

## **FINTAN DONOHUE OBE, CEO GAZELLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT THE HEART OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The Gazelle Group was formed in 2010 with the strategic intent to transform opportunity for students through entrepreneurship and enterprise. Over a three year period more than 20 colleges in the UK have bought into its approach and have been instrumental in creating new learning environments for students of vocational courses.

Recently the group, through its colleges, has engaged with a number of international partners. In this article the CEO Fintan Donohue describes how the Gazelle Colleges Group is working to transform the nature of vocational learning and the leadership of vocational institutions.

The expansion of Vocational Education and Training support to many countries across the world by British colleges has been a significant development in work with the British Council and in work directly with governors and colleges across the globe. Much of the work to date has focused on the skills agenda and on the desire to raise the capacity of countries to deliver the skills needed to support expanding economies in areas such as Africa, Middle East, South America, China, America and India in particular.

The Gazelle Colleges Group has challenged the narrow focus on skills and has argued strongly for a more enterprising and entrepreneurial agenda, to pervade vocational education and training. This manifests itself for many in the advancement of creativity in learners and the need to create greater balance between skills and the wider attributes that young people in particular will need to succeed in business creation, self-employment or in employment generally.

The Gazelle Group has found considerable interest in recent months across many countries in a model which demands holistic change within colleges and promotes a new type of college with an identifiable entrepreneurial culture at every level of the organisation. The Gazelle Group argues that the entrepreneurial culture and practice that is needed to drive value for learners and needed to establish a new type of institution, demands change in a minimum of four key strategic areas. These are represented by figure 1 below, which highlights leadership, student advocacy, employer engagement and tutor skills at the core of what is essentially an enterprise revolution.

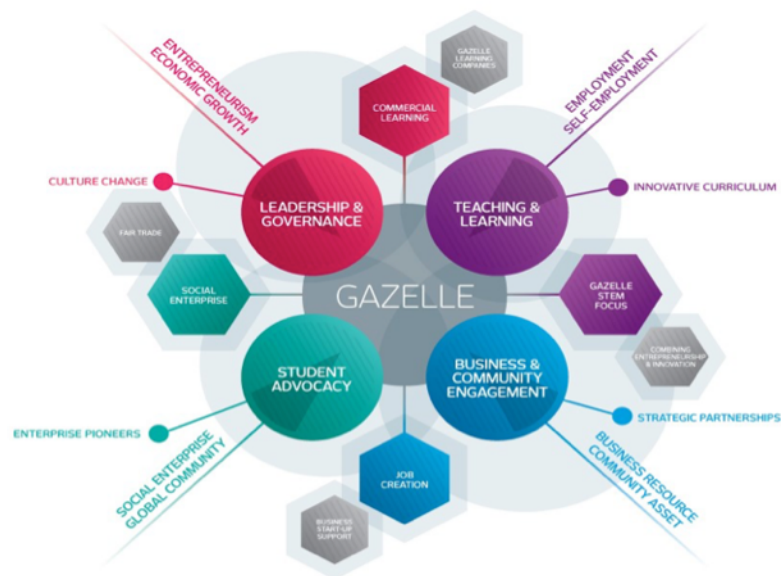


Figure 1

The group argues for fundamental change in curriculum content and delivery. In the USA, for example enterprise and entrepreneurship make up 6000 courses across universities and colleges but the teaching is too often focused on knowledge rather than practice. The courses in such colleges are often contained within entrepreneurial centres which have no direct relationship with the culture and practice of the college as a whole.

This article briefly sets out what is required to establish a new relationship with the VET system in countries that want to leap forward.. In the most recent report from UKCES supported by the confederation of British Industry, for example the 'gold standard' for VET is 'earning while learning' and going beyond 'skills acquisition'.

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

In the progressive colleges across the private sector and the most progressive public sector, entrepreneurial thought and action is promoted actively as a route to business success and graduate opportunity. For example, Gazelle has partnered with Babson College, arguably the foremost college for entrepreneurship education in the USA, to develop an entrepreneurial thought and action framework that is assisting UK college leaders, to embrace new ways of

thinking and working in their practice across their colleges. Using the Sara Sarasvathy's theoretical framework around effectuation, the group is pioneering new approaches to leadership. Their approaches demand more imaginative practices in the creation of wealth and in the advancement of a more outward facing college connecting with its community and its employers.

Fintan Donohue, the CEO of the Gazelle College Group in the UK argues that leaders in the public sector have largely been charged with spending money to deliver relatively time based qualifications. There is a long term requirement now for public funding reduction for leaders to demonstrate a much stronger commercial acumen and a more entrepreneurial approach to the development of their colleges. Mr Donohue argues that partners in countries such as South America, Asia, Africa and India are just as much in need of leadership that espouses entrepreneurship as colleges in the UK. It is for this reason that the Gazelle Babson gateway programme has attracted more than 80 senior leaders in the first year of its operation.

