prior research has examined the relationship between entrepreneurship and self-efficacy in four sample groups: unemployed, employed, entrepreneurs and graduates (Aviram, 2006; Nabi, Holden & Walmsley, 2010). Aviram (2006) examined the relationship between the 'propensity to act' on entrepreneurial intention and self-efficacy. Aviram (2006) proposed that inclination towards entrepreneurship requires relatively high levels of self-efficacy to enable an individual to convert entrepreneurial intention into action. This proposition was based on the findings of prior research (Bandura, 1986; Krueger, 1993; Krueger & Brazeal, 1994). Aviram (2006) adopted a quantitative approach to research and reported a statistically significant correlation between 'propensity to act' and self-efficacy. Nabi, *et al.* (2010) adopted a qualitative approach to research through conducting 'story telling interviews' also based on procedures validated in prior research (Bujold, 2004; Cochran, 1990; Collin & Young, 1992; Hamilton & Smith, 2003; Johansson, 2004; Savickas, 2002). Nabi *et al.* (2010) interviewed 15 participants who were identified as recent graduates with a wide range of degrees who were deemed to have started their own business (Nabi, *et al.* 2010). Nabi *et al.* (2010) reported two dimensions as outcomes of their research (1) the entrepreneurial maturity of the individual and (2) the complexity of the business idea. In relation to the former dimension, an important sub-dimension was 'understanding of the self' in order to build an entrepreneurial identity. This entrepreneurial identity included the concept of self-efficacy and one of the researchers' recommendations, based upon research findings, was to provide counsellors who could assist students to make the transition from student to entrepreneur by helping them to develop their self-efficacy beliefs.

One reason for the paucity of objective enterprise evaluation instruments is the lack of consensus surrounding the efficacy of enterprise education itself and what outcomes actually represent improvement in entrepreneurship (Athayde, 2009; Matlay, 2008). A review of the literature reveals

disagreement about whether or not entrepreneurship can be taught effectively (Johannison, 1991; Kirby, 2004; Kuratko, 2003; Rae, 1997). Often, courses focus on teaching *about* entrepreneurship and measuring success through new venture creation, rather than focusing on teaching *for* entrepreneurship and measuring success in the development of entrepreneurial skills, attributes and behaviours in their students (Kirby, 2004). When designing a tool to measure changes in entrepreneurial skills it is important to consider changes in participants' attitudes to enterprise rather than their personal traits because, from a conceptual perspective, attitudes are dynamic whereas traits are fixed (Gibb, 1993, 2000). Also, attitudes avail themselves to measurement of change because they can manifest themselves in three ways: cognitive (beliefs), affective (emotions), and behavioural (actions) (Rust & Golombok, 1989). A recent study, Athayde (2009), developed and validated a research instrument specially designed to measure young peoples' attitudes towards enterprise (the ATE test), which was based on previous measures employing Attitude Theory (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

Quantitative instruments in the form of questionnaires, such as the New General Self Efficacy Scale (NGSE) (Chen *et al.,* 2001; Scherbaum *et al.*, 2006) and the ATE test (Athayde, 2009) could be very useful tools for measuring changes in participant changes in GSE and 'enterprise potential' after engaging in enterprise education. However, before employing these questionnaires in large scale evaluations with the NEET population, we argue it is necessary to investigate their ability to measure *outcome* benefits that align with NEET perspectives. Investigative studies, based on inductive rather than deductive approaches to data collection have the potential to reveal greater insights into the concepts under investigation. Inductive, qualitative studies often reveal and clarify concepts for investigation in future quantitative studies. The qualitative paradigm adopted in the current study assumes that reality is subjective and multiple, offering participants the opportunity to perceive their world in many different ways. During investigatory research, participants may therefore be regarded as the most appropriate informants (Forsman, 2008).

Grounded theory

Grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) provides a set of analytic techniques that have been assimilated into most approaches to qualitative research (McLeod, 1995). Grounded theory's approach aims to develop a theory or model of the phenomenon being investigated that is demonstrably faithful to the lived experience of the people being studied (McLeod, 1995). Writers such as Lofland & Lofland (1984); Yin (1989); Patton (1990) and Miles & Huberman (1994) have defined stages in qualitative analysis based on grounded theory that depend on the systematic application of five fundamental ideas: immersion, categorisation, phenomenological reduction, triangulation and interpretation. This approach to qualitative analysis is sometimes referred to as 'Constant Comparative Method' (CCM) and forms the basis of the qualitative analysis conducted for the present study.

Aims of the research

As the research was both investigatory and inductive, the primary aim of the research was to reveal the *outcome* benefits, from the participants' perspective, after their participation in a six week ESP that was designed to influence their attitudes to starting a business, gaining employment or re-entering education. A secondary aim of the research was to seek relationships between the participant perceived *outcome* benefits and the constructs measured in the GSE and ATE scales in order to examine their appropriateness as evaluation tools for ESPs with larger groups of NEETs.

Method

Participants

The participants were six young people aged between 18-22 years (5 male, 1 female) who enrolled for the six week ESP delivered by a WISE at a youth centre in Northamptonshire. The young people were identified as being not in employment, education or training (NEET) and conformed to the 'complicated' sub-group of NEETs as defined by Yates and Payne (2006). Initially, nine young people enrolled for the ESP and completed Time 1 data collection procedures. Three of the young people left the programme before it was completed; six completed the ESP and took part in the data collection procedures at Time 1 and Time 2.

