



Examining the Role of the British Council's Creative Spark
Programme in the Development of Enterprise and
Entrepreneurship Education in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The Higher Education sector in Kazakhstan has been embarking on a period of modernisation following independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The need to drive innovation to support the building of an effective and diverse economy has led to an impetus to bring Entrepreneurship into Higher Education and to build the skills and expertise required to respond to global challenges.

The critical focus of this study has been to evaluate the trajectory towards developing entrepreneurial universities in Kazakhstan and their readiness in terms of both infrastructure and culture to support this development. The level of influence the British Council Creative Spark Higher Education Enterprise programme has had in supporting this ambition has been analysed. The extent to which the five-year programme of interventions between UK and Kazakh universities through Creative Spark have been both effective and sustainable have been evaluated. The value of cross-sector partnerships is limited without change in governance and a recognition of the necessity for closer relationships with industry which is demonstrated through the application of the Triple Helix model.

The findings of this qualitative study indicate that although valuable and influential, the reach and effectiveness of the Creative Spark programme has been limited due to cultural factors, a lack of consistency and the resourcing required for long term, systemic change. Recommendations include the application of the Triple Helix model to facilitate symbiotic relationships between universities, industry and the government to build a stronger basis for entrepreneurial activity, and in turn to support Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful family. My amazing husband Simon who has been endlessly patient and supportive. My son Jack, and daughter Hannah whose encouragement and enthusiasm have been a constant throughout this journey and who mean the world to me.

My parents, though long departed are ever present, this is partly for you.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and context

This thesis examines the modernisation of the Higher Education sector in Kazakhstan and how Enterprise and Entrepreneurial Education (EEE) is developing in this context. Through examining the 10 Creative Spark partnerships, an understanding of the extent to which Creative Spark has contributed to developing EEE in Kazakhstan is achieved. This study also investigates the implications for strengthening the Creative Industries in Kazakhstan as well as the nature of entrepreneurial education in the higher education sector.

Creative Spark was a British Council funded Higher Education Enterprise Programme which was launched across the Central Asian region to enhance skills and employability and to support educational development. This five-year initiative (2018 – 2023) was designed to support international university and institutional partnerships to develop enterprise skills and support creative economies across seven countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan), South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) and Ukraine. This thesis concentrates on Kazakhstan to give focus to the study and where, as a project manager, the author built an understanding of the specific context. The Creative Spark programme and the nuances within the programme will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

The growth in entrepreneurial education is common within developing economies as it is regarded as a route to a more diverse and internationally competitive economy (Wong *et al.* 2005, Kusmintarti *et al.* 2016). These factors are particularly pertinent

for those ex-Soviet countries which are seeking to move reliance from traditional industries to more knowledge-based economies (Kopycinska *et al.* 2009). As a result, interest in business education and within it the development of entrepreneurial education is being prioritised (Kurmanov *et al.* 2015).

Within this context the Government of Kazakhstan has been seeking to reduce their reliance on resource export. Whilst oil and gas contribute 10.7% of GDP (www.investkz.com) there is an imperative to encourage and facilitate the conditions for successful entrepreneurial activity, in which the university sector will play a vital role in supporting the development of SMEs and building the skills required to develop sustainable businesses (Zholtayeva and Yesentemirov 2020).

Reducing reliance on the oil and gas industries requires diversification and expansion within the economy and in turn the importance of business-related courses has increased to ensure the level of skills within the workforce (Tanabayeva *et al.* 2015). Across Central Asia there is a recognised move towards business orientated education although this shift from a Soviet style of education has been identified as a slow process of transition (McIntyre *et al.* 2005). Russian universities are regarded as having “low potential for influencing and supporting innovative entrepreneurship through their activities” due to the lack of developing the soft skills required for effective entrepreneurship, the low level of entrepreneurial competence development and an emphasis on employment over self-employment (Yashin *et al.* 2018:261).

To address the need to upskill the workforce and align with international educational standards, Kazakhstan adopted the Bologna Process in 2010 (EHEA 2023). This brought in alignment with European standards regarding curriculum, recognition of qualifications, mobility of students and academics, credits transfer and opportunities for joint educational programmes (Tanabayeva *et al.* 2015). Academic staff development is regarded as a particularly valued aspect of this process. In line with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommendations, since 2016 Kazakhstan has been moving to a more competence-based approach which recognises the importance of building skills to apply knowledge and has resulted in the acknowledgement of a need to develop a more engaging, practical and relevant curriculum (OECD 2018). The EU higher education sector prioritises competence-based education and therefore relates to the Bologna process but is not bound by it.

The crucial role of university-business collaboration and network clusters to stimulate entrepreneurial activity is recognised by Gretzinger *et al.* (2017) whose research emphasised the value of building networks to effectively support entrepreneurship. Connectivity between Business and Universities has been further emphasised by the UK government in the *Review of Business-University Collaboration* (Wilson 2012) which articulated the need for a healthy knowledge-based economy and the role of universities in providing the high level skills required. The close connection between industry and the university sector is increasing and with this the diffusion of knowledge and expertise as identified by the Triple Helix model proposed by Etzkowitz (2003) which is discussed in detail in section 2.1. However, obstacles need to be overcome within this cooperation due to cultural

differences, and the identification of mutual benefits (Valentin 2000). The process of increasing effective collaboration is therefore not without challenges.

The building of a more diverse economy through entrepreneurial activity is being sought in Kazakhstan with the universities playing a role in developing the necessary skills and expertise to build businesses with long term sustainability (Zholtayeva and Yesentemirov 2020). Through being selected as a partner country within the Creative Spark Higher Education Enterprise Programme the opportunity to build Entrepreneurial Education capacity and to develop the Creative Industries within Kazakhstan was presented.

1.1.1 Situating the research

Through gaining funding from Erasmus and the British Council I have been involved in entrepreneurship education in Kazakhstan for 6 years, primarily with one partner, Almaty Management University (Alma U). An initial visit in 2017 revealed an interest in the development of entrepreneurship curriculum and extra-curricular activity which had not previously been within the programme portfolio at Alma U. I have been a Senior Lecturer in Entrepreneurship at UON since 2008 and Head of the Marketing and Entrepreneurship team at UON since 2012. My experience in developing portfolio, endeavouring to improve pedagogy and enhancing skills within the academic team has been extensive. Having previously been an entrepreneur myself, I have personally experienced the challenges of business start-up and development. The experience of working with colleagues for 6 years in Kazakhstan has given me an appreciation of the working practices, challenges and constraints but also the enthusiasm and multiple opportunities for particularly young people in

this rapidly developing country. The challenges in pursuing the goals of modernisation have been seen at first hand through supporting Alma U in designing pedagogy and supporting faculty with skills enhancement.

The Creative Spark programme provided a significant development in the embedding of entrepreneurial education and a direct relationship was to emerge between UK and Kazakh partners across the wider programme for sharing of experience and best practice. I am therefore drawing from this experience to analyse the data collected. This research is investigating the extent to which EEE has been embedded within the Kazakh partner institutions and whether there is evidence that the development is sustainable beyond the scope of the Creative Spark programme. My positionality as a researcher has been examined in detail in the research design in Chapter 5 where consideration is given to the role of an insider/outsider within case study-based research (section 5.5).

1.2 Research gap

1.2.1 Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education

The development of EEE will be examined in greater detail in the literature review Chapter 4 but the nature of the discipline has evolved significantly in the last 30 years. The academic discipline of entrepreneurship emerged from the study of small firms (Mole and Ram 2012). The diverse nature of entrepreneurial activity and the role of the entrepreneur in new business creation has resulted in a lack of common definition of EEE (Shane and Venkatarman 2000). The basis for defining entrepreneurs and the surrounding theoretical debates have changed over time

from personality traits (McClelland 1961) to demographic variables (Storey 1994). The lack of a consensus as to the nature of entrepreneurship has led to the development of education in the subject being a cause for debate. Cunningham and Lischeron (1991: 46) sought to define entrepreneurship through 'Schools of Thought' which differentiated between motivations for entrepreneurship and aimed to encompass the range of activities including business creation, founding, adapting and managing. Personal characteristics of entrepreneurs were incorporated to emphasise the different behaviours required at different stages of entrepreneurial activity. The psychological characteristics became the dominant area of interest, primarily due to the predictive capacities of the theory. This was emphasised through the interest in the identification of entrepreneurial intentions (Thompson 2009, Ying *et al.* 2014, Fayolle and Gailly 2015). Education **for** entrepreneurship as opposed to **about** entrepreneurship and the emphasis of cognitive skills which respond to market conditions (Gibb 2002) has led to complementing classroom-based teaching and learning with experiential and innovative methods (Sherman 2008).

Recent pedagogical discourse centres on the development of the entrepreneurial mindset with the emphasis being towards innovation and cross-disciplinary working (Bilen *et al.* 2005, Shepherd *et al.* 2008). Whilst there is criticism of the psychological basis and a lack of consensus on definition, there is agreement that experienced based or engaged learning is likely to have the strongest effect on influencing the attitudes and intentions towards entrepreneurship (Neergaard and Christensen 2017, Hernandez-Sanchez *et al.* 2019, Robinson and Gough 2020).

Currently European universities broadly follow the OECD (2018) strategies with an emphasis on students acquiring underlying competencies alongside initiatives for innovation and exploitation of opportunities (Neergaard and Christensen 2017, Blass 2018). The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework ([EntreComp](#)) which seeks to define a common approach to support the development of entrepreneurship as a competence has contributed to this shift towards a concentration on an entrepreneurial mindset and the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to be entrepreneurial (Bacigalupo *et al.* 2016). The emphasis is therefore experiential as opposed to the post-Soviet education system which is mainly directed towards theoretical aspects of business training and planning (Zhanargul *et al.* 2019).

The interconnectivity between industry and education becomes a further consideration as the competencies are designed to reflect the skills required within the industrial context. To support this emphasis on developing entrepreneurial mind-set within universities, Williams *et al.* (2015) consider the rise of the 'Entrepreneurial University' which shapes a strategic orientation for the whole Institution. Etzkowitz (2013) argues that entrepreneurs are typically found within a collective which is supported by the growth of entrepreneurial teams (Donato and Rosa 2010) which would be supported through the integration of entrepreneurial activity and education.

1.2.2 Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in Kazakhstan

The OECD (2018) reported on the Education policy outlook in Kazakhstan within the Education Policy Outlook series, providing comparative data on education policies

and the impact on tertiary education. The enrolment into HE had declined by 36% over 10 years and in 2017 10% of students dropped out of their programmes. Evidence suggests that there is a lack of emphasis on '21st century skills' in HEIs (OECD 2018) which include literacy, problem solving, teamwork and adaptability. In addition, there is an imperative to strengthen the quality of staff and develop greater university/employer engagement to shape the curriculum (OECD 2018; Alvarez-Galvan 2014).

The context of Kazakhstan and the Central Asian region sheds light on the antecedents of entrepreneurial education (Ruta 2012, Andras 2018). The quality processes within higher education in Kazakhstan have been called into question in the context of entrepreneurial education (Valikhanova 2015, Yeleussov and Tolysbayev, 2015 Nursulu *et al.* 2019). The inherent need to produce graduates who have developed the skills to put theory into practice is recognised (Hernandez-Sanchez *et al* 2019, Nursulu *et al.* 2019) and the transition towards an entrepreneurial mindset is advocated (Robinson and Gough 2020).

The research gap which this thesis is addressing is the extent to which the modernisation of the education system in Kazakhstan has embraced a more European styled approach to the teaching of EEE through the Creative Spark programme and whether this has been effective. The potential for sustainable adaptations to curriculum and pedagogy and a greater emphasis on competence-based learning and teaching are examined through the lens of the UK and Kazakh partnerships established through Creative Spark. Through examining the projects at a granular level, insights have been sought as to the effectiveness of the UK and

Kazakh partnerships in building the skills and infrastructure, which the literature proposes are necessary for EEE to lead to successful business creation and ultimate impact on employment and the economy.

1.3 Research aims and objectives

The importance of EEE is recognised but how this is manifesting within HEIs in post-Soviet countries and specifically Kazakhstan is less well documented.

Empirical data regarding the embedding of skills, the development of curriculum and the capacity within universities to teach EEE is the gap which this project will address through an investigation into the influence of the Creative Spark Programme. The importance to Kazakhstan of developing and modernising the university sector has been articulated by the Minister of Education with an emphasis on applied studies, employability skills and synchronisation with the labour market (Nurbek 2023). By addressing the skills gap in the delivery of EEE benefits can be gained in both the creative industries which have been the focus for the Creative Spark programme but also the science, research and technology governmental priorities in order to exploit the natural resources within the country.

The aims of the study are firstly to investigate EEE in the context of Kazakhstan given its cultural and historical background and how this has been evolving in the last 5 years. The second aim is to explore the Creative Spark programme and how this is influencing the development of curriculum and pedagogy in Kazakh HEIs.

1.3.1 Research questions

1. To what extent are UK institutions through the Creative Spark programme supporting the growth and development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in partner Kazakh institutions?
2. How effective are the Creative Spark interventions in building capacity and the sustainability of EEE in Kazakhstan?

1.3.2 Objectives:

1. To critically examine the modernisation of the Higher Education Sector in Kazakhstan and explore how Enterprise and Entrepreneurial Education is evolving in this context.
2. To investigate the nature of Creative Spark programme within the participating HEIs and the extent to which it has influenced curriculum and pedagogy for the development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in Kazakhstan.
3. To explore the sustainability of the interventions by the Creative Spark programme for both Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education and the Creative Industries in Kazakhstan.

1.4 Outline of thesis

Chapter 1 presents the introduction to the thesis and rationale for the study.

A situational analysis provides the context and the research gap which investigates the extent to which the modernisation of the education system in Kazakhstan has

embraced a more European style approach to the teaching of EEE through the Creative Spark programme and whether this has been effective.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical constructs which form the basis of the analysis within the thesis. The interconnections between industry, government and universities illustrated in the Triple Helix model form the basis against which the development of entrepreneurial universities for effective delivery of EEE are regarded as the panacea.

Chapter 3 discusses the rationale and intended scope of the Creative Spark Programme in building entrepreneurial skills and supporting the Creative Industries within the partner countries. The Kazakh projects are specifically investigated through this thesis, but the full scope of Creative Spark programme is presented to provide the wider context.

Chapter 4 reviews the literature which provides a contextual analysis of the development of EEE within Kazakhstan and the process of modernisation within this post-Soviet HEI sector. The concepts of educational borrowing and the influence of the Bologna Process are critically evaluated providing insights into the development of curriculum and pedagogy to support EEE.

Chapter 5 is the discussion of the Methodology which provides an explanation and justification for the study in which the Creative Spark projects have been investigated to gain a clearer understanding of the extent to which EEE has become embedded within the Kazakhstani HEIs. An interpretivist methodology through a

qualitative study is outlined which incorporated in-depth expert interviews with British Council stakeholders and Creative Spark Project Managers in both the UK and Kazakhstan.

Chapter 6 presents the case study research results and combined discussion providing insights into individual projects. The implementation of the Creative Spark programme and the degree to which it has influenced the training of academics, the embedding of curriculum and the integration of industry has been examined. The extent to which modernisation has been experienced and the influence of the Creative Spark programme in embedding curriculum and pedagogy.

Chapter 7 presents the wider context results and discussion. The theoretical frameworks examined in chapter 2 will be applied to the findings to evaluate the challenges of moving towards an entrepreneurial, knowledge-based economy through EEE. Results from the research pertaining to the wider context within Kazakhstan will be the focus of the chapter and considerations of the extent to which long term impact is likely to be seen.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis through re-visiting the objectives and identifying how they have been addressed. Contributions to professional practice and knowledge are articulated and recommendations for the university sector, Kazakh Government and British Council to further facilitate a trajectory towards embedding EEE and supporting the development of entrepreneurial universities.

Chapter 2 Theoretical perspectives

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the emerging role of universities and the extent to which government, industry and universities are working in a cohesive manner to provide the basis for entrepreneurial activity. The theoretical perspectives pertaining to the emerging changes are exemplified through the Triple Helix model (section 2.2). The concept of knowledge spillover provides a mechanism for the commercialisation of knowledge and the mechanisms for bringing innovations to market is considered in section 2.3. Consideration is given to the conditions for effective development of entrepreneurial universities (section 2.4) and the importance of university internal structures and the extent to which this facilitates or inhibits entrepreneurial activity is investigated and analysed (section 2.5). The development of entrepreneurial universities in developing economies provides insights pertinent to the context of Kazakhstan and the extent to which entrepreneurial university development is achievable (section 2.6). Lastly an approach to curriculum development proposed by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission is evaluated and applied within the Creative Spark case context (section 2.7).

The transition for universities to focus on the development of entrepreneurial skills and effective entrepreneurial outcomes requires a significant shift from the traditional role of knowledge creation and teaching (Cunningham *et al* 2021). The rise in EEE reflects the need to encourage entrepreneurial endeavours within the university sector to both generate opportunities and commercialise innovation as a driving force behind social and economic transformation (Hagg and Gabrielsson

2020). There is widespread inconsistency as to how entrepreneurship is taught and what the focus should be from new venture creation, to running a small business or an emphasis on entrepreneurial skills and abilities (Hagg and Gabrielsson 2020). The success of EEE in terms of predicting entrepreneurial intention and subsequent behaviour has proved difficult to ascertain (Fayolle and Gailly 2015).

