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APPLYING THE PRACTICE-BASED METHOD IN TEACHING ENTREPRENEURSHIP - THE CASE OF THE MSc in BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP at TU DUBLIN

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Summary of Case

'Since we live in an age of innovation, a practical education must prepare a [wo]man for work that does not yet exist and cannot yet be clearly defined' - Peter Drucker

Following reviews of the relevant IEET (Innovation, Entrepreneurship Education & Training) literature and after assessing current thinking and practice in the domain, it was concluded that, in the absence of empirical evidence in favour of a particular pedagogical approach, that a portfolio of coordinated practice-based methods is an appropriate approach for developing value-based learning outcomes at this time (2019). These pedagogical approaches focus on students' attempts to discover, create and capture value by experiencing, playing, observing, creating and thinking reflectively and not just understanding, knowing and talking as in more traditional approaches (Neck & Greene, 2011). This innovative approach will be demonstrated (in terms of specifying learning outcomes) utilising the flagship MSc (Business & Entrepreneurship) programme in the Technological University Dublin which has adopted this approach successfully since 2014. The paradigmatic approach applies equally to novice and expert and thus applies across student populations. It is inclusive and therefore success is both idiosyncratic and multidimensional. It requires continuous practice; do – reflect - learn and not learn-do as in traditional approaches. Reflective practice thus becomes increasingly important for developing learning outcomes. The approach proposed is therefore particularly suitable for unpredictable environments. The teacher is empowered to experiment with a pedagogical portfolio that emphasises diverse tools and techniques. These approaches are broken down into five discrete primary pedagogies – Starting Businesses (Practice – experiencing/feeling); Serious Games and simulations (Play); Observation (Field trips and research); Design – based learning (Create, Co-create) and Reflective Practice (Deep learning, Marton, 1975) (i.e. reflection - on - practice, reflection- in- practice (Schon, 1987).

Expected learning outcomes then are based on the students' attempts to create value by experiencing, playing, observing, creating and thinking. Each learning outcome depending on the pedagogical approaches utilised. Learning outcomes can be stated in tangible terms. These learning outcomes can be delivered on other programmes by improved Programme/Course design, support for staff (upskilling) and appropriate value-based assessment criteria.

The case study presented here, MSc (Business & Entrepreneurship) will show how this strategic and innovative approach to teaching entrepreneurship is applied in practice at Programme and Module levels. Links or further information for Judges:

<http://www.dit.ie/studyatdit/postgraduate/taughtprogrammes/allcourses/dt353ftbusinessentrepreneurshipmsc.html#>

- **Introduction to the nature of the teaching initiative and its specific objectives**

Technological University Dublin came into being on January 1st 2019. It is the first named Technological University in the British Isles and it has emerged from the merger of three Institutes of Technology located in Dublin City Centre (numerous sites), South Dublin County and West Dublin. The new University will be the largest University in Ireland with 28, 500 student's across all campuses. Building on the core strengths of the three founding institutions, the new University is positioned as the first **PRACTICE – BASED, RESEARCH INFORMED** University in Ireland. This unique positioning contrasts sharply with the missions of the traditional research-led Universities.

In anticipation of the above developments, the College of Business in TU Dublin, through its Entrepreneurship Educators Strategy Group (EESG, 2013), undertook a review of entrepreneurially related learning & teaching in the College of Business. The group identified diverse and innovative approaches at *module* level, but found fewer coherencies in *Institutional, college* and *programme* level pedagogies underpinning entrepreneurship education. From this analysis it became apparent that significant knowledge gaps exist in the area of entrepreneurship learning outcomes in business education and beyond. The research suggests that these knowledge gaps might be addressed through improved course design, support for staff to upskill and appropriate value-based assessment criteria. The author of this case was awarded a teaching fellowship for the College of Business in 2014 with the objective of developing shared entrepreneurship learning outcomes that might be achieved in every undergraduate and postgraduate programme in the College of Business after the institutional merger. The question which needs addressing therefore is; in teaching entrepreneurship in the TU, what learning outcomes are we (as educators) trying to achieve?

In this case, it is argued that entrepreneurial module-level learning outcomes are important for undergraduate students in building fundamental skills and confidence, however the more strategically important goal is for students is to develop entrepreneurial mind-sets and entrepreneurial capabilities which can lead to greater entrepreneurial effectiveness (QAA, 2012). Graduates possessing these entrepreneurial attributes, it is further argued, will survive and thrive 'in a world characterised by increasingly greater levels of uncertainty and unknowability' (Neck & Greene, 2011:67/68). A world defined by a volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous and hyper-connected environment (VUCAH) (Rao, 2018). The output of this case study is to demonstrate how the development of appropriate learning outcomes can contribute to the development of entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes (entrepreneurial capital) in all graduates of the College of Business. These outcomes can then be applied to other non-business Colleges within the Technological University.