Procedure

Participants engaged in individual semi-structured interviews before commencement of the six week ESP [Time 1] and at the end of the ESP [Time 2]. Individual, semi-structured interviews at Time 1 and Time 2 were conducted by the researchers in a room specifically designated for this purpose. The open-ended questions employed by the researchers (See Appendix 1) were grounded in the literature reviewed above. At Time 1, the questions were designed to provide the participants with an opportunity to recall their prior experiences and describe their expectations of the ESP they were about to embark upon. At Time 2, the questions were designed to elicit participants' reflections of their experiences during the ESP, in order to evaluate those experiences and the impact the ESP had on their attitudes to starting a business, gaining employment or re-entering education. Interviews were recorded to a digital audio recorder and transcribed for qualitative analysis.

Participants were also asked to complete questionnaires at both Time 1 and Time 2. Researchers supervised the completion of the questionnaires with the participants in order to observe and support the participants should they require any assistance. The questionnaires had been validated in prior research and were designed to measure general self-efficacy (NGSE) and attitude to

enterprise (ATE). The questionnaires were employed in order to trial their appropriateness with this NEET participant group and to provide the opportunity to seek relationships between the participants' perception of *outcome* benefits and the questionnaire scale constructs. The NGSE scale has been tested in prior research and found to be a reliable and valid instrument for measuring general self-efficacy (Chen *et al.,* 2001; Scherbaum *et al.*, 2006). The ATE test was designed to measure 'enterprise potential' in young people and contains five dimensions of latent enterprise potential, which are all consistently associated with theories of entrepreneurship that have been measured previously in empirical studies that assessed entrepreneurship (Athayde, 2009). The five dimensions are: achievement, personal control, creativity, leadership and intuition and it is important to stress that it is young peoples' attitudes to these dimensions that are measured rather than the dimensions themselves.

The Intervention

The Enterprise Skills Programme was delivered over a six week period and was designed to influence participant attitude to starting a new business, gaining employment or re-entering education. The first week focused on 'team building' through engagement in collaborative, competitive tasks (e.g. participant teams constructed a 'catapult' with rudimentary materials provided and tested the efficiency of the 'catapults' in competitive trials). The second week involved the participants taking part in an intensive 'motivation' course specially designed to increase their self-confidence and increase their motivation. This part of the course was delivered by a specialist in this field. The remaining four weeks were designed to provide the participants with the opportunity to work 'one-to-one' with experienced 'mentors' and career consultants with a view to developing ideas for starting their own business, seeking employment or returning to education.

Data

The data consisted of 12 transcripts of participant individual semi-structured interviews [6 at Time 1 and 6 at Time 2] and 12 completed questionnaires [6 at Time 1 and 6 at Time 2].
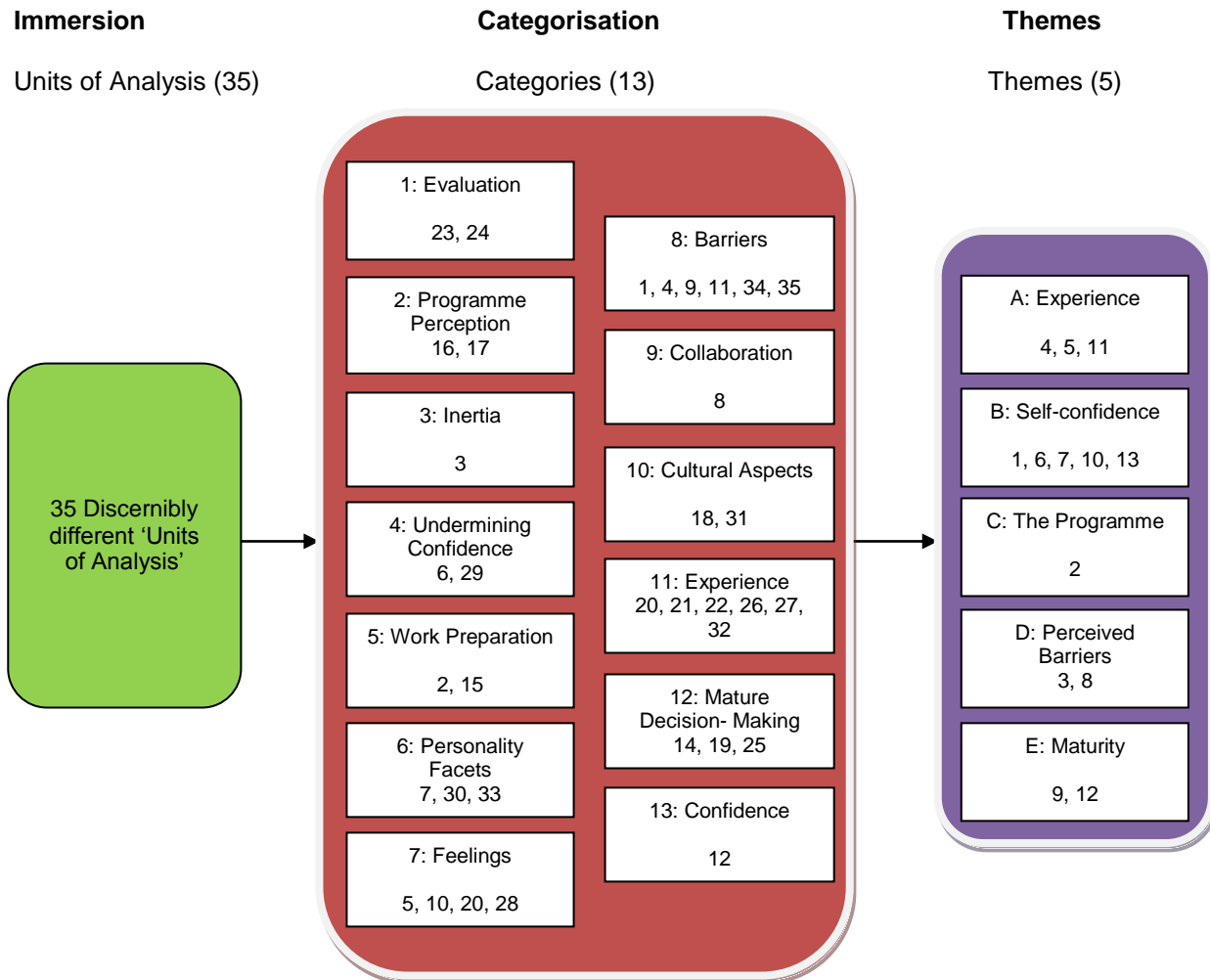
Analysis