The concept of 'entrepreneurial universities' which are designed to both stimulate and support entrepreneurship amongst academics, students and stakeholders requires considerable responsiveness to changing environments and development of internal structures (Miller et al 2021). This chapter investigates how this construct has emerged within the UK and developed countries and provides a contrast within less developed economies (Davey *et al* 2015). How the concept of an entrepreneurial university might therefore be interpreted and re-imagined within the Kazakh context through the Creative Spark programme comes into focus through the subsequent case analysis.

As discussed in section 3.2 the Creative Spark programme was designed to increase entrepreneurial activity within the creative industries and the Central Asia and Caucuses region. Universities were identified as conduits to support this activity through British Council funded joint projects between UK universities and universities in the Central Asian and Caucuses region. There is therefore a presumption that the universities involved will have the infrastructure and systems to support this activity. However, the preparedness of the Kazakh education system to make this adjustment in the short term is called into question (Piven and Pak

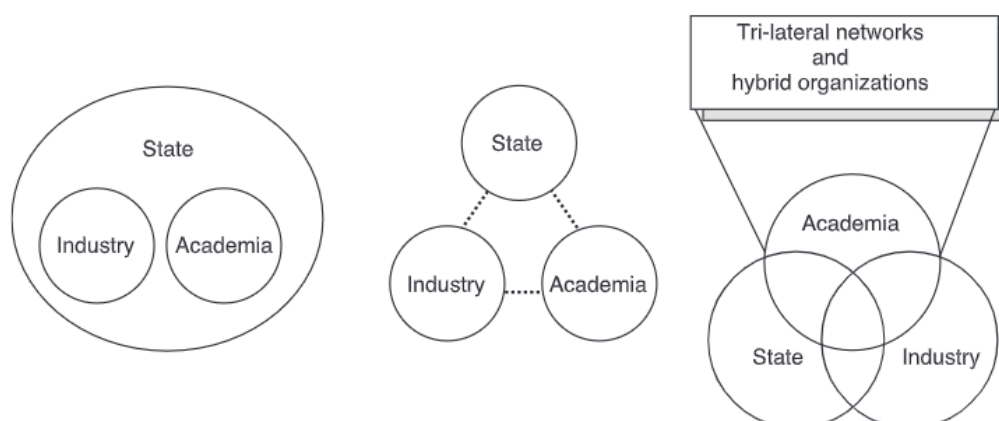
2006, Hartley *et al* 2015, Yeleussov *et al* 2015). Furthermore, the incidence and effectiveness of entrepreneurial universities per se has been the subject of debate.

2.2 Universities, Industry and Government

The effectiveness of entrepreneurial universities needs to be considered within the wider context. A move towards a more knowledge-based economy may be facilitated through a closer connectivity between universities, industry and government. It is argued that this will lead to a closer working relationship which facilitates innovation (Etzkowitz 2003).

The Triple Helix model was proposed by Etzkowitz (2003) which combined universities, industry and government to enable knowledge transfer which achieves direct economic impact.

Fig 2.1 Triple Helix Model



(Etzkowitz 2003: 302).

The university develops a proactive stance through closer working with industry and through the application of knowledge within an industrial context. The level of technical expertise within the industry increases as there is a greater level of academic training and sharing of expertise. Within this model the government becomes a public entrepreneur and venture capitalist, moving from the state essentially controlling industry and academia to a more laissez-faire approach with industry, state and academia operating separately but with more autonomy in the education sector. The third stage sees an interconnectivity facilitating investment, management of knowledge and technology which in turn drives innovation.

The application of this model to a post-soviet country needs to recognise that the Triple Helix was originally devised in the US which represents a very different context. The antecedents in the US education system saw a greater connectivity between the levels of private and corporate ownership of universities and less direct influence of the state. Equally, in the system in Europe was within developed liberal democracies (Kaša *et al.* 2021).

The incidence of innovation is happening not just within firms but between firms through knowledge sharing. As a result, intellectual capital becomes as important as financial capital. In order for the Triple Helix to emerge, four stages have been identified (Etzkowitz 2003):

1. Universities put knowledge to use through strategic alliances with Industry
2. The influence of one part of the Helix to another e.g. University to government and vice versa

3. The creation of trilateral networks and organizations to secure relationships
4. Capitalisation of knowledge in which the influence of the research within the university is acknowledged by the industry and government.

The model suggests that all universities have the capability and the motivation to set entrepreneurial activity as part of their mission. However, this has been called into question as not all universities have the same specialisms or levels of commitment to industry (Audetsch 2007, Philpott *et al.* 2011, Guerrero *et al.* 2015). Equally, the linear, four staged approach proposed through the model is regarded as unrealistic in practice whereby time constraints, budgetary controls and the availability of resources are likely to impact the progression through the stages. The level of direct involvement with government will also be a factor which will potentially be more accessible for research and innovation focussed universities receiving high levels of grant funding (Guerrero *et al.* 2015, O'Reilly *et al.* 2019).

The impact of intellectual capital as well as financial capital is thus being recognised and this will now be considered in the context of knowledge spill-over.

2.3 Influence of knowledge spill-over

The term knowledge spill-over refers to the commercialisation of knowledge and this being a key factor in the development of entrepreneurship within universities (Audetsch 2007). The knowledge generated through academic endeavour becomes a spillover whereby the more knowledge the more opportunities emerge. This suggests that entrepreneurial opportunities are not exogeneous but systematically created by an investment in knowledge. Universities and industry may create knowledge which is not exhausted and this in turn may enable the triple

helix to emerge where the relationships meet for exchange of ideas and funding. The extent to which this emerges in reality is questionable as myriad factors can influence the extent to which opportunities are presented, not exclusively through research institutions and incumbent firms. The willingness of entrepreneurs to share knowledge can be a factor whereby considerations of commercially sensitive data and the need for intellectual property agreements come to the fore (Lattacher *et al.* 2021).

The knowledge spillover proposition by Audretsch and Keilbach (2007) suggests that contexts which are rich in knowledge should generate more entrepreneurship as there are more entrepreneurial opportunities. In this way the wider Creative Spark community of over 50 HEIs has the potential to create significant spillover in the Central Asian and Caucasus geographic region. However, as evidenced through the experience of Creative Spark in Kazakhstan the impact of this is dependent upon the readiness of the organisation to respond in terms of academic and mentoring skills, the economic and cultural context and the infrastructure to support entrepreneurial activities.

The definition of an entrepreneurial university is therefore broadened to place academics and students who spill knowledge into the ecosystem. A definition of an entrepreneurial university as “any university that has the ability to innovate, recognise and create opportunities and which can produce and spill-over knowledge” (Radko *et al.* 2022:184) places a significant emphasis on the ability and the interest within the organisation to engage in spill-over activities. In a UK based study Radko *et al.* (2022) examined how stakeholders affect outcomes and how

these might change if different stakeholders and different university types are considered. The study considered 3 different university types in the UK: Russell Group which are primarily research-led institutions, teaching-based Institutions and more vocationally orientated Polytechnics. The role which different types of external stakeholders play and how these change with the type of university and the expectations of commercial outcomes including spinoffs, start-ups and licenses was examined. Findings By Radko *et al.* (2021) identified four types of stakeholders and their involvement in the knowledge spillover:

1. **Knowledge enablers** – organisations and individuals facilitating knowledge manipulation (Industry/government)
2. **Knowledge Creators or providers** – produce and spillover knowledge (students and faculty)
3. **Knowledge codifiers** – actively seeking new channels of transfer – Intellectual Property
4. **Knowledge facilitators** – organisations facilitating entrepreneurial incentives – incubators, science parks etc

The study determined that where support was provided by the universities, entrepreneurs achieved better outcomes. Where there was a lack of support potential entrepreneurs were not able to proceed through to the entrepreneurial act. This incorporates the creation of new knowledge, the codifying and facilitating of spillover outside the boundaries leading to the ability to act on opportunities and build on innovations. This leads to the concept of an entrepreneurial university which is designed with a third mission beyond teaching and research which emphasises commercialisation of activities (Cunningham *et al.* 2021). The inclusion of business incubators was significant for all university types along with access to

venture capital. The implication being there is a need to balance stakeholder interests to maximise outputs.

The economic impact of entrepreneurial university activities differs between the 24 Universities in the Russell Group and the remainder of the 124 UK universities according to Guerrero *et al.* (2015) who reveal that the Russell Group account for 15% of the sector but 75% of research income. The Russell Group is associated primarily with spin offs which are within associated science parks and incubators whereas the rest of the universities have economic impact associated with knowledge transfer. This is less easy to quantify but will include the generation of new ventures, jobs, collaborations with local and regional agencies. Guerrero *et al.* (2015) assert that the implications for policy makers are within the Research Assessment Exercise System where the need to improve technology transfer between universities and businesses is demonstrated. A positive impact on economic development is identified through the entrepreneurial activities of the Russell Group universities but this is restricted through the emphasis on research (Cunningham *et al.* 2021).

The success of the entrepreneurial universities is therefore not a consistent picture. This is compounded by there not being one comprehensive definition. In 2012 the OECD published a Guiding Framework for Entrepreneurial Universities to address this gap. A set of seven commonly identified features were determined against which a university could assess themselves:

1. Leadership and Governance
2. Organisational capacity, people and incentives

3. Entrepreneurship development in teaching and learning
4. Pathways for entrepreneurs
5. University-Business/external relationships for knowledge exchange
6. The entrepreneurial university as an international institution
7. Measuring the impact of the entrepreneurial university

(OECD 2012: 4 – 17)

Consistent with the research (Hagg and Gabrielson 2020, Cunningham *et al.* 2021), the need for an entrepreneurial culture and good governance is seen as crucial.

The need to build an internal structure to co-ordinate activities within the organisation and with external stakeholders was seen as key but also the reduction of barriers and the maximising of autonomy. This is further supported by Philpott (2011) who emphasised the importance of a bottom-up approach whereby academics were not forced to be entrepreneurial but were given the right support and environment. Equally the definition of individual entrepreneurial intent has been challenged by Thompson (2009) who argues that ‘neither a clear or consistent definition nor a uniform and reliable way to measure individual entrepreneurial intent has yet emerged’ which calls into question the basis and purpose of entrepreneurial education (Thompson 2009: 669).

There is therefore tension between governments encouraging the Triple Helix model of innovation to stimulate the economy and the propensity of the majority of universities to become effectively engaged in the more demonstrably impactful activities relating to IP and techno advances. The difference between innovation and entrepreneurial activity in science and technology and the behavioural or social

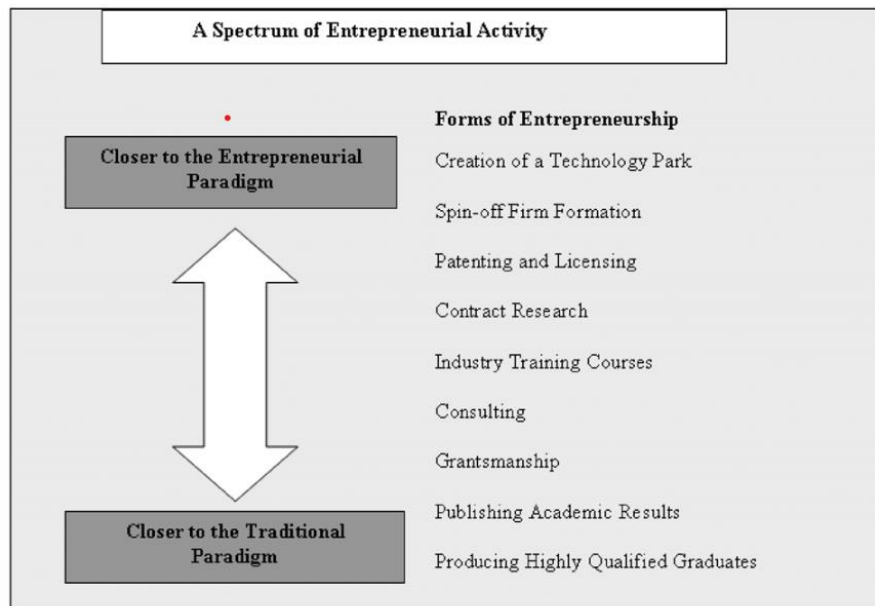
sciences can develop a 'them and us' culture (Philpott *et al.* 2011). An approach which facilitates and encourages entrepreneurial activities through providing resource and structures which support the academics is suggested as more conducive to fostering academic entrepreneurship than interventionist policies.

The concept of knowledge spillover has led to an understanding of the knowledge based impetus for a closer cohesion between the elements of the Triple Helix. However, this is not likely to be sufficient to provide an effective basis for entrepreneurship within the education sector without the associated structural changes to support activity. The mechanisms for becoming an entrepreneurial university and the challenges which this change in emphasis can create will now be discussed.

2.4 Trajectory to an Entrepreneurial University

Philpot *et al.* (2011) argue there is a spectrum from 'soft' to 'hard' initiatives which might be taken within an entrepreneurial university. The soft academic focussed activities relating to publishing and producing highly qualified graduates whereas 'hard' business orientated activity will lead to measurable patenting, licensing, and spinoffs but these latter factors are less compatible with the traditional role of the academic. There is a recognition in this approach that the skills and experience required to effectively become more entrepreneurial will therefore be at odds with the traditional role of the academic. The spectrum of activity is illustrated in fig 2.2.

Fig 2.2 Entrepreneurial university spectrum of activity



(Philpot *et al* 2011:162)

The adoption of entrepreneurial activity as a central mission to a university has associated risks and challenges including conflicts of interest, time constraints, the need for secrecy and monetary losses. However, as evidenced in the high profile institutions of Silicon Valley the production of university graduates in myriad specialisms has had a significant impact on the economy (Pique *et al.* 2020). Equally the academic community needs to be convinced of the appropriateness.

Philpot *et al.* (2011) conducted research within a European institution, described as being in “the early stages of the entrepreneurial trajectory” (Philpot *et al.* 2011: 164) which reflected a recent change in policy towards the inclusion of entrepreneurship education being an academic mission. Professors from a wide range of disciplines were interviewed and significant differences in attitude dependent on their discipline were identified. Concerns over the central ethos of the university were raised and

all were aware of tensions between encouraging entrepreneurship and rewarding pure academic activities. Those in the Arts and Humanities were more opposed to the concept of an entrepreneurial focus than Engineering, Science and Technology which may be due to the dearth of funding for humanities and social science projects (Philpot *et al.* 2011). This factor would therefore impact on the propensity for all universities to become entrepreneurial and point towards science and technology becoming the disciplines with the greatest inclination towards making the transition.

Revising organisational architecture has been proposed as a mechanism to support progress towards becoming an entrepreneurial university which recognises the need to re-evaluate the relationships and status of activities to facilitate this change.

2.5 Organisational architecture of Entrepreneurial Universities

The organisational architecture of entrepreneurial universities is investigated by Cunningham *et al.* (2021) who identify the challenges at different stages and the impact of multi-layer stakeholders which support the concept of stakeholder influence.

Fig 2.3 Organizational architecture

A conceptual framework of the organizational architecture of entrepreneurial universities across the stages of entrepreneurship (Cunningham et al.2021: 9)

STAGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP			EXPLORATION		EXPLOITATION	
			Latent	Emergent	Launch	Growth
MOTIVATIONS AND NEEDS <i>(Illustrative)</i>			- Exploring entrepreneurial opportunities and potential - Self-Employment - Raising awareness	- Undertaking gestation activities to attempt to create a new venture - Necessity- or opportunity-driven	- Assembling resources, team and networks - Go to market - Intellectual property protection	- Sustaining market viability - Exploring further entrepreneurial opportunities
ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORTS <i>(Illustrative)</i>			- Entrepreneurship education (tailored) and familiarization - Orientation programs	- Market validation - Business model development - Financial planning (Business case)	- IP agreements - Securing seed/angel funding - Recruiting talent - Market testing - Brokerage	- Secondary funding - Networking events - Expanding networks – alumni - Brokerage
ENTREPRENEURIAL ARCHITECTURE ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS	Exclusive focus on Exploration Stages	ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH CENTER	←	→		
		ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER	←	→		
	Selective focus on Exploration and Exploitation Stages	COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTER	←		→	
		PROOF-OF-CONCEPT CENTER		←	→	
		INCUBATOR	←		→	
		ACCELERATOR		←		→
	Overarching focus on all Exploration and Exploitation Stages	TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER OFFICE	←			→
		SCIENCE PARKS	←			→

The framework highlights the infrastructure requirements including centres, incubation and acceleration in the early stages, prior to universities having roles within large scale technology transfer or science parks. Tensions are highlighted relating to resource, skill and competency synergies, alignment of organisational units and the governance structures to support internal entrepreneurs. The challenges of building the infrastructure to provide support is highlighted and addressed through a conceptual framework which poses a series of questions to determine the scope and effectiveness of current infrastructure.

