

# Threshold concepts in Entrepreneurship Education

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# Research Context and Rationale

- Enterprise and entrepreneurship are seen as positive drivers of social, economic and political change
- Ongoing debate around the distinctive nature of entrepreneurship and how best to teach it
- Defining entrepreneurship threshold concepts is likely to inform the development of entrepreneurship curricula
- Transactional curriculum inquiry (TCI) involving entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship educators, students and educational experts ensures external and internal stakeholder involvement
- Findings will be of interest to scholars in education and entrepreneurship

# Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to make an original contribution to the enhancement of entrepreneurship education

## Research Objectives

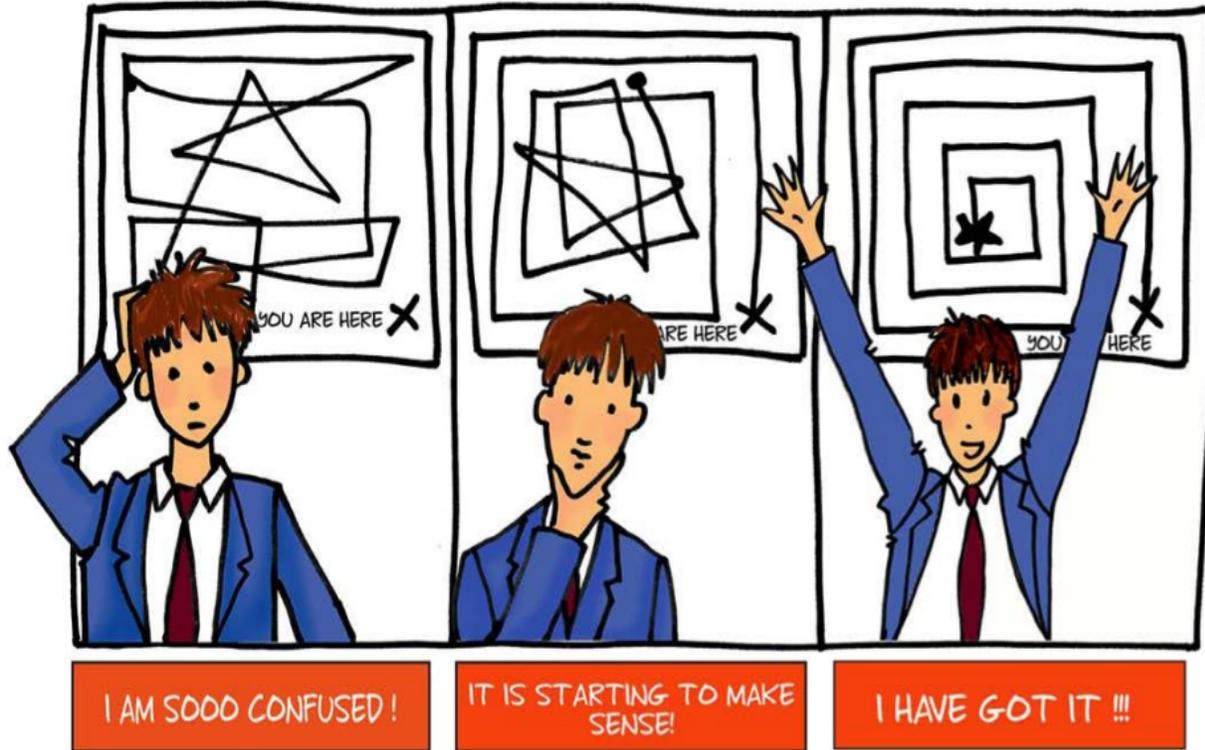
- To identify what it is that a student needs to grasp and/or become in order to “think like an entrepreneur” from multiple perspectives including expert entrepreneurs, educators and students
- To explore how the prerequisite transformations maybe engendered in students through the curriculum and pedagogy

Preparing students not just necessarily to be **business founders** but also to be more **creative**, to be **innovators** and **agents of change** in the organisations they work for

# Research Questions

- What does it mean to “think like an entrepreneur?”
- What are the threshold concepts that need to be understood in order to “think like an entrepreneur”?
- What pedagogical considerations and aspects of curricula design facilitate and hinder learning in entrepreneurship?

# Threshold Concepts



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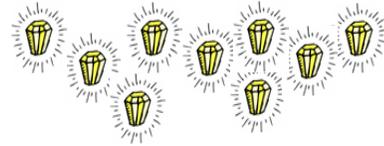
Smith, Young, Raeside & Elliot (2015)

- Transformative
- Irreversible
- Integrative
- Often troublesome
- Bounded

# Summary of work and conclusions to date



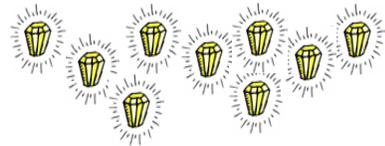
17 Individual interviews with expert entrepreneurs



9 Candidate Threshold Concepts (CTC)



12 expert ratings of importance of each CTC to thinking as an entrepreneur



Collated ratings shared with expert panel.