The method employed to analyse the transcripts of the participant individual semi-structured interviews was 'Constant Comparative Method' (CCM) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The CCM is an iterative procedure designed for the qualitative analysis of text and is based on 'Grounded Theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The CCM has been successfully applied in previous studies across a wide range of disciplines from social venture creation (Haugh, 2007) to music composition strategies (Seddon & O'Neill, 2003) and musical communication (Seddon, 2004 & 2005). This method of analysis focuses on a process where categories emerge from the data via inductive reasoning rather than coding the data according to predetermined categories (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The CCM involves five main stages: 1) immersion; 'units of analysis' are identified, 2) categorisation; 'categories' emerge from the 'units of analysis', 3) phenomenological reduction; 'themes' emerge from the 'categories' and are interpreted by the researchers, 4) triangulation; support for researcher interpretations of 'themes' is sought in additional data, 5) interpretation; overall interpretation of findings is conducted in relation to prior research and/or theoretical models (McLeod, 1994).

Time 1

Analysis of the Time 1 interview transcripts involved researchers engaging with the five stages of CCM. During 'immersion', the researchers repeatedly read the interview transcripts in order to

obtain a high level of familiarity with the data. During this immersion process 35 discernibly different concepts emerged from the data, for example, 'long-term unemployment'; 'negative school experience'; 'proactive' and 'creativity'. These concepts were regarded as 'units of analysis' (see Appendix 2). During 'categorisation', 'units of analysis' with similar meanings were grouped together according to 'rules of inclusion' created in 'propositional statements'. In this procedure, each 'unit of analysis' had to comply with the 'rule of inclusion' for a 'category' to be included in that 'category'. When researchers decided that a 'unit of analysis' did not comply with the 'rule of inclusion' for an existing 'category', a new 'category' was created to accommodate it, leaving room for a continuous refinement in the grouping. This process resulted in 13 'categories' emerging from the 35 'units of analysis'. During 'phenomenological reduction', five 'themes' emerged from the 13 'categories'. As before, each 'category' had to comply with the 'rule of inclusion' for a 'theme' to be included in that 'theme'. When a 'category' did not comply with the 'rule of inclusion' for an existing 'theme', a new 'theme' was created with its own 'rule of inclusion' defined by a new 'propositional statement'. These five emergent 'themes' were subsequently interpreted by the researchers as: 'experience', 'self-confidence', 'the programme', 'perceived barriers' and 'maturity'. A diagrammatic illustration of this qualitative analysis process is provided for further clarification (see Fig.1).

Figure 1 – Phases of CCM Analysis at Time 1:

Immersion

Units of Analysis (35)

Categorisation

Categories (13)

Themes

Themes (5)