The initial exploration stage produces antecedents to exploitation of business ideas which need to be supported through launch and growth phases.

Three stages of entrepreneurship are identified by Cunningham *et al.* (2021)

1. Latent - exploring opportunities and raising awareness including entrepreneurship education and orientation.
2. Emergent - Undertaking gestation activities, necessity or opportunity driven, market validation and business planning,
3. Launch and growth. – Assembling resources, taking to market, IP, market testing through to sustaining growth patterns, securing additional funding and exploring further opportunities

The needs of university-based entrepreneurs within the various stages are identified as being significantly different. Within this context Cunningham *et al* (2021) propose that entrepreneurial universities require organisational units to effectively support the stages at which a student, academic or stakeholder may be operating. The role of entrepreneurial curriculum is within the latent stage whereby an entrepreneurial

mind-set may be developed but for this to translate into exploitation of an opportunity and the launch of a business requires significant support, finance, mentoring and expertise. This has significant implications for the potential for the entrepreneurial activities within the Creative Spark programme which are primarily at the latent stage of development to become businesses capable of progressing through to the exploitation and growth stage. The breadth and depth of support which is identified as a requirement to facilitate entrepreneurial activity through to growth requires significant investment, governance and support to facilitate the creation of organisational units. Further considerations include the potential for overlap, interdepartmental competition for resources, attracting successful individuals, measurement criteria and the level of autonomy afforded to the various units.

An exploration of the emergence of entrepreneurial universities has demonstrated a lack of consistency in approach due to the myriad variables which come into play when considering the relationships between the elements of the Triple Helix model (Etzkowitz 2003) and the internal structures within the universities. Further research by Guerrero et al (2014) investigated two European cases in Spain and Ireland. The research confirmed that despite similar environmental factors supporting entrepreneurial activities, internal capabilities, governance and structures of individual institutions provided distinctiveness.

A more comprehensive study by Davey *et al.* (2016) investigated the preparedness of academics to engage in entrepreneurship. It proposed that the level of entrepreneurial activity by academics can enhance the relationships with business

and commercialisation of ideas. Davey *et al.* (2015) argue that collaborations can compensate for the lack of knowledge and entrepreneurial skills amongst academics and address perceived reputational and cultural differences. The study by Davey *et al.* (2015) across 12 countries in 4 European regions with a sample of 2925 responses investigated whether drivers (network relationships, access and research) or barriers (awareness, funding and culture) have the greatest impact on the incidence of academic entrepreneurship. A key conclusion was that context plays an important role. The extent of entrepreneurial activity and the enhanced influence of 'barriers' including funding and 'drivers' including access to data for research was evident in the more mature UK and German markets where there was an emphasis on an alignment with the exploitation of opportunities which align with the university mission. However, the less developed markets in Spain and Poland revealed less evidence of a strategic positioning to encourage entrepreneurial activities. Whilst entrepreneurial activity related to research was identified, the cultural inhibitors within the universities were not conducive to the development of academic entrepreneurship (Davey *et al.* 2015).

The emergence of entrepreneurial universities with a stated third mission supporting entrepreneurial activity requires significant investment and changes in working practices and could be regarded as being at a relatively early stage in the UK and Europe despite considerable governmental and policy support (Martin *et al.* 2019). How this might be re-imagined within a Kazakh context with a very different political and cultural landscape provides the context for the evaluation of the Creative Spark outputs. A consideration of the development of entrepreneurial universities in

emerging economies gives insights into the consistent emphasis on science and technology linked to anticipated economic impact.

2.6 Entrepreneurial universities and emerging economies

The first wave of entrepreneurial universities was in the US in the 1980s with the development of MIT and Stanford who pioneered generating Research and Development transfer primarily through spin-out start-ups (Dalmarco *et al.* 2018).

The second wave in Western Europe from the early 1990s concentrated on the commercial responsiveness of universities, including contract research and government sponsored initiatives and support for infrastructure. This included the development of science parks and business Incubators. The third wave will be knowledge transfer within emerging economies (Dalmarco *et al.* 2018).

The creation of entrepreneurial universities within emerging economies is therefore an area of interest as the relationships between universities, government and industry are likely to be less well established (Dalmarco *et al.* 2018). The 'third wave' impetus is believed to be driven by the universities but the preparedness of governments to support this is limited. To achieve the technology transfer and spin-off creation each part of the Triple Helix requires investment in technology and intellectual capital as well as a stated mission within the institutions (Davey *et al.* 2015).

An investigation of two emerging economies reveals a similar governmental emphasis. Dalmarco *et al.* (2018) identified a gap in Brazil between the universities and industry where there is a lack of synergy whereby industry has been built to manufacture not innovate. The Brazilian government is endeavouring to address

this through joint research funds and the creation of high-tech start-ups to upgrade the industrial sector. Coupled with this, students are encouraged towards entrepreneurial activity with the development of business parks and incubators. This could be termed as a 'spin out' of expertise from universities into industry. There is, however, a concentration on the technological start-ups. Equally Guerrero *et al.* (2017) identified that government support and subsidies in Mexico encouraged technological start-ups to collaborate with universities to develop innovative practices and this supported more radical innovations (Guerrero *et al.* 2017). This approach takes a 'spin in' trajectory whereby tech start-ups are encouraged to identify support within universities.

The author of this thesis was invited to attend the UK-KZ 9th Intergovernmental Commission (1st February 2023) in London at which the Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan Mr Sayasat Nurbek presented key priorities for the Higher Education Sector. Priorities included an investment in infrastructure to support the development of a scientific research hub, a continued expansion of branches of leading foreign universities and a commitment to synchronization of the higher education system with the labour market (Nurbek 2023). The first UK university campus to be located in Kazakhstan was launched in 2022 with the De Montfort University in Leicester opening a satellite campus in Almaty which has a focus towards Business and Law but also has an IT Faculty and an Art and Design Faculty. These initiatives are primarily designed to increase the knowledge and skills within the STEM subjects to support the technology-based oil and gas industry. However, a gradual move towards a wider influence to other industries, including the creative industries is in evidence.

The Creative Spark programme by contrast has concentrated on the 'soft' outcomes relating to the transfer of knowledge, the development of curriculum to support entrepreneurial specialisms and pedagogy. Alongside this the development of incubators and the 'Big Idea Challenge' competition were designed to inspire and motivate academics and students towards entrepreneurial activities in participating universities. This 'bottom up' approach is consistent with the concept of spill over supported by Radko *et al.* (2022), Philpott *et al.* (2011), and Audretsch (2007) but inconsistent with the emphasis towards the STEM subjects which is a governmental position (Nurbek 2023).

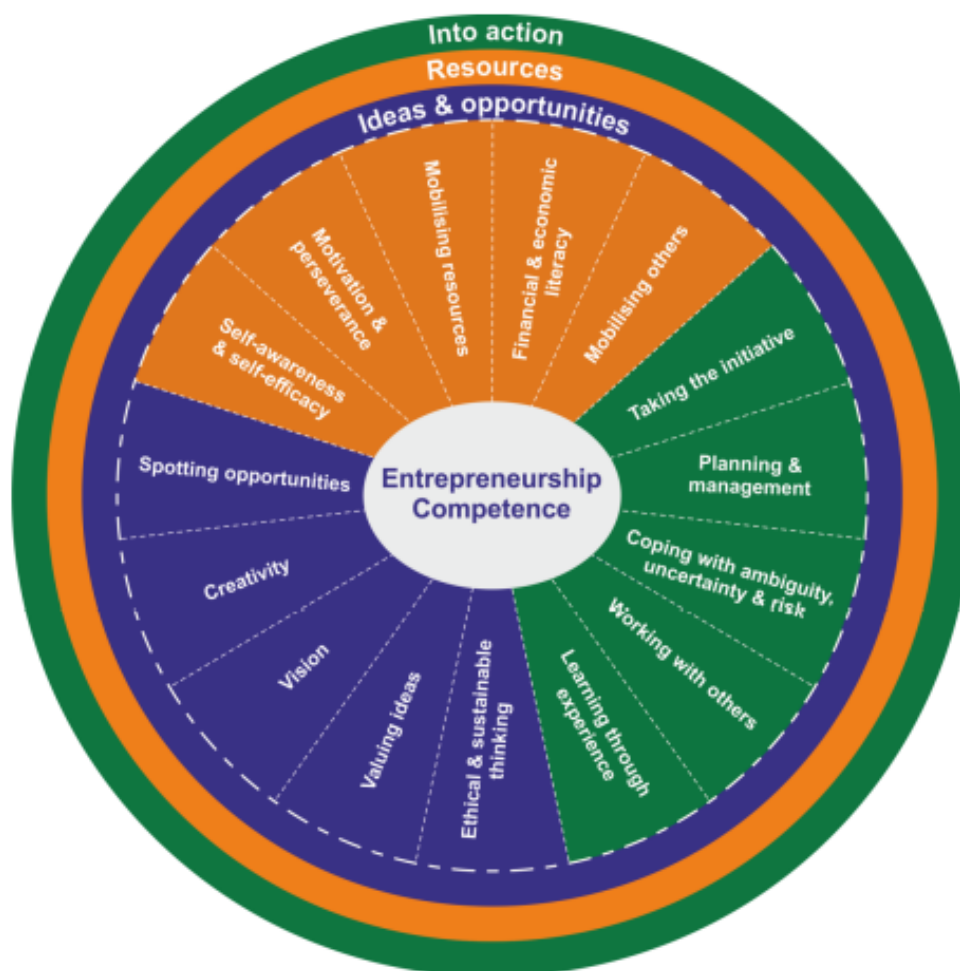
Whilst the entrepreneurial; university incorporates an entrepreneurial culture reflected in the structure and the governance, the development of entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy is a first stage of supporting entrepreneurial activity (Cunningham et al 2021, Miller et al 2021).

2.7 Curriculum development

The role and purpose of entrepreneurship education has been a subject of debate (Dinning 2018). The QAA (2018) guidance concentrates on the behaviours, attributes and competencies which are pertinent to preparing students for changing environments and contributing to society through entrepreneurial activity. Different interpretations as to the purpose and role of entrepreneurship education as to whether the concentration should be specifically upon new venture creation or a broader focus on being 'enterprising' and a focus on skills and attributes (Dinning 2018). In the author's experience the development of curriculum to support entrepreneurship has been challenging, and as a result the EntreComp

Competencies framework has been incorporated within curriculum design. In a response to a lack of consistency in the definition of competences in relation to EEE the Entrepreneurship Competences Framework (EntreComp Bacigalupo *et al.* 2016) was developed by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. The EntreComp is a tool designed to improve the entrepreneurial capacity of organisations and European citizens.

Fig 2.4 EntreComp Framework



(Bacigalupo *et al.* 2016).

The competences incorporate Kolb's emphasis on reflective learning as constructs within the application of learning through experience (Kolb 1984). It is regarded as providing a comprehensive approach to incorporating the breadth of activity within developing entrepreneurial competencies and an attempt to create a roadmap for EEE.

The approach has been supported within the context of programme design (Dinning 2019) but the efficacy of the framework has been critiqued by Campbell *et al.* (2020), who cited the extent to which it has been tested in industry is identified as a limitation. Furthermore Joensuu-Salo *et al.* (2022) identified that whilst the framework relates effectively to start up behaviour and prior experience of entrepreneurship, it is not sensitive to the gender or the level of education of those building the competences.

Transnational studies examining the efficacy of the EntrepComp framework have identified a value in increasing the motivation and understanding of entrepreneurship education in different contexts (Seikkula-Leino *et al.* 2021, Ratiu *et al.* 2023). However, the complexities of implementing the framework and translating it into practice remain more elusive. Research by Seikkula-Leino *et al.* (2021) in 47 countries has established an increased awareness and understanding of entrepreneurial education and the value of taking a competence-based approach to the development of curriculum and pedagogy. However, there is still a gap identified between the levels of awareness of the framework and effective implementation. This is exemplified through a call for the building of learning

communities to support the learning process of students and educators, policy makers, practitioners and stakeholders (Seikkula-Leino *et al.* 2021).

2.8 Conclusion

The drive to include enterprise within university curriculum is widespread throughout Europe and in many parts of the world (Dinning 2018). The impetus for the Kazakh Government to encourage the development of EEE within Kazakh universities is centred in the desire for economic development and growth. However, the challenges of developing entrepreneurial universities which are structured to capitalise on innovation and knowledge spill over require significant investment and a change in governance. The appropriateness of turning Kazakh HEIs into more commercialised institutions also needs to be considered. The Creative Spark project could be seen to support the application of the Triple Helix model through engagement with governments, universities and the creative industries. The development of entrepreneurial universities requires appropriate governance within institutions and a willingness in industry to support and engage with innovation. Chapter 3 will examine the rationale for the Creative Spark programme and consider the scope and purpose with specific reference to the projects in Kazakhstan.

Chapter 3 Creative Spark Case Study

The Creative Spark Programme provides a case study within this thesis to gain insights into the modernisation of the Kazakhstan HE sector and to investigate whether the programme has achieved its aims in supporting the development of both entrepreneurial skills and the creative industries. The case study is an integral part of the research, providing a source of respondents and secondary data for analysis.

The impetus for the British Council to embark on the programme will be considered as well as the design mechanisms. The design of the Creative Spark Programme was based on research which identified the rationale for the implementation across Central Asia, the Caucasus and Ukraine. Programme output data will be presented to demonstrate the range of activities and the extent to which both the education sector and the creative industries are being influenced.

3.1 The rationale for Creative Spark

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 the independent countries which are culturally and ethnically diverse have developed at different rates (Batsaikhan and Dabrowski 2017). Central Asian countries have made a gradual transition to market economies and the presence of natural resources including oil and gas as well as the geographical location has enabled transit trade between China and the West. These factors have led to a more advanced economy in Kazakhstan (Batsaikhan and Dabrowski 2017). In addition, independent approaches to developing education systems has led to a variation in the political context in the region (Stefes and

Wooden 2009) and as a result the progress of the HEI sector has not been consistent within the various countries.

In 2018 the British Council commissioned baseline research conducted by IFF Research, a London based independent social and market research agency to scope the landscape within the UK of EEE and investigate the potential for building creative enterprise partnerships between the UK and Wider Europe (IFF 2018). The aim from the perspective of the British Council was part of a strategy to extend the reach of UK educational offer:

‘Our aim in the Wider Europe region is to help 100 million people by 2020 reach their potential by engaging with the UK’s cultural and education offer. We believe that by connecting with these young people, the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs and wider communities that do not traditionally engage with the UK, we can support the development of stable, open and more prosperous societies.’

Andy Williams Regional Director, Wider Europe. British Council (IFF 2018: 7)

The role of the British Council in providing support can be regarded as ‘soft power’ whereby UK foreign policy benefits from the altruistic activities of this hybrid organisation. The IFF (2018) report investigated the capability of EEE within the UK education sector as well as across Wider Europe and concluded that enterprise skills and the Creative Economy were areas for potential growth but in need of intervention and support in Central Asian Countries.

This work is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which promote entrepreneurial competences as a means of supporting young people to

innovate, start businesses and create jobs (UN 2015). The imperative to increase entrepreneurial skills amongst young people and adults and encourage the formation of creative, innovating enterprises is specifically identified within the SDGs; 4.4 Skills and Enterprise and 8.3 Job Creation, Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation ([Skills and Enterprise SDG 4.4](#), [Job Creation, Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation SDG 8.3](#)).(<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>).

The subsequent Creative Spark programme was designed to be delivered within HEIs in the following 7 countries through partnerships with UK Universities:

Armenia

Azerbaijan

Georgia

Kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan

Uzbekistan

Ukraine

The embedded nature of the British Council within the participating countries has facilitated the design and delivery of Creative Spark providing access to the 7 partner countries.

The Creative Spark programme was designed with three main interventions:

1. Development of partnerships involving universities and creative institutions in the UK and those in programme countries in order to drive enterprise training in seven partner countries including the establishment of enterprise centres
2. Delivering enterprise skills training packages to students and creative entrepreneurs, ranging from pitching ideas and starting a business, to protecting intellectual property and securing financial support

3. Delivering an English learning programme with a range of new digital English language learning content including digital learning platforms, online courses and new Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) courses focused on English for entrepreneurship.

(IFF Baseline research (2018: 3))

The Creative Spark programme was designed with the aim of being flexible enough to reflect the variations within the region but with a strong core of purpose and activity to facilitate the sharing of best practice and the collation of combined data to demonstrate the impact. The design of the constituent parts will now be identified with a consideration of the project scale and management.