10 expert responses to criticality of each to thinking as an entrepreneur



5 Candidate Threshold Concepts (CTC) agreed by 9 or 10 (of 10) respondents

# Entrepreneurship Threshold Concepts

<p>“I can create value” Self-Efficacy</p> 	<p>Self-efficacy is about thinking “I can do this” whilst being (*highly) self-aware, self-controlled and conscious of one’s own strengths and weaknesses. It is about accepting mistakes as part of learning, and always being interested in knowing more.</p> <p><i>*later removed</i></p>
<p>“I see opportunities” Opportunity</p> 	<p>Opportunity is about seeing commercial potential where others do not. It is associated with intuition, making patterns and connections. It implies future orientation and a focus on possibilities for improvement.</p>
<p>“I understand the risks” Risk</p> 	<p>Risk is regarded as a sign of a potential opportunity, something to be understood - even sought out - rather than necessarily avoided. It implies quick wits, requires discernment and is not reckless.</p>
<p>“I know what’s important” Focus</p> 	<p>Focus is about making choices, having a clear vision and passionately driving towards it. It implies effective prioritisation, appropriate delegation and never switching off. Focus means intense, single-minded determination.</p>
<p>“I take action” Impact</p> 	<p>Impact is about making things happen and taking action (*on a grand scale) combined with a sense of urgency and a desire to make a difference. It requires courage and implies a degree of compulsion.</p> <p><i>*later removed</i></p>

## 4 others that didn't make the cut with the entrepreneurs...

<p>“I can be different” (Deviance)</p> 	<p>Deviance is about being unconsciously unconventional, able to resist the pressure to conform or do what family and society expects. It implies a degree of strong mindedness and can sometimes be perceived as being difficult or arrogant.</p>
<p>“Work = Play = Life” (Work)</p> 	<p>Work is not a distinct bounded set of activities, but integral to and indistinguishable from living and playing. It implies incredible effort invested by choice which is intrinsically motivated.</p>
<p>“I need other people” (Team)</p> 	<p>An effective team is prerequisite to success. Team is about knowing that the team can do more than the collection of individuals combined, not feeling threatened by the capabilities of others, but seeking out others abler than you.</p>
<p>“I know the fundamentals of business” (Business Fundamentals)</p> 	<p><i>Having fundamental business knowledge in sales &amp; marketing, finance and human resources.</i></p>

# Informed Consent

**Diamond Ranking Exercise with educators to identify the most significant and transformational concepts in teaching entrepreneurship.**

*(Part of a multi-stage transactional curriculum inquiry to develop entrepreneurship curricula.)*

You are invited to take part in a research study to identify the most significant and transformational concepts in teaching entrepreneurship.

The study is conducted by Lucy Hatt as part of her doctoral studies at Durham University.

\* This research project is supervised by Professor Ray Land (ray.land@durham.ac.uk) and Dr Nicola Reimann (nicola.reimann@durham.ac.uk) from the School of Education at Durham University.

The purpose of this study is identify the most significant and transformational concepts in teaching entrepreneurship.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a Diamond Ranking exercise in a small group.

Your participation in this study will take approximately 30 minutes.

You are free to decide whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences for you.

All responses you give or other data collected will be kept confidential. The records of this study will be kept secure and private. All files containing any information you give are password protected. In any research report that may be published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify you individually. There will be no way to connect your name to your responses at any time during or after the study.

If you have any questions, requests or concerns regarding this research, please contact me via email at [lucy.e.hatt@durham.ac.uk](mailto:lucy.e.hatt@durham.ac.uk) or by telephone at 0773 421 8412.

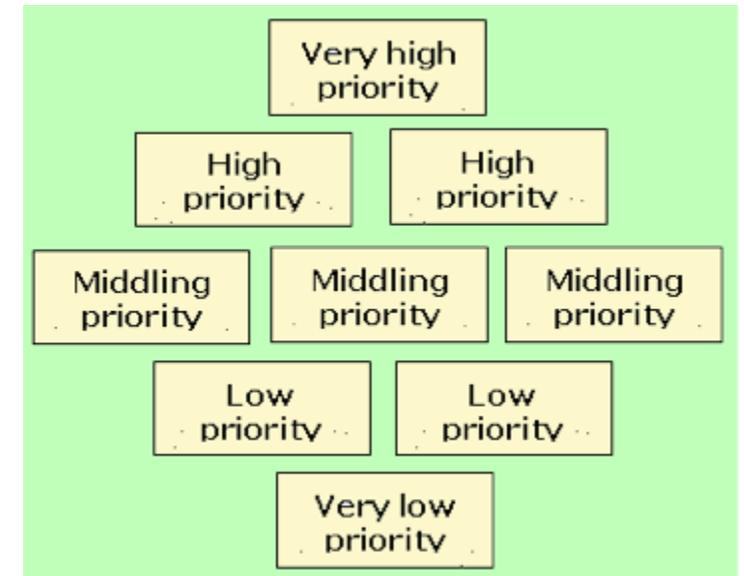
# Group Discussion

## Part 1

- Diamond Ranking Exercise
  - Discuss the concepts presented – are all Threshold Concepts?
    - Transformative
    - Integrative
    - Bounded
    - Irreversible
    - Often troublesome
  - Are any missing?
  - Place your 9 Threshold Concepts on the Diamond in order of importance...

## Part 2

- Share a summary of an example of an effective entrepreneurship/ enterprise workshop/classroom exercise
- Which TC's does your exercise address? How do you know? How do you assess?
- What changes, if any, will you make to your exercise as a result of considering it through the lens of TC theory?



# Wrap Up



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