35 Discernibly different 'Units of Analysis'

1: Evaluation
23, 24

2: Programme Perception
16, 17

3: Inertia
3

4: Undermining Confidence
6, 29

5: Work Preparation
2, 15

6: Personality Facets
7, 30, 33

7: Feelings
5, 10, 20, 28

8: Barriers
1, 4, 9, 11, 34, 35

9: Collaboration
8

10: Cultural Aspects
18, 31

11: Experience
20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 32

12: Mature Decision- Making
14, 19, 25

13: Confidence
12

A: Experience
4, 5, 11

B: Self-confidence
1, 6, 7, 10, 13

C: The Programme
2

D: Perceived Barriers
3, 8

E: Maturity
9, 12

NB. The numbers displayed above in Fig. 1 in the 'categories' boxes correspond to the relevant units of analysis contained in that category. The numbers in the 'themes' boxes correspond to the relevant category contained in that theme.
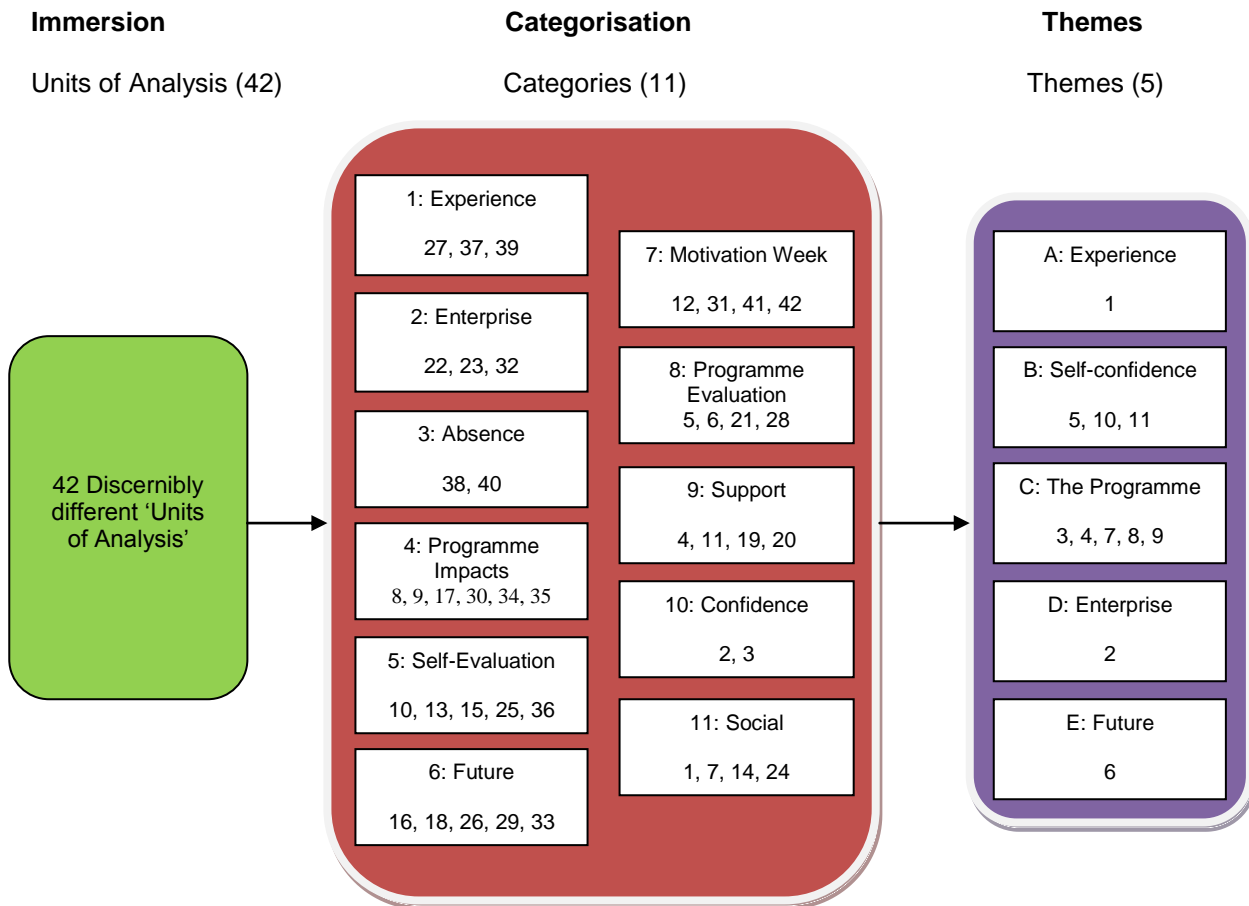
Time 2

The same analysis procedure employed at Time 1 was repeated at Time 2. During immersion 42

discernibly different concepts emerged from the data (see Appendix 3) for example, 'business idea';

'mentoring'; 'assertiveness' and 'career plan'. These concepts were regarded as 'units of analysis'.

'Categorisation' resulted in 11 'categories' emerging from the 42 'units of analysis'. During

'phenomenological reduction', five 'themes' emerged from the 11 'categories'. These five emergent

'themes' were subsequently interpreted by the researchers as 'experience', 'self-confidence', 'the programme', 'enterprise' and 'future'. A diagrammatic illustration of this qualitative analysis process is provided for further clarification (see Fig.2).

Figure 2 – Phases of CCM Analysis at Time 2:

Immersion	Categorisation	Themes
Units of Analysis (42)	Categories (11)	Themes (5)

42 Discernibly different 'Units of Analysis'

1: Experience
27, 37, 39

2: Enterprise
22, 23, 32

3: Absence
38, 40

4: Programme Impacts
8, 9, 17, 30, 34, 35

5: Self-Evaluation
10, 13, 15, 25, 36

6: Future
16, 18, 26, 29, 33

7: Motivation Week
12, 31, 41, 42

8: Programme Evaluation
5, 6, 21, 28

9: Support
4, 11, 19, 20

10: Confidence
2, 3

11: Social
1, 7, 14, 24

A: Experience
1

B: Self-confidence
5, 10, 11

C: The Programme
3, 4, 7, 8, 9

D: Enterprise
2

E: Future
6

NB. The numbers displayed above in Fig. 2 in the 'categories' boxes correspond to the relevant units of analysis contained in that category. The numbers in the 'themes' boxes correspond to the relevant category contained in that theme.

Numerical data from the 12 questionnaires (6 at Time 1 & 6 at Time 2) was entered into SPSS statistics software version 17.0. As this data was elicited from six participants, the only suitable analysis procedure was to seek descriptive statistics for triangulation with the qualitative data.

Results and Discussion

Ten overall themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data (five at Time 1 and five at Time 2). These themes were interpreted by the researchers as participant perceptions. Three of the themes that emerged at Time 1 ('experience', 'self-confidence' and 'the programme') re-emerged at Time 2. Two of the themes that emerged at Time 1 ('perceived barriers' and 'maturity') did not re-emerge at Time 2 but were superseded by two new themes ('enterprise' and 'future'). It is proposed that an examination of the similarities and differences between the themes at Time 1 and Time 2 will reveal the participants' perspective of the *outcome* benefits of the ESP. In the following discussion the participant quotations selected represent examples taken from 'units of analysis' relating to each relevant theme.

'Experience'

At Time 1, participants recounted their prior experiences of education and employment. Their educational experiences were generally negative and perceived as explanations and/or justifications for their current NEET situation.