3.2 Creative Spark Programme design

As previously mentioned in the introduction, Creative Spark was a 5-year initiative from 2018 – 2023 which was designed and delivered by the British Council. The aim of Creative Spark was to help young entrepreneurs in the partner countries to gain Enterprise and English skills to create their own career path or start their own business. The intention was to:

- Address youth unemployment
- Encourage the internationalisation of the Higher Education sectors
- To support creative enterprise and English language development

(British Council 2018)

Over 50 Creative Spark partnerships were created involving 50 UK Universities and 82 partner institutions within the ex-Soviet countries identified in section 3.1: The funding for each partnership was on a sliding scale during the life of the programme. Partnership funds were £50k for the first year, up to £30k for the second year, up to £20k for the third year and up to £15k for the fourth year to support in a wide range of both strategic and operational activities including: curriculum development,

establishing incubators, repositories of educational materials and academic research.

A launch forum was held in Tbilisi, Georgia in November 2018 involving all partnerships between UK Universities and those from the 7 delivery countries which had been successful in the bidding process. Led by the British Council a joint mission statement was created to articulate the relationship between the Creative Spark programme and the social and economic development in the region which stated.

‘We agree that the advancement of entrepreneurship and enterprise related education provides a useful contribution to longer term social and economic development, and the related national policies provide an important supporting framework for this development, especially for the creative economy sector.

The importance of the role of universities and other educational institutions is recognised in this progression, including the role of the English language, and we encourage and support their efforts, especially through international partnerships with the UK, and the Creative Spark programme‘

[Tbilisi Statement 21st November 2018](#)

The Creative Spark programme was managed through a centralised team which was overseen by a London based Programme Director. The overall Programme Manager had oversight of all partner countries and was responsible for conferences and events involving all partners. In-country Programme Managers delivered the project located within the British Council at each of the partner country locations.

The Creative Spark programme was designed to influence three levels in each of the partner countries:

- Systemic level to influence policy and impact industry.
- Institutional level to influence enterprise education within universities and latterly colleges.
- Beneficiary level to impact individual students and companies in the sector.

([Creative Spark IFF report 2018](#))

Impact data gathered throughout the project has demonstrated the levels of engagement across the entire project in all regions. The granularity of the data has not been presented to Country level but the following table illustrates the data collected to evaluate the activity across the region.

Table 3.1. Impact data

Source: Claire de Braekeleer, Regional Arts Director, Wider Europe, British Council at the Creative Spark Forum in Almaty, Kazakhstan 21/10/2022

Creative Spark Programme outcomes as at end of year 4 September 2022 (All countries)	Activity data
Higher Education and Creative Institutions partnered	132
Activities – workshops, bootcamps, training, networking, mentoring	1,435
New enterprise and incubation centres developed	23
New courses and modules developed on enterprise education	138
National policy fora supporting higher education reform	44
Students and young entrepreneurs attending Creative Spark events	54,628
People engaged with Big Idea Challenge	237,000
New business ideas generated through Big Idea Challenge	1,064
Numbers who used online Business English resources	400,000
Percentage increase in confidence in the use of English	30%

Percentage of partners who have taken specific measures to facilitate social inclusion	76%
Percentage of participants who are female	58%
Percentage of students involved in the programme receiving financial support to aid their education	57%

The impact data identifies the considerable activity across the entire Creative Spark programme. The outcomes are identified in terms of the engagement by the universities and students. The influence this has had at a more granular level of an individual country is to be determined in this thesis with specific reference to Kazakhstan.

3.3 Creative Spark in Kazakhstan

Creative Spark projects in Kazakhstan were designed with the aim of impacting both the education sector and the creative industries. In 2014 the Ministry of Culture and Sport in Kazakhstan expressed a commitment to culture with an initiative entitled 'The Concept of Cultural Policy' (CCP) which demonstrated a vision for the sector aimed at developing 'competitive, cultural mentality and development of modern cultural clusters' which were seen as an additional driver of the economy. Five mechanisms were identified by the Ministry to improve the competitiveness of the cultural environment:

1. Improvement of the management and financing system in the sphere of culture
2. A single educational space of the sphere of art
3. Development of science, implementation of international research programmes

4. Wide application of information and innovative technologies in the sphere of culture
5. Development of modern cultural clusters.

(Ministry of culture and sport 2014 cited in IFF (2018:74)

Whilst training in the Arts was provided to ensure students had the relevant artistic skills, little attention was given to entrepreneurial skills. The incidence of state sponsorship was high which impacted the independence of individual artists (Kim and Comunian 2022). However, few links were in evidence between the Arts academies and related industries. The state of the creative industries was further impacted by a lack of consistency in definition and classification with a lack of clarity in the terminology used. This lack of consensus on what constitutes the cultural and creative sector negatively impacted the ability to attract funding and support (Zhuparova *et al* 2022).

The availability of research in the arts and culture in post-soviet countries is limited (Kim and Comunian 2022). The Creative Spark partnerships have facilitated joint research between the UK universities and partner institutions which has led to an increase in the research and publishing concerning entrepreneurship but specifically the creative industries (Goncharova and Shayakhmet 2020, Altinay *et al.* 2021, Altinay *et al.* 2022). This has had the effect of increasing the profile of the Creative Spark programme with contributions being made in both the development of entrepreneurship and the formation of the creative industries in the partner countries. Roadmap meetings in the fourth year of the project encouraged the engagement of government and policy makers in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to

bring to the fore policy debate pertaining to the creative industries. The Creative Spark project is being examined in this thesis to determine its influence in developing EEE within the partner universities in Kazakhstan.

Terminology used in the discussion for this thesis are as follows:

Programme – entire Creative Spark programme in all 7 partner countries

Projects – delivery of the programme by UK and Kazakh institutions

Partnerships – relationships between individual institutions for delivery of projects.

The researcher's role as a Creative Spark project manager within Kazakhstan has facilitated a keen understanding of the activities within the programme through her own project and through access to a myriad events and fora organised by the British Council. The researcher's positionality is discussed in detail in chapter 5 but the insights facilitated through being an insider-researcher have provided a valuable context to this study.

The following literature review evaluates the current situation in Kazakhstan in relation to the development of EEE and investigates the extent to which modernisation is taking place. The phases of realignment are examined as Kazakhstan has moved from a Soviet model of education to a more European based system. The challenges which this transition has brought and the wider implications for developing entrepreneurship through education are considered.

Chapter 4 Literature Review

4.1 Introduction and scope of the literature review

The review of literature focuses on the objective to critically examine the modernisation of the Higher Education Sector in Kazakhstan and explore how Enterprise and Entrepreneurial Education (EEE) is evolving in this context. Since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 the sector has been evolving towards a European approach to higher education incorporating English language skills in the aspiration to compete globally. The motivation to compete globally through developing entrepreneurial skills and competences amongst the workforce has led to a concentration on the abilities of academics and institutions to support entrepreneurial activity both within curriculum and through extra-curricular activity.

A reduction in the control of the state and greater autonomy has further characterised this transition. The impetus towards developing EEE is evaluated in the context of forging closer relationships with industry and the employability skills of students. The modernisation of the Kazakh HEI sector provides an underpinning to the analysis and the extent to which this is being achieved. The application of a European style approach is explored within this discussion of the concept of educational borrowing alongside the effectiveness of applying educational policies and systems within the cultural context of Kazakhstan.

4.2 Higher Education Context in Kazakhstan

The development process in Kazakh Universities in the past 30 years since independence has led to a gradual shift from a Soviet style of higher education, characterised by centralised control and decision making to a more European

version which incorporates a balance of autonomy and accountability (Hartley *et al.* 2015). This has in part been driven by a desire to develop a more market-based economy whereby the universities are contributing through scientific and innovative approaches to engaging with industry and the wider society as identified in section 1.2.2. Educational reform in Kazakhstan is regarded as strategically important in order to be able to compete internationally (Adambekova and Amankeldi 2015). The desire to compete internationally is bound in raising standards and building an education sector which can increase the skill base but also attract international expertise to exploit the natural resources within the country. Attracting academics into the country and the education system will be dependent upon the quality of the offers in terms of not only remuneration but career progression, collaboration and opportunities.

A recognisable gap in the provision of education has been that of business and management which in turn reflects the restrictive nature of both the employment opportunities and the skills within the workforce (Kurnamov *et al.* 2015). An historical reliance on oil and gas has precipitated this situation with an emphasis on the STEM subjects, consistent with Soviet style education and providing the skills specific to this industry. Kuraev (2016) argued that the education system during the Soviet era which had an emphasis on building expertise in specific industries to improve the skills within the workforce had significant benefits. However, the opportunities for universities to research, innovate and exploit academic freedoms were severely limited. The move away from the Soviet era has manifested in a number of ways.

Significantly, a more recent orientation towards entrepreneurship and a recognition of the structures required to develop ecosystems and innovation by the government is resulting in a change in direction (Kromidha *et al.* 2022). Educational policy following independence encouraged the development of privately owned universities which rose to 110 of the 165 HEIs in 1998 (Kromidha *et al.* 2022). The privatization of the Kazakhstan HE sector has been driven by former President Nazarbayev (President from 1991 – 2019) who encouraged this through enabling HEIs to be turned into joint stock companies where the government held joint ownership with private and corporate investors. By 2005 60% of all universities/colleges/institutes were semi-private under this scheme.

Despite this move towards privatisation there was still considerable state control over the curriculum with the choice of major subjects restricted to those which were approved and high levels of regulation. Greater autonomy for the HEIs was required to facilitate more innovation within the curriculum and pedagogy. A desire to be able to compete internationally saw an impetus towards modernisation of the sector (Hartley 2016).

A change in policy brought a reduction in state control from 2010 and an encouragement towards more professionally orientated programmes such as MBA (Yeleussov *et al.* 2015, Kurmanov *et al.* 2015). However, this was not without some level of control being maintained by the state of the curriculum which led to a number of shortcomings within the Kazakhstan model of business education (Hartley *et al.* 2015). The principal areas of concern were the level of skills to teach internationally competitive programmes and gain the associated rankings such as

AMBA, AACSB and EQUIS. The acceptance of learners onto MBA programmes without business experience and a lack of practical components within courses have been identified as being factors which inhibit the progress of business education by Kurmanov *et al.* (2015) whose analysis further concluded that there is a resultant lack of qualified professionals within Kazakh companies. The concept of modernisation is therefore proposed whereby the quality and standards are brought into line with international accreditation and standards with the ambition being the expansion of educational services but also integration into the world and European educational system (Piven and Pak 2006).

Yeleussov *et al.* (2015) conducted an analysis of higher education institutions in Kazakhstan to identify the scope of business education. The study proposed 3 main conditions for determining the success of modernising the Kazakh model of business education:

“Firstly, to generate high level of education consumption in the country, having high-quality educational product is a must, namely professors and educational technologies, taking into account the specifics of business in our country. The gap between the quality of education and real-world practice is a major obstacle to business education development as an infrastructural element of innovative economy;

Secondly, the necessity to form the demand for educational services, both on the part of companies, and on the part of individuals. Variety in professional potentials, motivations, career plans creates demand for a differentiated approach to the formation of educational programs contents;

Thirdly, the new law "On education" excludes from state control the programs of additional education. Therefore, there is a need for public organization that would take up the regulatory functions, including, for instance, public and professional accreditation and certification of business education programs”

(Yeleussov *et al.* 2015: 145).

The gap between the needs of industry and the quality of the higher education degrees is therefore seen as significant. A greater cohesiveness between universities and industry would appear to be an obvious mechanism for closing the gap but requires changes in both infrastructure and mind set. Addressing the need for embedded professionally based education has been seen in the UK through the emergence of degree apprenticeships which provides a structure and a system to embed high level education within organisations and to facilitate synergy for mutual benefit. The development of a regulatory function for accreditation and quality assurance is a fundamental aspect of the self-regulatory nature of HE in the UK and would facilitate the autonomy which is required for HEIs in Kazakhstan to respond to market needs.

Achieving these conditions would therefore require a greater integration with the external environment including both industry and global quality standards. The connectivity between education and practice within the UK is designed to bring a strong influence of industry and the needs of employers within the design and development of curriculum. Quality is devised to reflect not only the systems and processes within the institution but also the extent to which the education will lead to positive employment outcomes for the students within applied subjects.

International accreditation can be achieved through a drive in changing practices within the institutions to improve standards and the capturing of relevant data which can be easier to achieve than a cultural shift in working practices. It is claimed that attracting international academics to work in Kazakh universities and through encouraging Kazakh academics to gain international experience, the likelihood of gaining accreditation will increase as quality becomes the focus (Abdramanova *et al*

2019). The integration of UK academics into Kazakh universities through the Creative Spark programme has facilitated exchange but the extent of the impact through a funded project is limited. Furthermore, the desire to build long term partnerships with UK universities may require a level of investment which is either not financially feasible or practical through a lack of cultural alignment which manifests in the setting of priorities. The implications of this are demonstrated through the limited level of transnational educational opportunities which arose as a consequence of the implementation of the Creative Spark programme.

Greater autonomy was recognised as necessary within a market driven economy yet the extent to which this can be achieved in the short term is questionable.

Hartley *et al.* (2016) suggest that institutional autonomy and the opportunity for HEIs to drive innovation and change will only be achieved through a new set of policies and new cultural norms that are established to support the legitimacy of any new system. The level of responsibility which autonomy requires is dependent upon the institutions being willing to establish effective quality mechanisms which hold people accountable. The concept of autonomy will be evaluated further in more detail in section 4.3. The modernisation process requires quality assurance to be implemented to enable the evidencing of compliance with international standards and subsequent ranking systems (Abdramanova *et al.* 2019).

Abdramanova *et al.* 2019 conducted an assessment of the quality of entrepreneurship education in Kazakhstan. Their study revealed a need to address the quality culture in Kazakh Universities, particularly in relation to the needs of

employers. As a result, three main areas of pedagogical conditions were identified to improve the quality of entrepreneurial education:

“There are such urgent tasks:

1. To adapt the university management structures to the changed conditions.
2. To strengthen the interaction between the consumers of educational services and partners of the university.
3. To direct the activities of universities toward the implementation of relevant trends that the society, education system and university are really interested in.”

(Abdramanova *et al.* 2019:15).

The primarily externally focussed conditions for modernisation identified by Yeleussov *et al.* (2015) are in contrast with the later work of Abdramanova *et al.* (2019) who recognised the importance of societal trends and the position of the university within a wider community but also the importance of adapting management structures to changing conditions. The willingness of individual institutions, many of whom are privately owned became a key challenge. Change and modernisation will represent risk in an environment where decisions on structure and curriculum were previously predetermined by the state. In the context whereby the directive of the state is becoming less influential, opportunities are emerging and whilst for some institutions this represents a positive step towards more choice and control, the levels of responsibility and independence also increase.

In 2018 a new law on education was passed by the Minister of Education and Science (2018) which provided universities greater control over educational programmes and significantly for entrepreneurial activities, the right to own start-up companies (Bokayev *et al.* 2022). In addition, a new framework for quality assurance was established whereby licenses are issued for subject areas as

opposed to specific programmes with the intention of encouraging innovation (Bokayev *et al.* 2022). A change within the cultural environment of the universities is, however, required to ensure effective implementation of these new freedoms. The discussion invariably returns to the level of autonomy and subsequent accountability of the University sector.

4.3 State control versus autonomy

Adambekova and Amankeldi (2015) identify the strategic importance of the higher education market to an economy and the need for a level of state regulation to ensure the sector is performing and continuing to innovate. The broader role of universities in society should also be considered alongside this notion whereby the contribution is not just measured in monetary terms. The emphasis of this thesis is towards business education. However, this is not the entirety of the sector and the broader societal contribution should be recognised. Innovation should, however, be facilitated and whether this is within the auspices of state control or more autonomous institutions will now be considered.

The concept of autonomy in this context is examined by Hartley *et al.* (2016) who sought to update an OECD study in 2007 through extensive sector research. Hartley *et al.* (2016) identify autonomy as being within the governance and decision-making processes. It is recognised that alongside autonomy there comes accountability which requires considerable systemic change. This has been seen partly through the formation of Boards of Trustees and less state control within independent institutions. Boards of Trustees are not necessarily an improvement on state control as the make-up of the board and individual positions driven by

personal motivations can impact the running of the institutions, and this needs to be recognised.

A series of reforms have been gradually introduced but the role of the regulatory bodies has led to contradictions due to onerous reporting requirements and increased bureaucracy and a lack of specialism (Monobayeva and Iembekova 2017). Furthermore, the level of accountability requires different management structures and expertise within the institutions although budgetary matters are still within state control. The onus therefore moves towards the management and the faculty of the institutions which can in turn increase the administrative burden and stifle innovation (Hartley *et al.* 2016). Individual cases which demonstrate an effective departure from state control and influence include Nazarbayev University which has enjoyed significant investment from the state but in a bid to build an institution which is globally competitive, it has close international partners which influence the norms and practices within the Institution. The potential influence of international partnerships and academic mobility can assist the move towards the understanding of the potential benefits of reform and change.

Cultural norms and beliefs required a conscious move away from the Soviet approach whereby fairness, efficiency and uniform quality were assumed through the state control. The centralised system could lead to an abdication of responsibility by individual institutions and the predominant belief system supports the efficacy of a central system which is open to a culture of corruption in developing economies (Khlystova *et al.* 2022). The impact of institutional trust is emphasised within transition economies which are characterised by Khlystova *et al.*

(2022) as having high levels of uncertainty and societies with low levels of trust.