- **The Infrastructure required to launch the initiative**

The College of Business in TU Dublin is located in a dedicated city centre location. See below.



The College will move in two years to the new campus for the University in the Grangegorman urban district (<http://ggda.ie/>). All Colleges in the University will be located on this dedicated site. It also will include the Universities incubation and knowledge transfer facilities. When complete, the campus will have a student population of approximately 22,000 students. It will be one of only two Universities' in Dublin City Centre. Having all Colleges on the same campus site will allow for the rapid diffusion of the practice-based methodology of teaching entrepreneurship through all faculties (colleges).

The College of Business will be located in the West quad group of buildings (2022) and will have a dedicated STEAM & ICE (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts/Humanities/Social Science, Maths & Innovation, Creativity, Entrepreneurship) space dedicated to championing the TU Dublin approach to teaching innovation-driven entrepreneurship to all of the non-business Colleges on campus. It is important to remember that the methodology has already been piloted successfully on the MSc (Business & Entrepreneurship) since 2015. See the illustration below.

- **The challenges that were encountered, how they developed and how they were overcome**

The application of practice-based outcomes on the MSc (Business & Entrepreneurship) commenced by firstly reviewing the literature on entrepreneurial education outcomes to identify the current state of thinking in the area. The literature is also utilized to identify possible trends in 'best' and 'next' practice. This literature review was undertaken in conjunction with the authors' attendance at the ICSB World Conference on Entrepreneurship in Dublin, June 11-14th. www.icsb2014.org. The author, a member of the local organizing committee, participated in sessions on the 'Entrepreneurship Education'

track and also attended relevant sessions at the pre-conference entrepreneurship policy day and consulted with key informants in the area.

- **How the initiative was received by the learners and other participants**

TU Dublin has developed its graduate attributes for enhanced employability (The 5 Es) which were approved by Academic Council in 2013 (GA Working Group, 2013). These are the graduate attributes which TU Dublin ideally would like its graduates to have upon graduation from the University. These are graduates who are: ENGAGED, **ENTERPRISING**, ENQUIRY-BASED, EFFECTIVE and EXPERT. The relevant E for this paper is ENTERPRISING. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: TU Dublin -An enriched educational experience: Enhancing employability.

Graduates who have the skills, knowledge and attributes needed to find practical solutions through the application of creative ideas and innovations

Descriptors of the graduates: Independent Thinkers, Creative, Career Educated, Self-starters, Innovators, Entrepreneurs, well - organised.

Technological University Dublin's Hothouse entrepreneur development programme has assisted over 250 new firms to create 1,300 jobs, attracted €115 million in equity investment and has licensed over 40 new technologies to multi-nationals and Irish SMEs.

It appears that the development of learning outcomes in the entrepreneurship education and training domain appears to have made little progress over recent years other than to provide lists of desirable outcomes (developed intuitively or based on research lacking rigor) but the extant literature offers, in the main, little theoretical or practical guidance on how these outcomes might be achieved through curriculum design and learning and teaching methodologies. Accessing the state of play in the entrepreneurship education domain, Neck & Greene (2011; 2014) revert to first principles and re-evaluate how entrepreneurship education is taught at 3rd level and how it might be taught in future given the increasing complex, uncertain and unknowable world inhabited by students. Taking an educators perspective, the authors state that the responsibilities of entrepreneurship educators is to develop the discovery, reasoning and implementation skills of their students so that they can survive and thrive in uncertain and unknowable environments. Entrepreneurship is about future opportunities but many of the tools and techniques traditionally used are not fit for purpose. Many techniques are more suited for benign and predictable environments as experienced in the past. Entrepreneurship is a multidisciplinary field – it requires knowledge of many areas by the teacher but the end goal in all cases is value discovery, creation and capture. Entrepreneurship is therefore a key conduit for creating personal, economic, social and public value in society.

Neck & Greene therefore proposed a new paradigm but not a new pedagogy for teaching in this new world. It is a conceptual approach to teaching entrepreneurship as a practice-based METHOD. This method goes beyond mere understanding, knowing and talking as in previous approaches and embraces using, applying and acting. In a word, **PRACTICE** becomes more important. In developing the new framework Neck & Greene were heavily influenced by effectuation principles (Sarasvathy) and hypothesis-based entrepreneurship approaches (SEE: Blank, Ries, Kelley, Muraya, Aulet etc.). This new approach has major implications then for entrepreneurship learning outcomes.