> *"So then, like from the years messing about every day, the teachers started not liking me. So, every time I walk in my lesson, she'll be like: 'No you're out because I know you are going to mess about'. So, I wouldn't say it's my fault……But it didn't really work out and now I've gotta do everything again and I don't really want to but I'm just going to have to do it."* (P4)

> *"Yeah, it was people trying to give me crap and then I would fight with them. And then I'd basically tell them go away.... the school was telling me if I fight again I get kicked out. So no matter what I done, like even if they hit me first and I hit them back, I was getting excluded I was the one that was getting kicked out of school. And it annoyed me. And then after that year I was getting told that if I'd end up fighting with anybody again I was getting kicked out of school. So I stopped fighting and that's when the bullying started. And it wasn't just one or two people either. It was everybody, like literally everybody in that year gave me crap.... I've tried to blank out everything from senior school, I just hated it, hated it so much.* (P3)

> *"I had depression so the school didn't really cope with it they just locked me in a room and then just pulled me out and I got home skilled."* (P1)

Participant prior employment experience was also largely negative and transitory in nature and contributed to their negativity:

> *"I was working for the last year and a half, and then I was made redundant. When I was made redundant, I was looking for a new job and I eventually found one working in a pub; but that is mainly nights so I am free during the days, and that is pretty much it. I don't think there is much else apart from that."* (P6)

> *"I worked with my uncle for a bit, learned tempitation* [presumed to be a fencing technique] *and fencing and things like that and I just liked that 'cos it was money at the time."* (P5)

At Time 2, the participants still talked about their negative prior experiences but they no longer perceived these experiences as explanations or justifications for their current NEET status. It would appear that their perceived positive *outcome* benefits resulting from the ESP provided them with the ability to overcome their prior negative experiences [N.B. the participants refer to the programme as the 'course' throughout the T1 & T2 interviews].

> *"The other ones* [courses] *that I went on, at the end of the courses I felt abandoned……It's like you've got somewhere to go for six weeks, eight weeks, twelve weeks, whatever the course is and then you are gone, you're kicked out and you don't get a lot from it. But from this course I have managed to perhaps get a future job out of it or an apprenticeship. It's something that goes somewhere I can keep getting higher do you know what I mean? Not just doing the same job over and over and over; because that kills me, I hate doing that.* (P5)

The above examples from the T1 interview transcripts, related to prior educational experience, support prior research that reported a link between NEET status and 'social exclusion' predicated on poor academic achievement, low levels of school attendance and exclusion from school based on truancy or bullying (Payne, 2002). The above examples from the T1 interview transcripts, related to prior employment, indicate the transitory nature of employment found by these young people and provide support for research by Bentley & Gurumurthy (1999) who reported that focusing on too 'narrow' a concept of NEET status can lead to failing young people who find transient and insecure employment. The above example from the T2 interview transcript exemplifies an *outcome* benefit from the programme from the participant's perceived 'experience'. It is proposed that this example

indicates an improvement in participant general self-efficacy based on experiencing some success, positive experience, verbal persuasion and improved psychological state by engaging in the programme and provides support for the findings of prior research by Chen, Gully & Eden (2001) that reported the augmentation of self-efficacy in relation to these experiences.

'Self-confidence'

At Time 1, the participants lacked confidence and imagination, especially in relation to completing tasks when the level of difficulty rises or when starting something new (e.g., a business):

> *"I used to be quite good with my imagination but I haven't used it in ages, just decided to stay sort of the way I am you know....." (P3)*

> *"I....just to help me 'cos I need more confidence 'cos I ain't very confident in myself" (P4)*

> *"Erm, obviously that is a big step up. You have to think up something for a business plan and I have never done that before in my life. So, I think I'd be quite nervous…I'd be very nervous as I don't want to mess this up do I? I've got to bring a new kind of really creative idea." (P7)*

> *"Cos I still don't really have the confidence just to walk into a completely new thing and just pick it up and do it. Cos I've always just kind of stopped like with Maths so hopefully just give me that bit of confidence."* (P1)

At Time 2, they were much more confident and motivated:

> *"But, I'll push myself now to get more what I want." (P1)*

> *"It motivated you. Well, yeah, got you motivated to actually go through with it rather than go 'I could do that but I can't be bothered'." (P6)*

> *"Yeah, a lot different. Before, I was just like not bothered and I didn't care what I did as long as I did something and now I am actually set to something I want to do." (P6)*

> *"I got a lot of confidence out of the project and I got some motivation out of it cos I've never motivated myself really to push myself to do something and doing that I actually pushed myself to do something and get something out of it and get some respect out of it as well so that was quite good I quite liked that." (P7)*

> *"I feel a lot more confident in myself, a lot more motivated to go out and get myself a job now because I am less nervous and everything. I got that out of it* [the programme] *now 'cos I can just go out there and make my mark in the world really so it's quite good." (P7)*

The above examples from the interview transcripts at T1 and T2 indicate a positive change in what the participants refer to as 'confidence' and 'motivation'. Participant self-confidence seems to have undergone a transformation, which they indicate above is predicated on their engagement in the programme. Prior research has indicated that confidence and motivation are concepts directly related to efficacy beliefs and an individual's assessment of the achievability of specific goals (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Lucas & Cooper, 2005; Mclellan, Barakat & Winfield, 2009; Pajares, 1996). Based on the findings of this prior research, it is proposed that what has actually changed in the current research is the participants' level of general self-efficacy.