Within this context productive entrepreneurship education is more difficult to achieve.

The changes to the quality assurance system brought in with the new legislation (Minister of Education and Science 2018) saw a move from state certification to a process of “so called preventative control” (Bokayev *et al.* 2022: 3). This involves self-assessment and the efficacy of quality measures has been compromised through allegations of corruption within the education system (Sabzalieva 2021). As the responsibility for quality falls within the remit of the individual institutions the expectation is that competition will increase but this needs to be accompanied by a quality assurance system which is nationally adhered to. However, whether the introduction of quality systems will automatically lead to a reduction in corruption needs to be challenged. The impetus for achieving institutional targets and benchmarks can lead to pressures on academics and systems which are less focussed on educational outcomes than achieving predetermined goals. The pressure to achieve targets can be at the expense of both the standard of education and the student experience.

There is also a concern that the reduction in state control is a factor in the reported increase in corruption and exchanges for grades (Oka 2019). A partial exchange economy existed in soviet times whereby a favour or ‘blat’ was exchanged for influence in matters such as university places (Polese 2008, Oka 2015). This has been replaced with cash which affects values as well as mind sets and has the impact of undermining and commoditising the education system. The Ministry of

Education has implemented measures to address the issue, but it is seen as systemic whereby degrees are treated as commodities and the exchange for cash is seen as common practice to the extent that a survey by Zhas Otan, the youth wing of the ruling party found that in 2014 some 90% of students admitted that grades and theses can be bought and regarded this as 'normal' (Oka 2019).

The most recent development is the design of diplomas being changed to allow for each university being able to design and award their own graduation diploma (Chernenko 2021). This is designed to increase competition but the readiness of universities to make this transition and to ensure that the authenticity of the documentation can be validated is questioned along with concerns that incidences of fake documentation may increase (Sabzalieva 2021).

The impetus to ensure the efficacy and quality of degree programmes and the level of expertise amongst faculty was necessary to reduce the allegations of corruption and to increase the standards within the Institutions. At the centre of this was a desire to be recognised internationally and to build institutional reputations which could compete on a world stage (Bokayev *et al.* 2022). The rationale therefore of joining the Bologna Process was to align with European counterparts. However, this required significant cultural changes both within government and the universities. The implementation of the Bologna Process has had a significant impact on the development of HE in Kazakhstan since 2010 and is therefore considered within this thesis. The implementation of the Bologna process, the extent to which it has enabled modernisation and the challenges which it has created are now considered.

4.4 The implementation of the Bologna Process and modernisation of EEE

A significant strategy by the Kazakh government to both modernize the education system and bring it closer to the structures within Europe and the US in order to be able to compete on an International stage has been alignment through the Bologna Process (Bogatyreva and Shukuskeva 2020). Kazakhstan was able to join due to geographically 14% of the country is within the European Higher Education Area.

An evaluation of the Bologna Process is necessary to consider the extent to which Kazakhstan is achieving the ambition of competing internationally within the education sector. The Bologna Process provides a European set of standards which were developed in response to competition from the United States (Piven and Pak 2006). The principles of free movement of people and goods was a further underlying principle. The ambition was to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for recognition of qualifications, an aligning of the structure of HE and enabling greater mobility for undergraduates and academics (Maudarbekova *et al.* 2015). The [Bologna Process](#) comprises a three-cycle system of HE within a qualifications framework to allow for promotion mobility, quality assurance, increased employability, development of joint degrees, recognition of qualifications, a social dimension and lifelong learning (Tampayeva 2015). The Bologna declaration identifies the mechanisms which were a requirement of integrating the process:

“The following objectives were stated in the original Bologna declaration:

- Adoption of a system of readable and comparable degrees;
- Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate;

- Establishment of a system of credits, such as in the ECTS system
- Promotion of mobility;
- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance;
- Promotion of the necessary European dimension in higher education.”

(Zelvys and Akzholova 2016:188).

The emphasis was therefore on realignment of the education system but also the opportunity for mobility of both academics and students. Interestingly this was an aspect of the BREXIT agreement which brought the UK outside of this process due to a resistance to mobility (Garben 2020). The subsequent removal of the Erasmus funding serving to further reduce the opportunities for joint working and research and has continued to isolate UK universities (Zotti 2020).

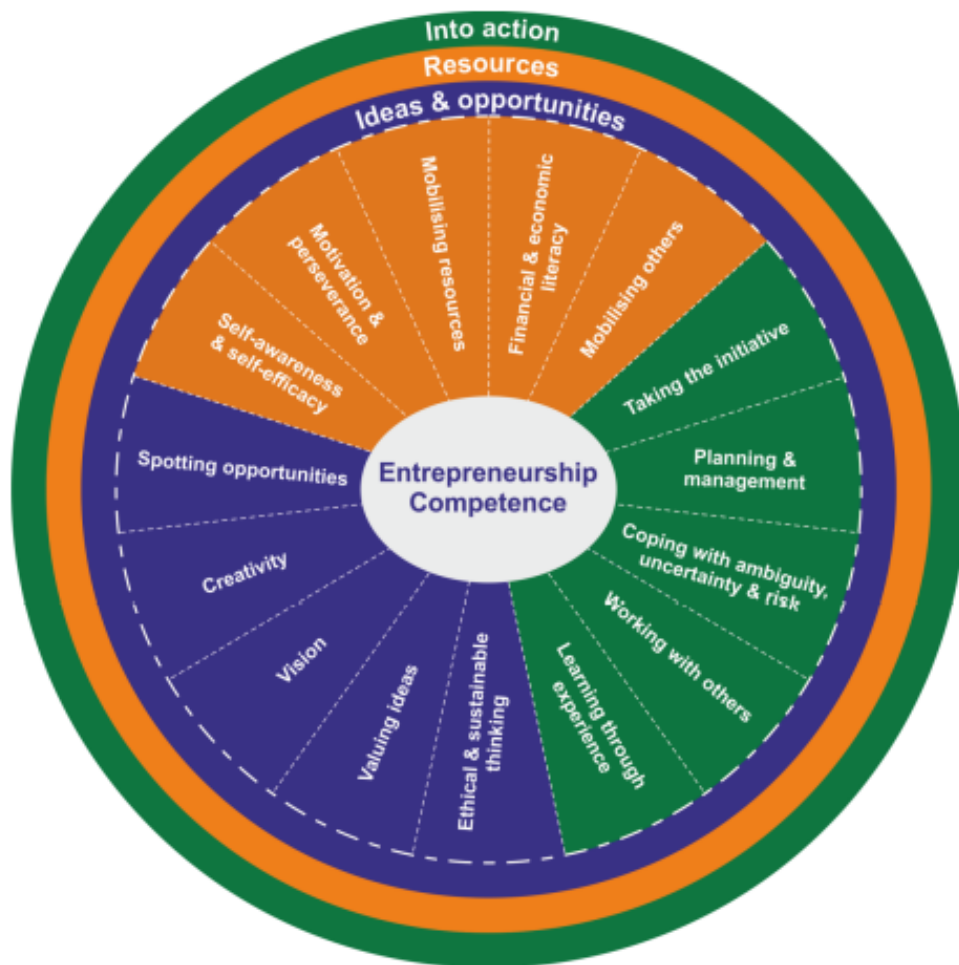
The Bologna Process has been instrumental in initiating educational reforms within Kazakhstan but the extent to which these reforms have led to autonomy and control of curriculum and pedagogy is questionable. The implementation of the Bologna Process provides a backdrop against which the concept of educational borrowing is evaluated and the development of quality standards are gradually being realised.

The alignment with the west has brought significant change in terms of the structure of education but the government produced Specify Classification Manual still determines the standards, syllabi and curriculum. The closer alignment with industry and the increasing institutional autonomy in the qualification design and delivery of curriculum was designed to lead to greater levels of specialism and professionalism within HEIs (Piven and Pak 2015). The nature of this provision was significantly different to the previous Soviet driven education system which was characterised through an emphasis on practical training rather than the ideology of

academic liberal knowledge and institutional self-governance. The communal needs were the main drivers for the Soviet system with academic freedom being minimised through the mandatory requirements (Kuraev 2016). Radical changes were therefore required in order to be in a position to comply with the Bologna Process criteria. This involved a move from the knowledge, abilities and skills approach to a competence-based pedagogy which develops the application of theory and analysis (Zelvys and Akzholva 2016). This in part reflects the rapidly changing external environment where the pure transmission of knowledge is no longer in demand but the specialists' ability to use knowledge and skills to perform functions which is the basis of a competence-led approach. This is reflected in the availability of information and the worldwide transition to web based information technology over the past 20 years.

The readiness of the Kazakh institutions to make this transition and to fully appreciate the concept of competences and how these translate into curriculum and pedagogy is to be considered and evaluated within this study. The difference between learning outcomes and competences is an aspect of this debate. The essential difference is that "Competences are the qualities developed by the learner whilst learning outcomes are determined by the academic staff with the involvement of students and employers, linked with a level of studies with a single course or module." (Zelvys and Akzholva 2016:194). The EntreComp framework Fig 4.1 (Bacigalupo et al 2016) which was discussed in section 2.6 was presented to the interview participants in this thesis during fieldwork as a mechanism to understand the extent to which EEE competences are being implemented.

Fig 4.1 EntreComp Framework



(Bacigalupo *et al.* 2016).

The purpose of the framework is within shaping curriculum to facilitate EEE by providing a structure which recognises the need to provide support for entrepreneurial ventures. There is also a recognition that students need to prepare for uncertainty and to combine creativity and ideation with research, planning and preparation. The limitations of the framework discussed in section 2.7 are recognised, however, the value of a structure which incorporates an authentic and

innovative experience for students is particularly valuable in a context whereby the teaching staff are unlikely to have personal experience of entrepreneurship.

In a globalised society the pace of change requires that populations need to upgrade their qualifications and evolve in terms of their competences and their professional activity with HE is playing a significant role (Piven and Pak 2015). Under Soviet rule the evolution of social change was slower and skills obtained in early life were useful for a longer period within a more static structure. The dynamics and change in the 21st Century are running at a substantially higher pace and the concept of lifelong learning becomes more of a priority. The emphasis has shifted away from knowledge acquisition to abilities and transferrable skills which has required a shift in emphasis within Kazakhstan but also a structural change (Ilyassova-Schoenfeld 2019).

Piven and Pak (2006) argue that the modernisation of the Kazakh education system needs to go beyond the Bologna Process formal provisions and ensure the pedagogy and curriculum are evolving at the pace required. The extent to which Kazakhstan has successfully embraced the principles of the Bologna Process is called into question by Yergebekov and Temirbekova (2012:1475) who suggest it is a 'dysfunctional formality' due to hindrances to the implementation of the process. The first of these hindrances is a mindset which relates more directly to the Soviet era of education with an emphasis on teaching not research. The majority of academics are hourly paid leading to high (20 – 30 hours per week) teaching loads which inhibits the opportunity to do research, personal development and to experience international mobility. The second hindrance is the proportion of

mandatory courses or modules which reduces or removes student choice. Finally, the inclusion of students in the administration of the university does not progress beyond a student council which does not have the impact designed into the Bologna Process. The culture changes required will however take time. Changes in working practices within UK universities involve a slow process of negotiation and restructuring involving consultation with governors, senate, quality, academics and students. Decreasing teaching workloads to leave space for research involves higher levels of trust and a move towards a management style of adhering to key performance indicators supported with staff development. Equally, giving students greater choice and increasing their influence on the working practices within the institutions requires a significant shift in mindset within the university hierarchy and amongst faculty.

Altynbassov *et al.* (2015:102) raise the challenges for Kazakhstan to enter the 'world educational space' in terms of training research personnel, attracting foreign professors, recognition of diplomas by other countries, and student mobility. Other studies have concentrated on the social relevance of integration but not the legal or regulatory aspects. The initial response at independence in 1991 was to increase proficiency and expertise to support scientific and technological advances. This transition needs to take into consideration the previously closed society which has significantly different legislative systems. To enable the transition Tampayeva (2015) suggests the theory of educational borrowing is investigated which has taken its meaning from the voluntary adaptation of educational models and practices in the west by post-soviet countries. The recontextualising of standards into the specific environment is a key requirement which recognises the constraints imposed

by Soviet legacies (Kuraev 2015). Silova (2002, cited Tampayeva 2015) challenges the debate around the concept of borrowing, suggesting that it is not necessarily imposed but the post-soviet countries are actually pursuing their own interest through the manipulation of the global forces. The complexities of applying particularly educational policies in different contexts are well recognised with the importance of understanding cultural variations (Burdett and O'Donnell 2016). Furthermore, Tampayeva (2015) argues that Kazakhstan can be considered to be more similar to the Caucasus and Baltic states in terms of its comprehensive structural reforms at all levels of education and the emphasis on financing from within the country unlike those post-soviet countries which are geographically closer to Europe.

The implementation of European standards was investigated by Tampayeva (2015) who concentrated on the concept of educational borrowing and examining the extent to which standards and educational reform was 'recontextualised' to the Kazakh context (Tampayeva 2015: 83). Tests were being implemented to evaluate student progress within a qualitative study with 38 educational professionals across Kazakhstan. The value of testing as a mechanism to enable objectivity was regarded as positive in an environment which has historically been faced with corruption (Oka 2019). The ability of the country to implement the Bologna Process would be severely compromised if corruption were to continue. However, it was recognised that testing did not provide an effective mechanism of assessment in all disciplines. Whilst tests were seen as a panacea and being widely used in both the US and Europe the appropriateness of the assessments to specific programmes is not necessarily understood by the Ministry of Education which results in teachers

becoming less supportive of the implementation. Elements of the educational borrowing are therefore positioning the pedagogy beyond the normal application to a point where overcoming corruption is taking precedence over educational decisions. The appropriateness to assessments which reflect the needs of employers and ensuring the relevant skill sets are not being considered. The conclusion is that the concept of 'recontextualization' comes into play when using a mechanism designed for addressing educational problems being re-purposed to address corruption (Tampayeva 2015:83).

A recognition of the complexities involved in educational borrowing and in particular the cultural context are cited as being key factors in whether effective outcomes are achieved (Burdett and O'Connell 2016). The time lag between a policy being put in place and evidence of measurable outcomes can also be significant, reducing the ability of educationalists and policy makers to determine the impact of specific interventions. It is argued that leadership programmes from systems which are performing well and developing of teaching methods are at the core of a successful education system rather than the system itself (Harris *et al* 2016). The implications of this being that whilst features of successful interventions which are being borrowed can be readily identified, the cultural and contextual aspect cannot.

Implementation of the Bologna Process has brought significant structural developments in the sector but the cultural changes within institutions is inconsistent. Kazakhstan is not alone in experiencing challenges in the implementation (Klemenčič 2019) as the effectiveness and influence of the EHEA is questioned, a major challenge being the cultural diversity within the region. The

challenges to the modernisation of the education sector are further bound within the use of international communication and specifically English language skills whilst maintaining and developing the Kazakh language alongside the ubiquitous use of Russian. The influence of languages will now be considered within the context of modernising the education system but further in relation to connecting UK and Kazakh universities through the Creative Spark programme.

4.5 Modernisation and the influence of language

The motivation for changes in the education system is within the desire and need for Kazakhstan to follow world trends in science and education for economic growth and stability. The access to alternative education systems and transnational education has meant that the requirement to learn foreign languages has become an underlying requirement. To achieve the stated ambitions of the President Nursultan Nazarbayev an initiative entitled “The Trinity of Languages” whereby “The Republic of Kazakhstan should be identified worldwide as a highly educated nation where people speak three languages. The languages are Kazakh, Russian and English” (Nazarbayev 2012, cited Mauderbekova *et al.* 2015: 249). This emphasises the importance of multilingualism in Kazakhstan which is a key component of the internationalisation of the curriculum but also the adherence to the Bologna Process and the opportunities for the society to have greater global recognition.

The achievement of this with more than 130 ethnic groups was investigated by Aubakirova *et al.* (2019) in the context of the State Program of functioning and development of languages 2011 – 2020. This determined that 95% of the

population should speak Kazakh, 90% Russian and 20% English. This initiative has seen the implementation into the curriculum of Higher Education where students can elect to learn in one of the three languages in a third of HEIs. The impact of this policy has been experienced by the author where it was observed at Almaty Management University modules would be taught three times, once in each language. This has clear implications for resourcing and the need for both subject and language dexterity amongst academics. There is a valid argument that globalization and the push towards greater internationalisation is dependent upon multilingualism. A reason for a lack of publishing activity amongst Kazakh academics is linked directly to insufficient knowledge of foreign languages (Uvaleyeva *et al.* 2019). The implementation of this strategy is therefore gradual and dependent in part on the availability of multilingual teaching staff and resources. Introducing the Trilingual model into schools was piloted in 2017 and due to be extended to the mainstream in 2019 (Aubakirova *et al.* 2019).