## **TEACHING TRANSFORMATION**

The predictable nature of teaching in an environment where students largely emerge into predestined employment roles that change little over decades, is a model of output that is in significant decline within Europe and increasingly within fast developing economies worldwide. Students are frequently requiring a higher level of stimulus and a greater level of opportunity if they are to be motivated and to be actively engaged in vocational education and training for the future.

Simply creating the environments of yesterday and expecting students already surrounded by mobile technology, social networks and global stimulus to operate in relatively predictable models of teaching delivery, is flawed. Within the Gazelle Colleges significant progress has been made in reducing the dependency on the singular teacher and the group student model. Much of the work of organisations such as Microsoft, Google, Intel and others, supports a move to a flipped classroom where more of the knowledge and skills based curriculum can be accessed outside of the traditional classroom, leaving time for a much greater action learning across different disciplines. In some of the more progressive Gazelle colleges learning has become largely project based with teams of teachers working in negotiation with students around their learning week and how to maximise the output in terms of their skills and wider knowledge acquisition.

## **STUDENT ADVOCACY**

A model which engages the students in the determination of their own success, enabling them to track their learning and to compare their progress with other students across similar

disciplines, stimulates competition and motivates the students to accelerate their learning rather than simply wait for the next slot in the timetable. Building competitions, meaningful work experience, access to learning companies into that delivery model helps to create an alternative to the more single model of pedagogy that teaches students a level of dependency which will not stimulate their employment in the future.

Building on some of the university models of entrepreneurial education particularly those pioneered in the curriculum leaders course at Babson, Gazelle has been able to create tutor supported development which encourages teaching leaders to approach learning design differently. Building Design Thinking, pioneered and developed by IDEO in the USA, is another innovation feature that can generate a different energy in the classroom.

## EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

The challenge faced globally around the engagement of employers in training and learning is a particular focus for the UK Government as they seek to build a world class apprenticeship learning framework. Recent reports from across Europe have highlighted the need for depth as well as breadth in vocational learning and the most recent report supported by CBI and published by the UKCES in the UK, 'Growth through People', highlights earning and learning as the gold standard for the future of vocational education and training. The challenge for colleges, often associated with a larger younger student cohort and a full time curriculum model is to invent new ways of building employers into the design and development of the curriculum. In such circumstances it seems much more likely that the students emerging will emerge with a skillset that commands the support of the industry.

Self-Efficacy	Social Skills	Functional Skills	Enterprise
Personal qualities needed for success in new worlds of work	Capabilities to find, make and manage networks and collaborations	Knowledge and abilities in particular business or technical areas	Understanding and aptitudes for driving successful enterprises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Focus and drive</li> <li>▶ Resilience</li> <li>▶ Adaptability</li> <li>▶ Reliability</li> <li>▶ Reflectiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Team-working</li> <li>▶ Leadership</li> <li>▶ Networking</li> <li>▶ Empathy</li> <li>▶ Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Technical competence</li> <li>▶ Technical knowledge</li> <li>▶ Core skills (3Rs)</li> <li>▶ Academic abilities</li> <li>▶ E-confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Commercial nous</li> <li>▶ Creativity</li> <li>▶ Problem-solving</li> <li>▶ Initiative</li> <li>▶ Risk-taking</li> </ul>

In the Gazelle Colleges there is increasing evidence of employer support for the progressive curriculum and teaching models that are emerging from the most dynamic of the colleges. It comes as no surprise that industry are seeking students with greater creativity and a capacity to add value to the business from an early stage of their employment. In order to create students

with those employability skills, there is a need to recognise, as illustrated in the diagram below (figure 1), that the development of the wider enterprising and entrepreneurial mind-set and skills requires just as much time, energy and pedagogy as the more easily defined vocational skill output.

For too long, the pedagogy surrounding the advancement of creativity as well as the advancement of skills has remained hidden within the curriculum. There is almost a belief that a student for example undertaking a vocational course in construction, engineering or catering will somehow automatically acquire the reasoning and creative abilities by dint of carrying out that work. While some of the learning methodologies around concepts such as Design Thinking, Social Enterprise and creative thinking etc are in early stages of development, they nevertheless represent a future that colleges across the globe and those currently being designed within countries such as the Middle East, would do well to consider.

1) Gazelle Global, (2012) *Enterprising Futures: The changing landscape and new possibilities for further education*, Gazelle Global.

2) Gazelle Global, (2012) *Enterprising Futures: The changing landscape and new possibilities for further education*, Gazelle Global.

3) Kiefer, Schlesinger, Brown (2010) *Action Trumps Everything: Creating What You Want in an Uncertain World*, Black Ink Press.

4) Sarasvathy (2009), *Effectuation: Elements of Entrepreneurial Expertise (New Horizons in Entrepreneurship Series)*, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

5) Cole and Donohue (2014) *Further Education Re-imagined: Preparing for the Future Workforce*, Microsoft, Gazelle Group and Intel.

6) <http://www.gazellecolleges.com>

7) <http://www.ideo.com>

8) UKCES (2014) *Growth through People*, UKCES.

9) <http://www.gazellecolleges.com>