'The programme'

At Time 1, before the programme began the participants were given some indication of its content and mode of delivery but as the following examples from the T1 interview transcripts reveal, participants had a wide range of expectations of the programme:

> *"So I thought this course might be, would sort of move me on, get me out of the way I am, get me on to a better job where I am earning more money so I could get myself a house and get myself out of Corby because I don't want to be living here."* (P3)

> *"The business plan idea. I've got lots of ideas, like I've got lots of ideas for different things and I like that idea. She said there was err...... a few different workshops and programs what placements and things I'm gonna get where I can bring my own ideas to things. That sounds interesting cos you don't normally get to do that. I've worked at a few normal places and you don't say nothing you just go and do your job and that's it (laughs)."* (P5)

> *"Well maybe the idea I'm going to come up with might be something I want to be doing in the future and maybe that will be what I'm doing I mean I don't know yet it depends on what I come up with and then, if I really enjoy what I'm doing I might stick at it, do you know what I mean? It depends."* (P3)

> *"It would probably widen my knowledge as to how businesses run, I will probably see business in a new way, as opposed to just looking at it and saying well all that they sell is crisps or whatever. I'll now see that to get this I have got to do this, to get profit or whatever. It will make me understand more about it and make me appreciate more how hard people are working to run businesses and things."* (P6)

> *"Well I think even before the course is finished I'll be searching for a job in a restaurant I think, because then I know when I do finish I will have got the paper, I've got what I need. Then when I go back there for the interview, I've got everything there, and they will see that I am the man for the job, they will take me on and I will be sorted."* (P7)

At Time 2, they compare the programme that was delivered with their expectations:

"I've got more out of it than I expected to be honest, it was a lot more than I was expecting. It was just class after class of speaking and that, but eventually you get to know everybody and it becomes a lot more fun to come and gives you something to do. Like on long weekends I am sat thinking I wish I had college today because I am bored and have nothing to do. I am used to having Mondays to sit around and watch things like Jeremy Kyle and that do you know what I mean?" (P5)

"He set out 6 or 7 chairs. No it was 10 chairs and he sat you in the end chair and that was now. And then a year later you move up a chair and a year later you move up a chair and as I moved up the chairs I was saying what I was expecting in the future. At the first chair I was to move up in position. The second chair was to get more training and then move up again and then right I think the 5th chair would be being the pub manager and having a pub licence and the 10th chair was owning my own pub running a pub through Weatherspoons." (P6)

"I expected it to be more like sitting down and writing and working things out. But it wasn't, it was kind of more hands on and working for you and everyone else. I have been on courses before where it is all just done to meet criteria." (P1)

"Well at first, just because of the way it was explained to me, it was explained to me that I thought it was about building a business plan and I thought it was like E2E business links. I was expecting something similar to that but it wasn't it was different. You got to coming up with your own ideas but this one is about getting you to go forward with what you want to do and that's what your mentors come in and do and that's what they help you with. They try and get you to set your goals and then they try and get you there. It was good." (P5)

"It was a lot better because it got you really involved, I just thought it was some person just sitting there talking to you about things but it got you actively involved, made you think about things and made you actually want to do it as well, quite motivating." (P6)

"I just didn't expect it to be like the way it did I didn't expect it to sort out my head the way it did." ...."Just like sorting my head out like the way like I said the way things sort of looked at things differently that's what happened and I thought it might happen but I didn't think it was gonna happen and it did happen so it was alright, it was good." (P3)

"I guess it showed me a different frame of mind really just you know just go out there actually talk to people instead of being shy and just going for it so it was quite good. It's good now cos I can actually do that now before I couldn't talk to other people. Like before if I was sat here and I was talking to you I would probably, my face would go red and I wouldn't know what to say but yeah now it's OK I've got confidence in myself." (P7)

The above examples from the T1 interview transcripts reveal that the participants expected a range of activities and benefits from the programme. Some participants saw the programme as an opportunity to get a work placement, others an opportunity to develop a business idea. Some thought the programme would result in a 'paper' qualification but they all saw it as an opportunity to 'move forward' in their lives, which they felt had stagnated. It is interesting to note that the comments at Time 2 centred on intrinsic changes in the participant's outlook, described as 'different frame of mind', 'sorting my head out' and 'motivating', resulting from what they describe as

unexpected course content and delivery, rather than the extrinsic outcomes they described at Time 1. It is proposed that by raising the participants' awareness of enterprise through providing programme content that taught *for* enterprise rather than *about* enterprise (Kirby, 2004) and providing positive role-models through the 'mentors' (Curran & Blackburn, 1989; Lewis, 2005), participants' attitudes to employment, education and enterprise were transformed.

Differences between the three 'common' themes ('experience', 'self-confidence' and 'the programme') from Time 1 and 2 are examined above. The remaining themes, 'perceived barriers' and 'maturity' from Time 1 and 'enterprise' and 'future' Time from 2 are now considered.

'Perceived barriers'

Various comments made by the participants at Time 1 indicated some of the perceived barriers to their future employment prospects. These barriers were articulated as lack of qualifications in Maths and English, psychological problems and lack of confidence in their business skills:

> *"No, I feel myself, I've got to have Maths because everywhere like warehouse jobs they always say like have you got a test like to pass so, if I never had no Maths and English, I'll go to the job and do the test and fail because I won't know nothing like not a lot about Maths and English."* (P4)

> *"I've got ADHD so, it's kind of hard for me to keep my attention span if I'm bored with something and somebody talking and you feel like 25 minutes and telling me about things and if I'm not interested about what she's talking about it's kind of hard for me to listen and register it."* (P3)

> *"Ah, yeah, like working on your own business or something.....nah I don't think I would ever be able to do that. I would rather work in like someone else's business than my own, cos I don't think I'd really be a good business man."* (P4)

The theme 'perceived barriers' outlined above exemplifies how young peoples' self-efficacy can be negatively affected by social exclusion, predicated on poor academic achievement or debilitating psychological states, which can impact on their ability to succeed in finding employment or

engaging in enterprising activities (Lucas & Cooper, 2005; McLellan, Barakat & Winfield, 2009). However, not all of the participants expressed these levels of negativity.