A further incentive to become proficient in English is provided through the Bolashaq scheme which provides scholarships for Kazakhs to study in the UK and for academic training. This scheme has seen 8279 students achieve qualifications since its' inception in 1993 ([BOLASHAQ Scheme](#)). According to the President Anuar Zhangozin in the academic year 2022/23 1189 students are studying abroad, the majority in the US (652) and UK (329) with the government announcing a further 555 scholarships for 2023/24 (Zhangozin 2023). However, the emphasis is on science and medicine. In 2022/23 just 0.4% of the scholarships involved the creative industries in terms of the subjects to be studied abroad by participants

The contrasts in different parts of the country in terms of resources and skills and particularly those HEIs situated in the Capital are emphasised through research by Tlepbergen *et al.* (2022) who identified the differences in the regions compared with the larger, higher profile universities in the Capital. This study investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ways in which technology has enhanced particularly learning of language. A survey with 327 students from 4 HEIs in the Capital Astana (named Nursultan at the time of the research) was conducted with a further 11 qualitative interviews. The study investigated the current language abilities among undergraduates and what major challenges students have faced during emergency remote-learning processes. Fluency in the Russian language was dominant (96.3%) although almost two thirds (64.5%) spoke fluent Kazakh and over a third (39.7%) were confident in speaking English fluently. Only 11.9% of participants did not speak English at all. However, the importance of being able to speak English for professional growth was seen as 'very important' by 62.7% or 'important' by 26.4% of student participants, recognising the increasing importance of the use of the English language for access to international education and resources.

The Creative Spark programme incorporated language training resources and an emphasis towards developing English language skills which, in addition to EEE education and supporting the Creative Industries, formed a cornerstone of the programme. The extent to which this became a valuable aspect of the programme is evaluated in section 6.4.

Maudarbekova *et al.* (2015) emphasises that internationalisation in HE involves internal and external changes:

- Education abroad
- Cross-country and trans-boundary education
- Mobility staff & students, training programmes and institutional mobility
- New international standards for programmes
- International dimension in academic standards
- International partnerships
- Strategic educational alliances.

The integration of activities at all levels is required which includes research-based and educational activities and the ability to operate effectively in a multicultural world. The strategic objective is to consolidate Kazakhstan's position in the world community and education is seen as a significant factor. However, Maudarbekova *et al.* (2015) questions the cohesiveness of the strategy without there being a proper balance between economic, cultural and academic purpose. The comparability of diplomas, the experience and qualifications of staff and the ability to work collaboratively will continue to be limiting factors in the quest to internationalise the sector.

A gap which has been identified is that of the preparedness of academics for closer working with industry and the need for a training program to support this shift (Tazhbeyeva *et al.* 2014). Integration within external organisations is presented as extra-curricular activity as opposed to being an integral part of study. The inclusion of employability skills and understanding of the expectations and industry demands of graduates are being brought increasingly into the UK classroom. Embedding

employability is identified as being essential for preparing students for employment and developing the skills to be adaptable and resilient in the workplace (Kornelakis and Petrakaki 2020).

4.6 Relationships between HEIs and Industry

In recognition of the need for HEIs to work more closely with Industry the Kazakh government launched a programme for fostering closer relationships alongside signing the Bologna declaration. The initial concept was a restructuring of industry through diversification as a means of improving competitiveness and leading to improved growth and greater stability (SPIID 2010). This was revised in 2014 to become the State Program of Industrial and Innovative Development 2015 - 2019 (SPIID – 2 2014). At this point the role of higher education in economic development and particularly the opportunity for greater internationalisation was at the forefront of the government initiative.

Crucially, the recognition that soft skills including the ability to innovate, think critically, network and build an entrepreneurial mindset became a driving force (Jumakulov *et al.* 2019). Input from the top 100 science and technology universities provided the internationalized approach with the resulting triple helix (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 2000) of Kazakh university STEM departments, international university partners and local industry organisations working together. The aim was to enable industry-relevant research-based postgraduate programme development. This system further enabled a benchmarking of the Kazakh university provision against standards in the West. With the emphasis on economic growth and the

improvement of international competitiveness in priority sectors, SPIID -2 developed the role of universities in this endeavour and the effectiveness of postgraduate training for the needs of industry.

Research into the effectiveness of the SPIID-2 initiative by Jumakulov et al. (2020) used a range of qualitative methods comprising a wide range of interviews and focus groups to gain a broad perspective. The sample size being relatively small (11 SPIID-2 universities operating 22 programs) limited the reach of the study. The push to develop new and innovative curriculum in conjunction with international and industry partners was combined with student internships and company case project work. A release from previous national requirements enabled a change in credits linked to external industry based activities. In addition, faculty from the SPIID – 2 partner universities contributed to teaching and introduced new methods. Investment in laboratories and infrastructure was key to the success of the initiative which enables an update in facilities and experimentation. The training of faculty and management developed strategic, planning and entrepreneurial skills which have the potential to build capacity in the sector through cascading the skills and the knowledge. The international dimension has enabled a rapid improvement and raising in standards.

The evidence shows that SPIID-2 has worked as a catalyst to foster effective collaboration and result in innovative developments and significant improvements in the capabilities of graduates being innovators within the industries. Jumakulov *et al.* (2020) emphasise the role which research plays in supporting innovative industrial

developments and the research capacity and capability is facilitated through the international partnerships.

Whilst the SPIID-2 initiative has demonstrated sound results in the initial evaluation there is a limitation to traditional Kazakh industries and there is a recognition that a wider reach in terms of disciplines is required (Jumakulov *et al.* 2020). In order to achieve the economic advances and to be able to adapt to changing external environments a strong business education system helps to facilitate a creative, innovative approach to starting and running businesses (Kurmanov *et al.* 2015) hence the impetus for the development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education. However, the effectiveness of business schools in producing graduates who have the abilities required by industry is called into question. Management schools and industry are seen to be operating in very separate domains (Anjam 2013) The dependency of Kazakhstan on the business education system remains significant, driven through entrepreneurship and the creation of private HE institutions. Whilst the increase in provision of business education has seen a rapid growth, it has been the researcher's observation that the tendency in Kazakhstan has been towards the delivery of a more theoretical curriculum which is concerned with the fundamentals of entrepreneurship and not necessarily building an entrepreneurial mindset. The direct relevance to the requirements within business and employers are thus called into question.

Curriculum has moved from theoretical to experiential in Europe and the US in order to facilitate the adaptation to the pace of change in industry (Hodge *et al.* 2014). A consistent and effective connection with businesses is required to ensure that

effective and applicable life experiences can be not just reflected in the classroom but fully integrated. This approach goes beyond extracurricular or co-curricular activity but may incorporate work experience and placements. There is inconsistency as to how the integration with industry manifests as a number of variables are to be considered. These include actual definitions of experiential learning, the way in which experiential learning is realised and the life stage of learners. Baden and Parkes (2013) suggest that experiential learning should engage a students' senses as well as their intellect. Their feelings and personalities become a part of the effectiveness of this integrated approach which can lead to a more ethical socially conscious mind-set.

In the researcher's experience this can be achieved in EEE through the inclusion of authentic assessment which mirrors workplace challenges and through connecting with businesses through internships, consultancy, live client projects and dissertations. This concept is further developed by Neergaard and Christensen (2017) who based on a longitudinal study advocates the importance of negotiating elements of curricular to re-set student expectations and ensure the effectiveness of markers and scaffolding to support a move towards more experiential competence-based learning. The role and influence of the student within the context of modernising the education system is now considered.

4.7 Student perspective of EEE in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is in a good position for education reform by comparison with other ex-soviet countries due to the oil and gas natural resources and the preparedness to

adopt European structures and standards (Merrill 2010, Stetar and Kurakbayev 2010).

‘Objectives of the State Programme for Education 2016 – 2019 include:

- Equipping students with skills relevant to labour market
- Integrating Kazakhstan in to the EHEA
- Bolstering synergies between education, science and industry
- Stimulating commercialisation of research
- Fostering national identity
- Encouraging active citizenship and social responsibility’

Jonbekova (2020:1184).

However, the focus of policy makers is on the economic rather than social benefits of HE.(Jonbekova 2020). The significant expansion in providers has led to an increase from 288,400 students in 61 HEIs in 1991 to 496,209 students in 122 HEIs in 2017. By 2023 the number of institutions has contracted slightly from 122 to 119 but student numbers have risen to 626,200 (Nurbek 2023). Further rapid expansion of the sector is planned with a target of 800,000 students by 2025, with an increase in international students anticipated. The perceived range of public or community benefits are identified by government as;

- higher tax payments
- increased quality of civic life
- reduced reliance on government support
- greater social cohesion.

(Nurbek 2023)

For students themselves the subsidies for HE were halted following the dissolution of Soviet Union – 69% Kazakh students self-finance with tuition fees ranging between USD1000 to USD 8000. There are concerns over the unemployment and

underemployment of graduates with career prospects being a key motivator to undertake a bachelor's degree programme.

The value of education to students themselves is under-researched. To address this gap Jonbekova (2020) conducted a qualitative study with final year undergraduates in both Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to gain an understanding of the motivations for study and the relationship with their future employability. Focus group discussions were held in 2016 – 2018 with undergraduates studying Economics and Law. In total 85 students from Kazakhstan were interviewed in focus groups of 5-6 students. The fields of economics and law are perceived as most prestigious and are increasing in numbers, four regions were covered, all universities were National or State representing large cities and more undeveloped rural areas. The sample was therefore relatively small and further quantitative work to build more generalised data would enable more reliable conclusions.

The study did however provide valuable insights. For the majority of students in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan the primary purpose of HE is for economic benefits, career earning potential and to provide enhanced employability (Jonbelova 2020). The relatively high current oil prices in 2020 and the lack of availability of jobs was a major concern. Degree level qualifications are also required by the job markets although this could be a factor of the chosen sample being economic and law undergraduates. Attaining a stable income to provide family support is a stated goal, particularly for those who are first in family to go to university. Whilst entrepreneurship is regarded as an option there are perceived to be high barriers due to cumbersome registration, high taxes and a lack of loan capital. Non-

economic reasons included the opportunities to socialise and for females to delay the prospect of marriage and caring responsibilities (Jonbekova 2020). Most significant is the view that a bachelor's degree is regarded as 'incomplete' and needs to be followed with a Masters qualification.

This narrative from government, universities and therefore employers has a significant effect on the value of first degrees and the concept of 'diploma disease' (Jonbekova 2020) whereby the education credentials are being used by employers in lieu of more rigorous recruitment processes. A more comprehensive sociological analysis of educational strategies based on an analysis of student motives identified consistent findings in the importance of the diploma itself above the content of the study or mastery of the specialism (Duisenova *et al.* 2020). The extent to which EEE fits within this scenario is questionable. Whilst a degree is not required to be an entrepreneur, the skills and knowledge serve to reduce the risk of failure.

The effectiveness of entrepreneurial education in developing a culture of entrepreneurship will be dependent on the necessary infrastructure being provided. In addition, the recognition of entrepreneurship as an advantageous career needs to be supported through government policy (Altinay *et al.* 2021, Kromidha *et al.* 2022). The Creative Industries have the potential to generate employment and entrepreneurial opportunities within emerging economies and this provides an alternative to the gas and oil industries for young people (Altinay *et al.* 2022). The role and ability of universities to build the infrastructure required to support industry development through entrepreneurial talent discussed is a key factor in building successful entrepreneurial universities as identified in section 2.5.

4.8 Literature review conclusions

The literature review has provided a critical examination of the modernisation of HEI education in Kazakhstan and explored how EEE is evolving in this context.

The cultural context has been established (Adambekova and Amankeldi 2015, Hartley et al 2016) which has demonstrated limitations in the ability to reform (Yergebekov and Temirbekova 2012). A desire to build growth within a market-based economy (Kromidha *et al.* 2022) has identified skill gaps and has driven the shift from a Soviet style of education to a European style version which is typified by greater autonomy within the university sector (Piven and Pak 2006). The gradual reduction in state control and increase in professional qualifications and accreditation is designed to achieve greater integration within a more globalised society (Yeleussov *et al.* 2015, Kurmanov *et al.* 2015).

Inclusion within the Bologna Process (Bogatyreva and Shukuskeva 2020) has led to a re-design of the education system to align with European standards which concentrate on the building of competences within curriculum design and pedagogy with an emphasis in business education towards building skills for industry (Zelvys and Akzholva 2016). A recognition that transferrable skills and an alertness to changes in the external, global environment have further driven this strategy which it is argued has encompassed educational borrowing and a re-contextualising to the Kazakh environment (Ilyassova-Schoenfeld 2019). The extent to which this has been achieved is called into question partly due to the challenges of increasing autonomy in the HE sector with associated increases in responsibility (Tampayeva 2015.) A motivation to build language skills within the higher education sector which

reflect both the cultural history of the country through the Kazakh language as well as emphasise the importance of English as an international language has been driven into the HE sector by the political leaders (Aubakirova *et al.* 2019, Tlepbergen *et al.* 2022).

As discussed in chapter 2 the development of relationships between the university sector, government and industry have been identified as a mechanism for driving innovation and entrepreneurial activity (Etzkowitz 2003) with the concept of the entrepreneurial university providing infrastructure to support entrepreneurial activity (Philpot *et al.* 2011, Hagg and Gabrielson 2020, Cunningham *et al.* 2021).

The literature review has demonstrated that the study of EEE within Kazakhstan is relatively unexplored. The policy context provides consideration of the influence of the government in the imperative to build a dynamic economy and the role of universities. However, the extent to which the policies are impacting activity within specific institutions and the extent to which this manifest in changes in curriculum and pedagogy as well as the introduction of quality mechanisms is still to be investigated.

The Creative Spark programme was developed to support the building of skills and competences amongst academics and learners within the specific context of the creative industries through partnering UK and Kazakh institutions to deliver 5 year project. The gap to be further examined in this thesis is the effectiveness of the Creative Spark intervention in building EEE in the Kazakh context and the potential sustainable influence of the Programme.

Chapter 5 Methodology

The preceding literature review explored the emergence of Enterprise and Entrepreneurial Education within Kazakhstan and highlighted the political and cultural context and the educational reform which is impacting this development. The influence of western educational cultures which is exemplified within the Creative Spark Programme through the UK and Kazakh HEI partnerships further highlights the impetus within Kazakhstan to move further towards the concept of developing universities with EEE capabilities.

The methodology applied to this study explored the emergence of entrepreneurial learning and teaching within the partner universities of the Creative Spark Programme. The influence of the projects within the partner universities was investigated and the extent to which this will have a sustained impact. Whilst through the researcher's insider perspective, greater understanding of the nuances of the programme delivery could be achieved, an alertness needed to be maintained to the potential biases and sensitivities of this position.

This methodology chapter presents the researchers' philosophical position and the rationale for using a case study strategy to address the thesis aims and objectives. The positionality of the researcher is considered before the method is outlined.

5.1 Research philosophy

This research examines the role of Creative Spark in the development of EEE in Kazakhstan, The research questions for the thesis are as follows:

1. To what extent are UK institutions through the Creative Spark programme supporting the growth and development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in partner Kazakh institutions?
2. How effective are the interventions in building capacity and the sustainability of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education Kazakhstan?

Whilst impact data generated by the British Council provided an analysis of the breadth of activity and the levels of engagement within the Creative Spark projects, greater insights into the specific projects were being sought through this study to investigate the specific influence on the development of EEE within participating institutions. Investigation of these social phenomena required a paradigm which enabled an understanding of the actions of participants and the subsequent assessment of the impact.

The ontology and epistemology underpinning this analysis is therefore interpretivist as the focus of social phenomena have been created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018, Saunders *et al* 2016). This means that the rationale behind actions and the participants' behavioural responses to external cues have been examined with an interpretivist stance (Travers 2001). The case study approach aims to discover rich descriptions by participants and a nuanced understanding of the topics rooted in their experience. A descriptive practice-orientated study enabled the individual projects to be explored and the formulation of a comparative study (Dul and Hak 2007). The specific context and cultural norms were underlying considerations, particularly as the data was gathered by interviews in both the UK and Kazakhstan.

Using case study as a strategy for educational research has been evaluated by Hetherington (2013) who concluded that complexity emerges in on-going and open-ended scenarios. This position was embraced by the researcher who recognises the transient nature of a research project in the context of a dynamic environment. The concept of being open to unanticipated paths which might emerge through the research is left unrestricted through the case methodology and enabled through the building of a staged approach to the fieldwork which permitted themes to be explored with subsequent participants.

5.2 Research strategy

The Creative Spark programme in Kazakhstan provides a case study within which to investigate the aims and objectives of this study. Case study research illuminates the theoretical issues being studied through providing an analysis of a context (Hartley 2004) whereby processes and behaviour are intrinsically influenced by the context. Case study provides a strategy whereby the complex variables within organisational research can be approached through inductive analysis. The development of theory can emerge as a result of the evidence with the researcher being cognisant of the nuances and implications of the data within the organisational and cultural contexts.