- **How the initiative was received by the learners and other participants (Applying the PRACTICE – BASED principles)**

The MSc (Business & Entrepreneurship) is a one year Masters programme in TU Dublin which has been running since 2006. In 2014 it was re-imagined as a conversion programme for **NON-BUSINESS** graduates only. This was in response to an identified need for a business and entrepreneurship programme for STEAM graduates (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts/Humanities& Social Science, Maths). The practice-based methodology principles were applied from that time. Having non-business graduates only on the programme, has given us a unique opportunity to pilot the practice-based methodological approach in an experimental-type setting. So far (4 years), the response from both students and external examiners on the programme have been very encouraging. The students show clear preferences for the ‘doing-reflecting- learning’ pedagogical approach. There is an annual average cohort of approximately 25 students - with up to 75 per cent of the students coming from overseas.

- **The learning outcomes that were achieved and how they were measured and evaluated**

A method approach applies equally to novice and expert and thus applies across student populations. It is inclusive and therefore success is both idiosyncratic and multidimensional. It requires continuous practice; do – reflect - learn and not learn-do as in traditional approaches. Reflective practice thus becomes increasingly important for learning outcomes. The method proposed is therefore suitable for unpredictable environments. The teacher is empowered to experiment with a pedagogical portfolio that emphasises diverse tools and techniques (Table 1). These approaches are broken down into five discrete primary pedagogies – **Starting Businesses** (Practice – experiencing/feeling); **Serious Games and simulations** (Play); **Design – based learning** (Create, Co-create), **Field work** (Observing) and **Reflective Practice** (Deep learning, Marton, 1975) i.e. reflection - on - practice, reflection-in- practice (Schon, 1987). Expected learning outcomes then are based on the students’ attempts to create value by experiencing, playing, observing, creating and thinking. Each

learning outcome depending on the pedagogical approaches utilised. Learning outcomes can be stated in tangible terms. These learning outcomes can be delivered by improved Programme/Course design, support for staff upskilling and appropriate value-based assessment criteria. Table 1 shows how this practice-based approach has been applied to the MSc (Business & Entrepreneurship) master’s conversion programme in the Technological University Dublin.

Table 1: Entrepreneurship Learning Outcome Matrix at Programme level for MSc (Business & Entrepreneurship) @ TU Dublin

Year Of Programme	Primary Pedagogies/Tools/Techniques Do-Learn-Think (Reflect)	Programme design – Curriculum development	Support for Staff – Learning & Teaching methodology	Assessment criteria – Formative, Summative	Learning outcomes
1	Experiencing/practice/feeling Starting businesses/Projects	Business Plan Charity Project Consultancy project	Requires teachers with business planning and consultancy skills	Dragons Den Funds raised Delivering on brief	Value Discovery, Value creation, Value capture, Value evaluation Implementation Pivot/Failure
1	Playing Playing Serious games and simulations	Simulations	Train Staff in use of tool/technique on programme	Scenario development Competitions Win/loose	Embrace/accept success and failure through play
1	Observing Field trips/Experiments/field research	Consultancy project Thesis	Requires teachers with consultancy and research KSAs	Quality of research Relevance v rigor	Evaluation of value Contributing to value creation
1	Design based learning Creating, co-creating	Product/Market Development module	Requires teachers with innovation management, product development and growth marketing KSAs	Innovativeness of new market offering – incremental innovation to disruptive innovation	Value discovery Value creation
1	Reflective practice Thinking	Consultancy project Charity project Thesis	Requires teachers with critical and reflective thinking skills.	Reflective journals Feedback on performance – formative/summative Presentations Thesis grade/Viva	Reflection on practice Reflection in practice

Note: M.Sc. (Business & Entrepreneurship) in the School of Marketing, College of Business, TU Dublin is the case study used. The elements in the programme which go beyond understanding, knowing and talking and embrace using, applying and acting are shown above. It is important to remember that the first semester in particular contains some foundational building blocks which allow for the more practice-orientated modules on the programme to be delivered primarily in the second semester.