'Maturity'

In contrast to the 'perceived barriers', some participants revealed a more 'mature' approach to their future employment prospects. It was articulated that sometimes, one might have to accept employment that does not appear to have immediate prospects in order to create future opportunities. Also, one might have to relocate to find work or collaborate with another to start a business:

> *"…I know what it's like and I ain't gonna lie to people you don't think that there are problems or something that they are going to get a great job and earn lots of money you know like loads of people do. Be honest with them and tell them they expect an agency and it is going to be factory work but you need to stick at it until you get something but first you need the money to get there. That's what everybody has to do."* (P5)

> *"Yeah, cos everything is shutting down isn't it, like from factories and everything they're all full pretty busy so people need to move to find work now and people aren't used to it but they're going to have to aren't they?"* (P5)

> *"Well I am not going to go* [say] *'No my idea is better'. We will just talk as a group, decide which idea best suits and then just go for it. Because you can't just, you may have your own idea but there are other people who want to talk. So you have to share their thoughts as well. So I would see what thoughts they had and then go for it, really."* (P7)

'Enterprise'

A theme of 'enterprise' did emerge at Time 2 but starting a business was considered to be a possibility for the long term future rather than something to engage with in the immediate future. However, the emergence of this theme would suggest that participants' attitude to enterprise had changed to make starting a business a future possibility. For this NEET group, change was manifested in two of the three ways proposed by Rust & Golombok (1989) (i.e., cognitive, affective

and behavioural) participant NEET's beliefs (cognitive) and emotions (affective) changed but accompanying actions (behavioural) may not manifest themselves until much later.

> *"Oh yeah, I have got it* [a business plan] *all typed up properly, in my own plan and what not and how I go about doing it and that. I've got it all on computer. I've done that myself."* (P5)

> *"I really enjoy the job that I am in and I like working in a pub, which can be a really good atmosphere and I figured that, if I could run my own pub, then I could try and do a better pub that what I mean cos I know. I know this sounds big headed but everyone does quite like me I'm friendly and everything that's the kind of atmosphere you want in a pub isn't it? You want to go into a pub and for people to be friendly and I want to be able to run a nice pub that everyone appreciates and respects."* (P6)

> *"I intend to get myself a job save up as I said just hopefully plan my own business one day in the future and that would be great really for me and my family so it would be nice yeah that's what I plan to do really now that this course has finished."* (P7)

'Future'

Perhaps the most positive theme to emerge at Time 2 was 'future'. This theme is characterised by the declaration of future plans by the participants, which included engaging in work placements, being more enterprising within their existing employment, returning to education and beginning to plan for the future.

> *"Yeah I have got a plan. A plan of where I want to go and what I want to do if you know what I mean and I've figured out my steps of how to get there. So the Plan B and the mentoring training is giving me the steps I need to get the apprenticeship that the woman said I could have. I couldn't just walk up to them, they wouldn't have just given me it but because I have been doing this that has given me the steps and the advantage over people to try and get it."* (P5)

> *"I suppose in the long run, if I end up owning my own pub, that's like a career for life really isn't it? As opposed to last time, I was just like I'll go whatever I want there is no set career no set anything if I get fired I go to another job. Cos that's not what you really want to do is it? Whereas now, I'm set for it so I can just go for that one goal as opposed to just doing anything. If I go for that one goal in the end I will probably be happier than doing whatever."* (P6)

> *"Try and get a job and re-sit my GCSEs. I really want to re-sit my GCSEs 'cos I didn't go do my GCSEs. I didn't go in the school so I just want to re-sit them, get them out the way and then if I pass them, I can go get a better job and go and move on to a better thing rather than working in factories cos I've always been clever."* (P3)

> *"I enjoyed the bit when we were asked to think about where we would be in 10-15 years time because that actually made me think. I wasn't sure at first and then I got asked and I was like oh and then I just suddenly thought of it all and had the answer there. I knew it all along but I had never bothered to think about it. So now I know it definitely"* (P6)

"I'll have to write CVs and send them out and be ready for it. I'll have to research for the job I'll be applying for as well. I need to know what I am doing and basically go from there." (P7)

We propose that because the research adopted an intervention method during data collection, differences between the themes emerging from the analysis of the interview data at Time 1 and Time 2 reveal changes in participants' GSE and ATE that emerged after engagement with the ESP.

GSE and ATE

Based on findings of prior research reviewed earlier in this article, it is argued that the changes in participant perception revealed in the analysis of the interview data in the current study, relate to increased participant GSE (Pajares, 1996; Sherer *et al.,*1982; Lucas & Cooper, 2005; Locke, Durham & Kluger, 1998) and ATE (Lucas & Cooper, 2005; McLellan, Barakat & Winfield, 2009; Delmar & Davidson, 2000; Krueger & Dickson, 1993, 1994; Chen *et al*., 1998 Curran & Blackburn, 1989; Lewis 2005; Athayde, 2009). These participant changes were revealed *within* the themes of 'experience', 'self-confidence' and 'the programme' from Time 1 to Time 2 and *between* the themes of 'perceived barriers' and 'maturity' at Time 1 and 'enterprise' and 'future' at Time 2.

Participant perceived changes from Time 1 to Time 2 within the themes 'experience', 'self-confidence' and 'the programme', were related to their negative prior educational experiences, which at Time 2 they reported were no longer perceived as reasons or excuses for their current NEET status. Also at Time 2, participants reported increased levels of self-confidence and motivation as a result of activities engaged in during the ESP. Participant perceived changes from Time 1 to Time 2, between the themes 'perceived barriers' and 'maturity' at Time 1, which were replaced at Time 2 by 'enterprise' and 'future', were related to increased participant GSE and ATE. Evidence of these participant changes can be found in their expressions of interest in starting their own businesses sometime in the future, and more positive plans for the future.