This is confirmed by Yin (1994) who emphasised the multiple sources of evidence which converge to provide triangulation of the results and the real-life context. The flexibility of case research design permits the probing of planned and emerging theory. There is recognition that there may be discrepancies or conflicts between

the viewpoints of the various participants which has been considered within the analysis (Bassey 1999). The investigative nature of the research objectives provides an impetus for a methodology which recognised that in examining real-life situations there is not necessarily a distinction between phenomenon and context. In addition, the case study approach acknowledges the potential for many variables of interest. Cases can benefit from a prior development of a theoretical proposition and will rely on 'multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion' (Yin 2018: 15).

Whilst the position of the researcher is to be discussed in greater detail in section 5.3, the value of an insider researcher is emphasised by Eisenhardt (1989) who claims the juxtaposition of conflicting realities can "un-freeze" thinking, potentially leading to the generating of theory with more limited researcher bias than alternative approaches (Eisenhardt 1989: 546).

The emphasis on the organisational and cultural context facilitated by case study research is valuable considering the cultural Kazakh context which is a post-Soviet society. This cross-national study requires an effective understanding of what concepts mean and the implications attached to behaviours (Hartley 2004). The use of qualitative research is recognised as appropriate in a cross-cultural context as it enables 'stories' to be captured and the capturing of life experiences leading to an understanding from an individuals' perspective using both interpretation and a flexible approach (Liamputtong 2010: 11). The cultural context is defined as "an extensive knowledge of social, familial, cultural, religious, historical and political backgrounds" (Jackson and Mead Niblo 2003: 24). I have built this knowledge and

sensitivity as a result of 3 in-country projects over the past 6 years involving numerous exchanges and visits to Kazakhstan. The limited ability to build an 'extensive knowledge' of all the criteria identified is recognised. However, through working within partner universities and building an understanding of the cultural context have been at the forefront of discussions, and my resulting contribution within the projects delivered.

Data has been triangulated through access to conference and forum events through the life of the Creative Spark program providing additional evidence and data for systematic analysis. The case analysis was strengthened by the inclusion of multiple UK and Kazakh Institutions as well as the funding body. The opportunity to examine contrasts and similarities between the projects and the individual institutions provided greater insights into this study. Access to the Project Leaders within the Institutions and the Stakeholder participants from the funding body was enabled through my position as a UK Creative Spark Project Leader and a trusted part of the Creative Spark community within Kazakhstan and in the UK. The permissions gained to conduct the study and the access to the Creative Spark Programme Leaders were facilitated through my direct involvement within the programme. This positionality and the implications of this role are considered in greater detail in section 5.3.

Whereas quantitative research will seek to enable generalisation to a given population through the sample size or sampling frame this is less applicable to a case study where the emphasis is on analytical generalisation (Hartley 2004). The generalisation occurs through the process which underlies behaviour in a given

context and therefore the conditions under which the behaviour might be expected to occur again. The basis of generalisation is therefore understanding the processes and responses within the cultural context (Hartley 2004).

The researcher's philosophical position and design of the research within the case study strategy will be considered in section 5.3.

5.3 Positionality

As a researcher-practitioner it is important to consider positionality as the researcher was a project leader within the Creative Spark programme (Greene 2014; Unluer 2012). The incidence of insider-researchers within the field of education has been expanding through practitioner enquiry and the expansion of professional doctoral programmes (Greene 2014) but needed to be considered to mitigate any potential bias. It is recognised that building of trust and openness cannot only be achieved through being an insider or outsider and there are advantages and disadvantages of each position (Chavez 2008). The researcher's position facilitated insider knowledge of the programme and a keen understanding of the activities pertaining to the researcher's own project. The researcher's own experiences have informed the research and provided data, but the researcher did not have an insider position within the organisations which have been the subject of the interviews (Costley *et al.* 2010).

The knowledge of the programme through a project manager role and a pre-existing relationship with a number of the participants may promote openness (Unluer 2012). As a project manager the researcher had the advantage of insight into the

programme and could therefore understand the nuances of the implementation processes. In addition, the ethical implications of the researcher's own ideological position which might have been taken for granted was also considered. Through the researcher articulating her own position, respondents were encouraged to reflect on alternative constructions (Costley *et al.* 2010:33). The insider position of the researcher led to participant reflexivity whereby consideration of specifics within their project outcomes were brought to the fore (Cassell *et al.* 2020).

The expediency of access to the programme and participants (Chavez 2008) permitted an opportunity to explore the topic as a colleague. The managers within each of the 9 Kazakh/UK projects formed what might be termed as a 'community of practice' (Costley *et al.* 2010: 51) through a shared domain of activities (Bennington and Hartley 2004). Throughout the programme the British Council have sought to encourage the development of a community both within each country but also across the regions through regular conferences, roadmap meetings and forums. Such collaborative networks facilitate academics and practitioners to jointly develop knowledge creation as well as knowledge transfer. This leads to the concept of a 'spiral of knowledge' which is therefore created through the social interaction of the participants (Bennington and Hartley 2004: 362). It is therefore proposed that the orientation of the research has been to develop a deeper understanding than might otherwise have been achieved without the insider knowledge.

The challenges of an insider – researcher and the potential for bias are recognised in the literature (Creswell and Creswell 2018; Walford 2001). The typology of the researcher in the context of research within both the UK and Kazakhstan needs to

be considered (Banks 1998). For the UK based aspects of the research the researcher is categorised as an 'indigenous insider' whereby the values, perspectives, beliefs and behaviours have been developed through the researchers' cultural and ethnic background (Liamputtong 2010: 110). However, for the research with Kazakh participants it could be argued that this researcher sits between being an 'indigenous outsider' and an 'external outsider' (Liamputtong 2010: 110). The former indicates this researcher has been socialised within a cultural community but is regarded as an outsider conducting research despite holding perspectives and knowledge of the community in which the research is conducted. The latter however is characterised as having a lack of empathy for the culture or community which in itself can lead to distorted views and beliefs. Through reflective practice the researcher has endeavoured to address the potential positioning as an indigenous outsider. The 'third space' identified by Dwyer and Buckle (2009:57) resonates with the researcher in the recognition that a qualitative researcher by the nature of the work is both an insider and an outsider but needs to be alert to potential bias. The concept of a 'fluid identity' which embraces both an insider and outsider role provides a greater demonstration of the complexities within qualitative research. (Dwyer and Buckle 2018: 2)

The researcher was aware of linguistic and cultural barriers which can lead to miscommunication and to misunderstanding (Littig and Pochacker 2014). The levels of experience in working within the Kazakh culture within the Creative Spark projects was very varied which in itself required a sensitivity within the data analysis. Having built a level of trust within the researcher's own partnership with Almaty Management University, and having been part of the UK project management team

at UON, the researcher's sensitivity to the cultural dynamic within the university context was recognised by the participants. Whilst the researcher had not worked directly with the UK and Kazakh interview participants she was known to them as part of the Creative Spark community. The Kazakh participants were given the option of a Russian to English translator but only one participant asked for this facility which was provided through a partner University. The English language skills amongst participants was a reflection of the embeddedness and emphasis of the English language within the Creative Spark programme, devised, funded and delivered by the British Council. The advantages of being an outsider are identified by cross-cultural researchers whereby different perspectives might be provided where cultural norms do not constitute constraints (Coloma 2008) but can in fact lead to otherwise 'meanings and assumptions that may otherwise remain unspoken' (Carter 2004: 348).

Researcher bias within insider research refers to the projecting of the researchers' own personal beliefs experiences and views onto the participants or analysis of data (Greene 2014) but as Aguiler (1981 cited Greene 2014: 26) argues this can be a 'source of insight as well as error'. Steps have been taken to mitigate potential bias through the sample comprising all of the potential project managers and the building of trust with the participants to encourage openness (Yates 2004).

The anonymity of all participants has been maintained through a coding process which is identified in section 5.5.4 and the researcher's credibility in using multiple sources to provide triangulation of the data is cited. The practice of reflexivity requires that the researcher is alert to and takes into account their own

consciousness and is able to exercise a level of distancing (Greene 2014). Through a reflective process the researcher should strive to be both an insider and an outsider to gain the advantages of understanding access and insight whilst not losing the fundamental principles of objectivity within analysis and building conclusions. The researcher achieved this through drawing on previous experience as a commercial agency based qualitative researcher which required high levels of professionalism and extensive training to reduce bias in both data collection and analysis.

5.4 Method

Through adopting an interpretive exploratory approach, the research method chosen was in-depth semi-structured co-expert interviews. The concept of building process knowledge based on both practical experiences and institutional contexts can be achieved through expert interviews (Doringer 2020). As a project manager, the researcher maintained the position of an expert within the interview process with an equal status and position within the Creative Spark Programme. During the researcher's previous 20 years experience as a commercial qualitative researcher she had built the expertise required to engage in expert interviews. Janesick (2001) recommends an awareness to intuitive inclinations and creativity within qualitative interviewing to increase the richness of the data. The use of intuition and to trust one's instincts in pursuing a line of enquiry opens opportunities to delve more deeply and provide the participant with the opportunity to consider alternative viewpoints (Janesick 2001).

Expert interviews have permitted a breadth of experience but there was also a need to be sensitive to the cultural differences (Creswell and Creswell 2019). The ethics associated with this were considered in greater detail in section 5.4.3. By using semi-structured interviews comparison was permitted between the projects within the case study, but different perspectives were pursued (Berg and Lune 2014; Walford 2001) which reflected the variation within each of the projects and the potential for differing viewpoints to emerge.

5.4.1 Sample

To gain a breadth of opinion and to facilitate the contextualising of the data interviews were conducted in 3 phases. This enabled the interviews to be transcribed and initial analysis to inform the subsequent interviews:

- **Phase 1** – Funding body stakeholders responsible for the design and the delivery of the Creative Spark programme (March 2022)
- **Phase 2** – UK project managers responsible for the co-design and the delivery of individual projects within the Creative Spark programme in Kazakhstan (May – July 2022)
- **Phase 3** – Kazakh project managers responsible for the co-design and delivery of individual projects within Kazakhstan (October 2022 – April 2023)

Ten Creative Spark projects were delivered within Kazakhstan involving a total of 11 UK and 14 Kazakh Universities and Organisations. As identified in Table 5.1 below, in four of the partnerships more than one Kazakh University were involved and one project had two UK Universities as part of the partnership. Initial approval to

conduct the study and to complete the research was granted by the Programme Director at the British Council in the UK prior to the thesis proposal being approved by UON (October 2020). The British Council reference for the author's project was EV16042V5S. Ethical approval was granted through UON in December 2020 prior to the start of the fieldwork (ETH2021-0059).

The Institutional partnerships are identified:

Table 5.1 Creative Spark Partnerships in Kazakhstan

UK University	Kazakh University
University of Northampton	Almaty Management University
	Astana IT University
Loughborough University	Nazarbayev University Research and Innovation System (NURIS)
University of Leicester	Atyrau State University
University of East London	Kazakh-American Free University
University of Reading	Kazakh-British Technical University
	Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory
University of Lincoln	Kazakh-Russian International University
	Baishev University
Capital City College Group	The National Chamber of Entrepreneurs Atameken'
Goldsmiths University of London	Impact Hub Almaty
	Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts
Coventry University	Narxoz University

Oxford Brookes University / University of Birmingham	L. N, Gumilyov Eurasian National University
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5.4.2 Interview participants

Two interviews were secured with the programme managers during phase 1:

1. The Programme Manager for the entire Creative Spark Programme in all 7 countries in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Ukraine.
2. The in-country Kazakh Programme Manager responsible for education.

As the total possible sample was limited a census approach was adopted (Yates 2004, Mason 2010) whereby excluding the researcher's own project, all the project leaders in the 21 UK and Kazakhstan HEIs were invited to interview. Whilst project managers from each of the partnerships were invited to interview, a total of 8 project managers accepted. Being too busy was cited as a reason for not being able to take part but responses were not received from all those who were contacted. The resulting sample was comprised of:

- 4 UK project managers in phase 2
- 4 Kazakh project managers in phase 3

In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants and the institutions a coding system has been used. The UK partner and the corresponding Kazakh partners have each been given a code identified in Table 5.2 below. Whilst it is recognised that maintaining anonymity could be challenging given the discreet numbers of organisations involved in the project, names of individual academics and institutions have not been incorporated or attributed to data. Universities and participants were coded to maintain anonymity of participants.

Table 5.2 Interviews conducted with coded participants

Phase of interviews	Participants	Date of interview
1. Stakeholders	SH 1	24/03/2022
	SH2	25/03/2022
2. UK partners	UK 34A	31/05/2022
	UK 19A	17/06/2022
	UK 38A	21/07/2022
	UK 63A	22/07/2022
3. Kazakh partners	KZ 24B	22/10/2022 (Face to face)
	KZ 82A	01/11/2022
	KZ 59B	30/11/2022
	KZ 50A	16/04/2023

Care was taken to ensure participants of the research were given clear guidelines as to the content and context of the interviews and the lengths taken to provide anonymity as identified in section 5.5.1. Decisions not to answer questions or to take part in the study were to be respected but there were no incidences where there was a refusal to take part or to answer specific questions based on the content of the questions.

As a project leader for a Creative Spark programme the researcher was interviewing those within knowledge of the UON project and care was taken to ensure the participants recognised the opportunity for anonymity but also understood the researcher's positionality within the study. The researcher had an alertness to the potential for subjectivity due to insider knowledge which was considered in the data collection and analysis. Questions did not relate to an evaluation or judgement of the performance of individual members of staff in the organisations. The decision was made not to include the researcher's own project and therefore not to interview colleagues within the UON team or within the AlmaU or Astana IT team. The

researcher's position as the project leader and her seniority within the team was felt to have the potential of causing a conflict of interest for the colleagues in UON, AlmaU and Astana IT. The decision to omit the researcher's own project within the study was therefore taken but the experience of running the project has inevitably informed this study.

The Kazakh participants were given the option of a translator or to conduct the interviews in English. The researcher was alert to the fact that the Kazakh participants were speaking in a second language. One participant elected to have a translator which was facilitated within Alma U where a translator was provided for an in-person interview which was conducted during a visit by the researcher to Kazakhstan in October 2022. The Creative Spark project supported the development of English language skills and the Kazakh project leaders were selected within the Kazakh universities as having proficiency in the English language to enable effective partnerships. Whilst simultaneous translation was provided by the British Council at joint events and conferences a large proportion of the Kazakh attendees were able to converse in English. It was therefore unsurprising that the Kazakh participants, with one exception who preferred a translator, were fully able to answer the questions.

5.4.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were undertaken at the proposal stage of this thesis in line with the requirements of the University of Northampton and permissions were sought to undertake the case study analysis formed a part of this process. The

positionality of the researcher was an aspect of this study which needed to be considered in detail due to the potential for researcher bias. The researcher's position has been addressed in section 5.3. In addition, an alertness to the need to triangulate data whilst benefitting from an insider perspective has been considered to ensure this has not unduly influenced the process of data collection and analysis. As a manager of both an academic team and as a programme manager within Creative Spark the potential for the researcher to be regarded as in a position of authority was reflected upon. The purpose of the interviews was to gain the participants' perspective on projects in which the researcher didn't have any direct involvement.

The researcher also used previous experience in conducting qualitative research to build trust in the initial stages of the interview and to reassure the participant of the impartiality of the researcher and the importance of maintaining an objective viewpoint. This was achieved through initial explanations of the process of the interview and confirmation of the way in which the data would be handled before commencing the recording. Ice breaker questions which included encouraging participants to discuss the EEE within their own institution before investigating the Creative Spark project were designed to put the respondent at ease through discussing familiar topics.

5.5 Interviews

5.5.1 Participants and invitations

Interview participants were recruited from the HEI organisations which delivered the Creative Spark programme in the UK and Kazakhstan and with stakeholders from

the funding organisation. A list of all project managers and contact details was provided by the British Council and participants were invited to interview by email. Although restrictions to travel through the COVID-19 pandemic had been lifted the use of video conferencing had become a very common method of communicating. The use of the Teams platform negated the necessity to travel and provided a clear time bound commitment to participants to contribute to the research. The use of videoconferencing could be problematic in focus group research due to the altered dynamic of a group experience through being in a remote situation. However, the use of videoconferencing for a one-on-one interview provides for a similar experience and the opportunity for the participant to be in their own environment which can lead to a more comfortable and convenient experience (Archibald *et al.* 2019).

Participants were provided with participant information which identified the purpose of the study, the context for participants' contribution, the data handling strategy and the use of a coding system to protect participant's anonymity. An example of the participant information form can be found in appendix 1.

Consent for participation in the qualitative work was obtained from all participants. Once participants had agreed to take part and completed the consent form, the participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any point and to decline to answer specific questions. None of the participants took the option to withdraw or decline questions and all gave full and complete interviews.

Electronic signatures were used unless the interviews were face to face in which case a physical signature was gained. The completed, signed forms were scanned if necessary and held electronically in a one drive password protected and encrypted file. An example of a completed consent form can be found in appendix 2. The paper versions were destroyed following the soft copy being generated. The coding for the participants used within the research is held electronically on one drive with password protection. This approach to gathering and storing the data was consistent with GDPR guidelines provided by the University of Northampton.