Programme aims, learning outcomes and objectives

The MSc is a pre-experience and postgraduate qualification. Given that over half the programme is self-directed learning, the target audience for this MSc is defined very broadly. The core audience for this MSc is primarily pre-experience and post-graduate Science, Engineering, Technology, Social Science and Arts/Humanities students who wish to

build on their existing learning and have an aspiration to work in developing market ready products either by founding their own business or by working creatively in an existing business. It is expected that the programme would also have resonance with entrepreneurship educators or small business trainers/consultants/policy makers. Unlike undergraduate programmes, which have standard inputs, standard learning process (with minimal self-directed learning) and standard graduates, this MSc programme has a diverse recruitment of graduates, an individualistic process of transformation through a mix of set taught modules and self-directed learning, and a diverse output of students.

A key goal is to integrate theory and practice. Consequently the philosophy underlying this MSc in Business & Entrepreneurship is to focus on providing a rigorous business education for high calibre graduates to prepare them for lifelong careers in enterprise. It is intended that students will have already undertaken their academic formation in a variety of science, engineering, technology, social science/arts/humanities based disciplines and that this programme will both broaden and deepen their intellectual capacity in the theme of enterprise development. Each element of the programme is designed to act as a building block towards further academic development.

In planning this MSc, the Programme Team was conscious of the challenges of the modern business environment, where technologists are called on to be innovative strategic thinkers with a broad portfolio of business responsibilities. The initial aim is to expose graduates to a framework of concepts and approaches necessary for developing an enterprise through a range of functional disciplines, while also providing an overview. The capstone of this master's programme is the dissertation. In providing this programme, the TU Dublin is responding to a national and industry need to nurture a cadre of highly-qualified, expert graduates capable of developing, managing and marketing the wealth creating resource of the country. (See: TU Dublin graduate attributes – the %E's).

The MSc in Business and Entrepreneurship is an initiative that addresses Ireland's needs for greater innovation. It draws from the TU Dublin foundation of innovation and entrepreneurship and builds on the TU Dublin brand reputation for distinct and high quality programmes. The programme's mission is to help graduates achieve exceptional accomplishments by providing the business skills that are critical to identifying and exploiting commercial opportunities. More specifically, the programme aims to:

Offer graduates of non-business disciplines, the opportunity to build on the intellectual formation achieved in their primary degree education by developing knowledge and techniques of Innovation, Technology, business and Entrepreneurship through a dedicated one-year programme.

Distinguish itself from general postgraduate business programmes by emphasising innovative and entrepreneurial energies that are the foundation of TU Dublin's reputation. Create, through the use of a variety of pedagogical approaches (Practice-based), a multi-skilled graduate with a sound knowledge of business management techniques, in addition to the wider interpersonal and leadership qualities required to develop enterprises.

Focus on specific skill needs in the economy, by preparing graduates for careers across a range of management disciplines. While focusing on immediate and practical skills, this programme also aspires to develop the capacity within participants to sustain their learning journey, independently and continuously, throughout their lives.

Programme learning outcomes

Develop a strategic, integrated and holistic perspective on innovation in organisations and new venture creation through a study of management/business at:

An individual, group and organisational behavioural level

A functional, process and strategic level

And through reflection on experience (both personal and within the cohort)

By providing visionaries with a unique set of business skills and hands-on opportunities in a nurturing, real-time business environment, the programme will help to mould leaders who will build tomorrow's businesses. As part of this process, it will prepare participants for the challenges of growing a high potential business through the development of enhanced personal and interpersonal skills and, in particular, provide mastery of the strategic and competitive imperatives of managing in a complex international business environment.

Learn to question assumptions and confront the implementation of solutions, thereby developing the analytical and research skills needed to make logical arguments and creative contributions to improve business and management practice of growing organisations.

By making informed planning, financing, investing, organising and monitoring decisions in class and in real settings, this programme's graduates will enter entrepreneurial business environments with a set of knowing-doing skills that will provide the setting for creating future Irish businesses.

To ensure each participant is challenged individually to attain the highest standards of personal excellence and as a result become more self-aware of their strengths and aspirations so as to identify potential career development paths.

Contribute to society at large by enhancing life-long learning skills and personal development.

Above all, the programme is about developing the student mindset, skillsets whilst developing their ability to work with appropriate toolsets to discover, create and capture value in economic, social, cultural and community domains in national and international contexts.

The programme is structured to provide a strategic perspective on business creation, technology management and innovation in organisations, but it is also designed to help participants establish some autonomy over the content of their degree. The substantial practical dissertation, business plan and product/market development project (together accounting for approximately 40% of the total marks available for the programme) encourage participants to pursue their own interests for career and business development.