Triangulation

Data from the questionnaires completed by the six participants at Time 1 and Time 2 was entered into SPSS statistics software, version 17.0 and descriptive statistics were produced. This analysis revealed a 6.46% increase in participant GSE and a 2.78% increase in participant ATE after engagement with the enterprise skills programme (See Table 1). The small number of participants involved in the current study and the fact that the results provided are based on descriptive statistics minimises the importance of this quantitative data and obviously negates any generalisation from the results. However, participant percentage increases in GSE and ATE do provide some support for researcher interpretations of the emergent themes and may be regarded as triangulation of the data (McLeod, 1994).

Table 1: Changes in general self-efficacy (NGSE) and attitude to enterprise (ATE) from T1 to T2

Questionnaire Type	Total out of	N	Time 1 Mean (SD)	Time 2 Mean (SD)	% change
NGSE	80	6	54.50 (14.07)	59.67 (9.48)	+6.46
ATE	252	6	185.17 (16.9)	192.17 (22.97)	+2.78

The researchers in the current study reported that during their supervision of the completion of the GSE and ATE questionnaires, none of the participants experienced any major difficulties in completing them. We believe that the proposed relationship between the emergent themes of the current research and the constructs measured by the GSE and ATE scales, validate employing these scales in the evaluation of future larger-scale ESPs conducted using an intervention method within a quantitative paradigm.

Summary

The authors believe that the innovative use of an intervention method, employing interview techniques within a qualitative paradigm, enabled us to reveal the participants' perspective of their experiences resulting from their engagement with the ESP. We acknowledge that the procedures employed in this research study would be too costly and time consuming for general evaluation use but propose that relationships established between emergent participant themes and the constructs for the two scales GSE and ATE indicate the appropriateness of these two scales as evaluation tools for future larger-scale ESPs. Using scales that have been repeatedly validated in prior research adds academic rigour to evaluation, which is often missing from ESP evaluation. Furthermore, results of the current study ensure that the evaluation tools suggested are seeking to measure participant's perceived *outcome* benefits based in social science theory and are not just focussed on programme designers and deliverers expected *outcome* based on conventional, commonsense understandings of both social problems and treatments (Chen & Rossi, 1980).

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Appendix 1

Open-ended questions for the semi-structured interviews at Time 1 and Time 2

These questions were designed to allow the maximum freedom for the participants to respond with what was significant for them as individuals. Interviewers employed the questions as initiators and followed up with appropriate prompts once the participants had chosen the subject of their response.

Time 1

1. Please tell me how you heard about this programme
2. Please tell me about what you have been doing before you became involved with this programme.
3. What things about the programme are you looking forward to?
4. Please describe anything that you are concerned or worried about being involved with this programme
5. Please describe what you think would be the most you could get out of this programme
6. Please describe what might you be doing after the six weeks are completed
7. In what ways do you think that the programme will influence what you do in the long term future?
8. Please describe what impact you think the programme will have on you as a person.

Time 2

1. Please tell me what you enjoyed about the programme you have just finished.
2. Please tell me what you did not enjoy about the programme you have just finished.
3. In what ways was the programme different than you expected it to be?
4. In what ways did the programme measure up to what you hoped it would be?
5. In what ways do you feel different than you felt before you came on the programme?
6. Please describe what you feel you got out of the programme.
7. What do you intend to do now that the programme is finished?
8. Please describe how the programme has influenced your future?
9. How was this programme different than the others you have been on?

01 – Maths & English
02 – Vocational Training
03 – Inertia
04 – Age 16-18
05 – Emotions
06 – Negative School Experience
07 – Enterprise Potential
08 – Collaboration
09 – Unrealistic Aspirations
10 – Dislike of Inertia
11 – Abdication of Responsibility
12 – Confidence
13 – Motivation
14 – Realistic Aspirations
15 – Employment Experience
16 – Perceptions of Course Content
17 – Perceived Course Outcomes
18 – Limited Horizons
19 – Career Decision-making
20 – Positive Experience
21 – Optimal Experience Theory
22 – Optimal Experience Practice
23 – Intrinsic Evaluation
24 – Extrinsic Evaluation
25 – Maturity
26 – Positive Role-Model
27 – Positive School Experience
28 – Boredom
29 – Long-term Unemployment
30 – Creativity
31 – Cultural Heritage
32 – Trust & Responsibility
33 – Pro-active
34 – Vague Aspirations
35 – Lack of Enterprise Potential

01 – Social
02 – Confidence Negative
03 – Confidence Positive
04 – Supportive Environment
05 – Positive Evaluation of Course
06 – Course Expectation vs. Reality
07 – Social Confidence
08 – Course Output
09 – Course Impacts
10 – Self-Efficacy
11 – Mentoring
12 – Motivation Week Mastery Experiences
13 – Self-evaluation
14 – Extrinsic Evaluation
15 – Intrinsic Evaluation
16 – Job-seeking Strategy
17 – Effective Communication
18 – Aspiration
19 – Peer Mentoring
20 – Mentor Training
21 – Personal Problems with the Course
22 – Business Idea
23 – Enterprise
24 – Widening Horizons
25 – Self-evaluation of Change
26 – Career Plan
27 – Criticisms of Previous Courses
28 – Suggested Course Improvements
29 – Moment of Realisation
30 – Collaboration
31 – Motivation Week Bonding
32 – Nascent Entrepreneur
33 – Short-term Future
34 – Assertiveness
35 – Respect
36 – Self-analysis
37 – Negative Employment Experience
38 – Absence of Mentoring
39 – Positive Employment Experience
40 – Absence
41 – Motivation Week
42 – Motivation Week Confidence