Programme objectives

The core objective is to provide a programme of directed and self-directed learning at an accelerated pace to enable high calibre non-business graduates to achieve mastery of current entrepreneurship and innovation theory and technique grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the venture creation and operational environment and business processes globally. More specifically, the programme's objectives are to:

Focus, where appropriate, the knowledge base and career opportunities of participants, by providing choices to specialise in particular domains of entrepreneurship and innovation. Provide the opportunity through the Masters dissertation for the student to engage in an independent learning journey involving the design, implementation and interpretation of primary research directed towards the resolution of a research problem.

Develop the analytical competence required for undertaking and interpreting business research.

Develop the strategic vision and planning capability required for shaping the overall business mission and developing strategic management plans for emerging and innovating businesses.

Achieve a thorough understanding of business processes and their contribution to customer fulfilment.

Provide the competence required for analysing and applying the outputs of the management and marketing information systems in a business.

Develop the competence required in developing products and services, as well as managing their implementation in the emerging business environment.

Develop competence in interpreting and shaping negotiations in complex business environments while having sympathy for the legal and ethical background to commerce.
 Develop operational competence in financial analysis needed to underpin business development decision-making.

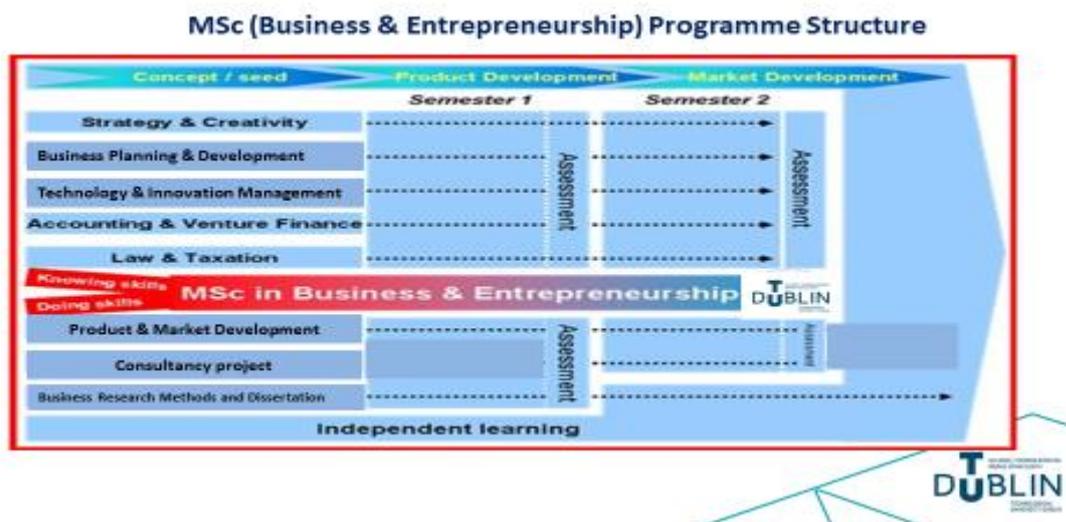
Develop competence in the strategic management of market relationships in both domestic and international environments with particular reference to IT driven processes.
 Develop high-level group interaction skills and problem solving orientation in both the learning environment and the operational business environment.

Overview of nature, duration and general structure of programme

The programme is primarily designed to offer a variety of intellectual challenges to participants whose primary intellectual formation has been validated through degree level studies in a science, engineering, technology or social science related disciplines. Important secondary audiences for the programme are graduates working in the policy or SME support sector and graduates with a special interest in enterprise development and innovation.

Figure 2: Programme structure

The MSc in Business and Entrepreneurship is conducted over a full academic year, incorporating two twelve week semesters, each having a particular emphasis on teaching, self-directed study; group and individual programme work and examinations. The structure of the programme is as follows:



Studies in Semester 1 cover the subjects of Creativity, Business Management, Technology Management, Venture Finance, Research methods, Theory of Entrepreneurship and Business Law. Such accelerated learning is designed to give participants the confidence and conceptual tools needed to develop business ideas, analyse business situations and to undertake business planning. In tandem, participants engage in the initial stages of work on

two separate substantive elements of the programme within a seminar/workshop format: (i) the product/market development project and business plan; and (ii) the dissertation (Project).

Building on learning from the first semester, studies in Semester 2 cover the subjects of Strategy, Innovation Management, Management Accounting, Business Tax and Consultancy project. Work also continues on the business development plan, with support available through weekly group sessions with the module advisors for the 12 class weeks of the semester. In tandem, participants move to greater engagement with their dissertation research and have the opportunity to work 1-to-1 for a total of four hours with an advisor up to mid-June, at which point they work on their own through to submission of the dissertation in early September.

Curriculum, distribution of marks and ECTS credits

The maximum marks available for the programme is 1800 marks. The programme attracts a maximum of 90 ECTS credits. The curriculum and the allocation of marks and credits are detailed in the tables below.

Table 2: Distribution of marks and ECTS credits

Module	ECTS	Marks
Business Strategy	5	100
Business Creativity	5	100
Technology Management	5	100
Innovation Management	5	100
New Product/market Development	10	200
Business Management	5	100
Business Plan	5	100
Venture Finance	5	100
Management Accounting	5	100
Business Taxation	5	100
Business Law	5	100
Consultancy Project	10	200
Dissertation	15	300
Research Methods	5	100
Total	90	1800

Table 3: Curriculum and allocation of learning hours

Area of activity	Lecture/ Tutorial	Reading, self- directed learning	Programme work	Formal exams	Total learning hours	ECTS credits
Strategy & Creativity1	24	49	25	-	100	5
Strategy & Creativity2	24	49	25	-	100	5
Innovation Management	24	49	25	1	100	5
Technology Management	24	49	25	1	100	5
Venture Finance	24	49	25	2	100	5
Accounting	24	49	25	2	100	5
Business Taxation	24	49	25	2	100	5
Business Law	24	49	25	2	100	5
Business Management	24	49	25	-	100	5
Business Plan	24	49	25	-	100	5
Subtotal	240	490	250	10	1000	50
Dissertation	24	138	138	0	300	15
Research Methods	24	49	25	1	100	5
Product /Market Development	24	88	88	0	200	10
Consultancy Project	24	88	88	0	200	10
Subtotal	76	362	362	0	800	40
Total	388	853	589	11	1800	90

- **Plans to further develop the initiative.**

Based on the research conducted for this project and the authors' experience of programme management and teaching on entrepreneurial programmes, the following recommendations are made to TU Dublin for further implementation of this strategic approach to practice-based teaching methodology over the next three to five years.

1. The knowledge, skills and aptitudes developed in the student in Entrepreneurial education and training (EET) i.e. the development of entrepreneurial capital, is a fundamental building block of economic growth, particularly in the small open state. It is therefore recommended that TU Dublin take a lead as **the** entrepreneurial University in the state and make it a requirement that all level 6-9 programmes (undergraduate & Postgraduate), not only in the College of Business, but across the University adopt the policy of applying the 'practice-based methodology approach to teaching Entrepreneurship' at firstly College, School and then Programme level before the approach is adopted at module

level. This approach has already proven successful on the pilot programme - the MSc (Business & Entrepreneurship) since 2015.

2. To champion the above approach, it is recommended that the University appoint a senior University Academic leader with domain expertise to work with the Colleges to embed the practice – based entrepreneurship education agenda across all Colleges.

3. It is recommended that the University firstly pilot the approach in one school in each of the Colleges of Business, Arts and Tourism, Engineering & Build Environment, Science & Health so that treatment and control groups can be established to allow for rigorous longitudinal research to validate or modify the approach to be undertaken during the embedding phase.

Poster summarising the Practice-based approach to teaching innovation-driven Entrepreneurship in TU Dublin

DEVELOPING THE TU DUBLIN PRACTICE-BASED METHOD FOR TEACHING INNOVATION - DRIVEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

TU Dublin
Graduate
Attributes (5 E's)
 ENGAGED
 EFFECTIVE
ENTERPRISING
 EXPERT
 ENQUIRY - BASED

Desired Entrepreneurship Learning outcomes

- Value Discovery
- Value Creation
- Value Capture
- Value Contribution
- Value Evaluation
- Implementation
- Success/Failure
- Reflection-in-Practice
- Reflection on Practice

The Practice - based Method²

Suggested new pedagogy of teaching entrepreneurship subjects:
 From LEARN-DO-REFLECT to DO-REFLECT-LEARN

5 Primary pedagogies:
 Venture Creation (Practice)
 Serious Games and Simulations (Play)
 Field Research/Trips (Observation)
 Design (Create, Co-create)
 Reflection on Practice (Deep Learning)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adopt the Practice – based METHOD for entrepreneurship-related studies across the University
2. Pilot the approach in one School in each College.
3. Invest in Curricula re-design, staff upskilling and specification of value-based assessment criteria



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