5.5.2 Interview process

All except one of the interviews were held online using the Teams platform hosted by University of Northampton. The Teams platform enabled a video conference which was recorded and a transcript provided. One face to face interview was conducted during a visit to Kazakhstan in February 2022 when all necessary protocols required in-country were adhered to in relation to COVID-19. This interview was recorded using 2 devices. A clear version was transferred into password protected One Drive on the day of data collection and used for transcribing. The recordings were then deleted from the devices. Translation was required and the researcher was alert to the paraphrasing which the interpreter was undertaking to communicate responses to questions. In order to mitigate a lack of accuracy in the data being gathered the researcher returned to key points and confirmed understanding with the participant. The participant had a good understanding of spoken English but preferred to speak in Russian. The researcher could therefore confirm understanding and the validity of the translated responses with the participant.

All participants were given the right to have their data removed 14 days after participating in the fieldwork, but none made this request. The data comprised recordings and transcripts from individual interviews. The identity of individuals including email addresses and contact details relating who participated has been kept in an encrypted password protected area of One Drive with the coding of the participants and their institutions applied to the transcripts and the recordings.

The coded transcriptions were stored on a password protected area of One Drive in line with UON policy. On completion of the transcripts the voice recordings have been deleted. All raw and processed data from the interviews have been stored in encrypted, password protected folders on One Drive with participant names being coded.

The potential use of this data after the completion of the DBA project will be for academic purposes and can be preserved for future research. The underlying data from this research will be put into datasets and accessible 12 months after completion in the University of Northampton's Research Information System PURE repository.

5.5.3 Interview questions

The interview questions were nuanced to take into consideration the different positions of the participants in each of the phases of fieldwork. A thematic approach was taken which took into consideration the breadth of activity within the Creative Spark programme. The researcher was aware that the projects had been diverse

and inconsistent in nature as each partnership designed a bespoke programme. The extent to which consistency in design could be anticipated was limited. An exploratory, phased approach was therefore required to address the aims and objectives of the thesis whilst gathering rich data for analysis which reflected the aims and objectives of the individual projects.

Phase one Stakeholder participant questions for semi structured interviews

1. What was the motivation for the launch of Creative Spark?
2. Can you identify what the main objectives were for the Country-wide programme and whether priorities changed during the programme?
3. To what extent has Creative Spark influenced government policy?
4. To what extent has Creative Spark influenced curriculum and pedagogy?
5. Are you familiar with the Entrepreneurial Competencies framework? [show the framework, explain if not familiar]. Do you know if entrepreneurship education is moving towards this approach?
6. What support is there for Creative Spark start up beneficiaries and the creative economy in the future?
7. What plans are there for sustainability following completion of Creative Spark?
8. What is the anticipated legacy of Creative Spark?

Phase two and phase three project leader questions for semi structured interviews

1. What is the provision of Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Education (EEE) in their Institution and KZ partner institution prior to project – both in curriculum and extra-curricular?
2. What were the original objectives of Creative Spark project and have they evolved? In what way?

3. To what extent has EEE curriculum and pedagogy been embedded through the project?
4. Has staff training taken place and has the project influenced academic staff development?
5. Are you familiar with the Entrepreneurial Competencies framework? [show the framework, explain if not familiar]. To what extent is entrepreneurship education is moving towards this approach?
6. Do you have plans for sustainability following completion of Creative Spark?
7. Is there any evidence of any influence on educational policy in Kazakhstan?
8. What would you anticipate the legacy of the project might be in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, training and extra-curricular activities?

5.5.4 Coding and analysis

Videoconference data from the Teams platform produced transcripts. The interviews ranged between 40 and 64 minutes. A total of 486 minutes was recorded which resulted in transcripts providing 59,076 words. The voice generated transcripts were inaccurate in places so the transcribed data was cleaned through replaying the interview, editing where necessary to reflect the actual words spoken by the participant and ensuring the transcript was an accurate reflection of the actual interview. This initial 'cleaning' of the data provided the researcher with an initial opportunity to review the participants' responses and to start considering how the coding frame might be structured. An example of a transcript can be found in appendix 3. Transcripts were uploaded into NVIVO software for analysis.

The analysis of the transcripts followed the phases from the interviews:

The first phase of analysis was for the stakeholder interviews who gave the rationale and background for the Creative Spark programme. Participants were

also encouraged to share their experience of the programme and to expand in areas pertaining to their particular role within the project.

The second transcripts to be analysed were those of the UK academics whereby the nodes were increased to reflect the additional areas of interest specific to running the projects. Lastly the Kazakh interviews were analysed which gave further insight into the projects from the Kazakh perspective. The nodes were not increased in the last phase but the differing viewpoints were considered in the analysis.

The process of developing the nodes within NVIVO started with the first 2 transcripts in phase one. Whilst the nodes followed closely the research questions, these were re-organised within the coding frame to enable a more logical development of the analysis and to reflect the emphasis within the interviews. This led to 5 key areas being evaluated and forming the higher order nodes:

- Curriculum Development
- Design of Creative Spark
- Entrepreneurial Skills
- Influence on Education policy of Kazakhstan
- Success factors for Creative Spark

The nodes incorporated additional topic areas which were added due to the content discussions. An example of this is 'Quality of enterprise education' which was not specifically identified in the questions but was brought into the discussion by the participants and through probing questions.

Once the coding frame had been designed in the first phase the remaining transcripts were imported into NVIVO and re-configured within the nodes. The second phase with UK project managers resulted in additional nodes being incorporated in response to the data, an example being 'entrepreneurial skills' which hadn't been discussed in the first phase interviews. Where additional nodes were added, previous transcripts were re-visited and re-coded if necessary to ensure that any newer nodes accurately reflected the full discussion and complete analysis was enabled. The third phase comprised Kazakh project managers and the transcripts were again analysed using the nodes which had been built during the previous two phases. The data did not require any further nodes to be added at this final stage.

The analysis of the data concentrated upon investigating the key topic areas and ensuring the breadth of experience and opinion were captured. The themes which provide the structure for the results chapter as identified in section 6.1 have emerged from the coded data analysis. As themes emerged within the data analysis the literature was re-visited to identify any gaps and to enable greater critical analysis of the data in chapters 6 and 7.

Table 5.3 NVIVO coding for analysis

The screenshot shows the NVivo software interface. On the left is a hierarchical tree of nodes, and on the right is a table summarizing the data for each node.

Name	Files	References	C
Curriculum development		7	70 1
European Comptences Framework		6	20
Extracurricular activities		5	23
Impact of COVID 19		3	13
Quality of enterprise education		7	43
Design of Creative Spark		7	32 1
Project activities design		6	27
Rationale for Creative Spark		4	12
Entrepreneurial skills		8	69 1
Creativity skills		3	4
Employability skills		7	14
English language skills		4	12
Influence of CS on Educational policy		7	35 0
Educational policy KZ		6	19
Success factors for CS		7	44 1
Outcomes for CS		7	36

5.6 Secondary data analysis

Secondary data was derived from a range of sources including:

Presentations by project managers at Fora organised by the British Council

Baseline study reports for Creative Spark and for the Fashion Industry

Monitoring by the British Council for each year of project delivery

Roadmap meetings with Country partners

Attendance at:

- Creative Spark conference at Oxford University (3rd & 4th September 2019)
- Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan programme managers Roadmap event in Almaty (4th – 7th February 2020)
- Creative Spark roundtable via Teams (18th June 2021)

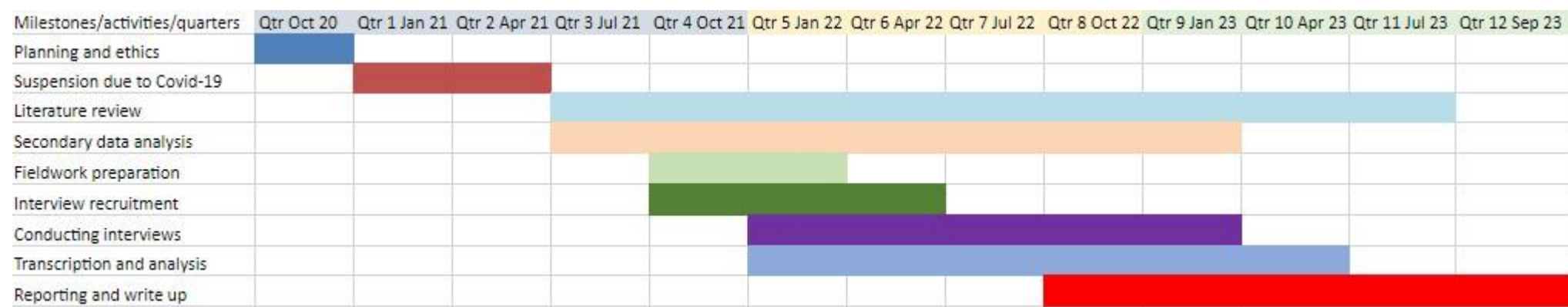
- Cormack Consultancy Group Internationalisation Opportunities for Kazakh Institutions via Zoom (7th December 2022)
- Forum on the role of education in the development of the creative industries in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan – invited to run a workshop with the Kazakh programme leaders, Almaty (21st October 2022)
- UK-KZ 9th Intergovernmental Commission round table ‘Strengthening inter-state links through Higher Education Co-operation’, London (1st February 2023)

5.7 Timeline

The gathering of data was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic which impacted the University sector both in the UK and in Kazakhstan as all teaching had to be delivered online and significant disruption to working practices made the gathering of data problematic in the anticipated window. In addition the researcher was granted a suspension of studies during February to August 2021 due to the work pressures during the period of the pandemic. Table 5.4 identifies the timeline for the thesis.

This chapter has outlined the methodology applied to explore the Creative Spark projects and to gain an understanding of the extent to which the projects have influenced EEE within the participating Kazakh Universities. The subsequent two chapters will present the findings from the research and analyse the data in the light of the literature review and theoretical perspectives.

Table 5.4 Timeline



Chapter 6 Case study results and discussion

6.1 Introduction

The essence of this study is how entrepreneurial education is developing in the post-Soviet country of Kazakhstan, a process which has been gradually developing momentum over the past 30 years since independence from the USSR in 1991 (Abdramanova *et al.* 2019, Uvaleyeva *et al.* 2019). The research set out to explore the development of Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Education (EEE) in Kazakhstan using a case study approach supported by qualitative data gathered from within the Creative Spark programme.

This chapter presents the results from the qualitative study which demonstrate the variations within the HEI sector in terms of expertise and skills but also the expectations of both academics and students and the level of interest and preparedness to build EEE into the curriculum. The direct involvement through Creative Spark by UK universities in the creation of curriculum, pedagogy and extracurricular activities in EEE are considered in the cultural, economic and social context within Kazakhstan.

The data gathered will then be presented in the context of the thesis objectives. Firstly an examination of modernisation of the higher education sector in Kazakhstan is undertaken followed by a discussion of how EEE is evolving in this context. Secondly to investigate the nature of the Creative Spark programme and the extent to which it has influenced curriculum and pedagogy through an

examination of the interventions which have taken place, the challenges in achieving interventions, the training of academic faculty and any cultural enablers or barriers have been considered. The third objective is to explore the sustainability of the Creative Spark interventions and identify whether new systems and processes have been introduced which will have a long-term impact. The results pertaining to the third objective are presented and discussed in Chapter 7 which incorporates an exploration of the theoretical implications of the study.

The fieldwork comprised qualitative interviews with UK and Kazakh Creative Spark project leaders and stakeholders involved in the design and monitoring of the programme as detailed in chapter 5. Interview participants have been coded to maintain anonymity. Project leaders from the 4 Kazakh universities have been coded using the initials KZ before their institutional numerical code. Similarly, the 4 UK project leaders have a UK code preceding their institution's number. In addition, two stakeholders were interviewed who had roles overseeing the project and these have a prefix of SH.

The extent to which the Kazakh universities are ready and prepared to engage with a European style of EEE is to be considered in the light of the research in the context of both the cultural fit and political imperative. The research results have been analysed with reference to the literature and secondary research which have provided a context for this study.

A critical analysis of the data being presented in this section has the following themes providing the structure:

- Implementation of the Creative Spark Programme
- The influence of Creative Spark on the Creative Industries
- Modernisation of HEIs and English Language skill development
- Quality of EEE curriculum development and design
- Engagement of industry in the curriculum and student experience
- Limitations and challenges of Creative Spark
- Influence on the education policy in Kazakhstan
- Sustainability and future relationships.

6.2 The implementation of the Creative Spark Programme

As discussed in chapter 4, the stated ambitions of the Kazakh Government to shift towards a more European centric structure of higher education to increase the ability to compete internationally has led to a reform of the education system which was seen specifically between 1995 and 2018 as reforms were put in place to align with the Bologna Process (Adambekova and Amankeldi 2015, Hartley *et al.* 2016, Bogatyreva and Shukusheva 2020). This integration of a European approach to both the structure of the education system and the approach to curriculum and pedagogy has been challenged in terms of the extent to which reforms have actually taken place within universities (Yergebekov and Temirbekova 2012, Tampayeva 2015, Zelvys and Akzholova 2016). The Creative Spark programme was designed to contribute to addressing this gap in the drive to a modernisation of the HEI sector.

As identified in Chapter 3 the three levels which the Creative Spark programme was designed to influence were:

- Systemic level to influence policy and impact industry.

- Institutional level to influence enterprise education within Universities and latterly Colleges
- Beneficiary level to impact students and companies.

([Creative Spark IFF report 2018](#))

Following a bidding process 10 projects were approved by the British Council within Kazakhstan which comprised UK universities and Kazakh universities forming partnerships for the delivery within Kazakhstan. The British Council provided infrastructure including an overall Programme Director, a Programme Manager and in-country programme managers. The latter of these contributed to the research and have been identified as stakeholder (SH) participants.

The objectives of the individual Creative Spark projects varied but were within the same basic concept of raising quality and improving standards of enterprise education through the input and influence of UK HEIs. One of the Stakeholder participants (SH2) explained that the programme required country-level adaptations:

'The only area that we have made a tailor- made intervention is the systemic level, because in every country political context, Unis and stakeholders are different. So the intervention in terms of policy engagement is different in every country. But other than that, all the grant partnerships and individual beneficiary focused interventions were planned the same everywhere.'
(SH 2)

The expectations of the funding body were therefore tailored to the context of each project in terms of the extent to which systemic change might be enabled through Creative Spark. The political and economic landscape as well as the structure of

the HEI sector needed to be considered, this would incorporate the extent to which there was state control over the education sector (Adambekova and Amankeldi . 2015, Hartley *at al.* 2015). The individual projects were designed by partners, responding to individual institutional and local needs and the expertise within the partner institutions.

For example, the researcher's own project concentrated on the fashion industry. Desk research identified the need for a multi-level approach to build an effective cluster within Almaty and to build entrepreneurial skills amongst those working in the fashion industry as well as the student body. UON has specialisms in both entrepreneurship and fashion and the Kazakh partner also worked closely with Kazakh Fashion week and local universities concentrating on fashion and textile design. The project was industry specific and designed to provide entrepreneurial skills, impact the delivery of EEE as well as develop a mechanism for creating an ecosystem within the fashion industry. Similarly projects specialised in Music or the Arts or were more generic and concentrated on building entrepreneurial skills within the faculty and student body without the level of integration within the creative industries.

It is claimed that Kazakhstan has taken a more direct approach to embracing the principles of European education systems in order to facilitate Transnational Education and to foster closer working relationships with European partners than has been seen in its Central Asian neighbours Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Zelvys and Akzhlova 2016). However, the actual integration of systems and processes is not uniform across the country and is impacted by the

nature of the institutions and their role within the wider higher education landscape. This was evidenced through the implementation of the five year Creative Spark programme, the individual projects being designed and delivered on a partnership basis between Kazakh and UK institutions.

The extent to which actual systemic change may be achieved in terms of building a creative economy sector through the Creative Spark intervention is to be examined. The programme designers accepted that the ambitions to develop an ecosystem for the creative economy and to effectively influence entrepreneurship education within the higher education sector were complex and demanding. The complexity was multiplied through the inclusion of 7 partner countries at different stages of development in terms of both university education and the maturity of a creative economy or sector. The ambitions of the programme were therefore questioned by Stakeholder participant 2:

‘The ecosystem of a creative economy sectors is something different and something that should be taken as a separate interaction model or a separate programme, maybe because bringing those two together wasn't always easy.’ (SH 2)

The determination of the skills sets required for success in the sector and the development of these within universities to encourage graduate entrepreneurial activity became the focus of the project. A re-focus on enterprise education with Creative Industries being the context therefore emerged.

‘We decided that our priorities were investing in the quality of education, higher education sector for enterprise education and by hearing what the

feedback we received from the businesses and a creative economy sector.'
(SH2)

The criteria for Creative Spark were however, still broad. It was regarded as being a strength of the programme that there was freedom within the projects to create an approach and set of activities with minimal constraints from the funders:

'This was a big asset of the programme the freedom of choice and design. This helped the Kazakh partners to become experts themselves and they can now help the industry.' (SH 1)

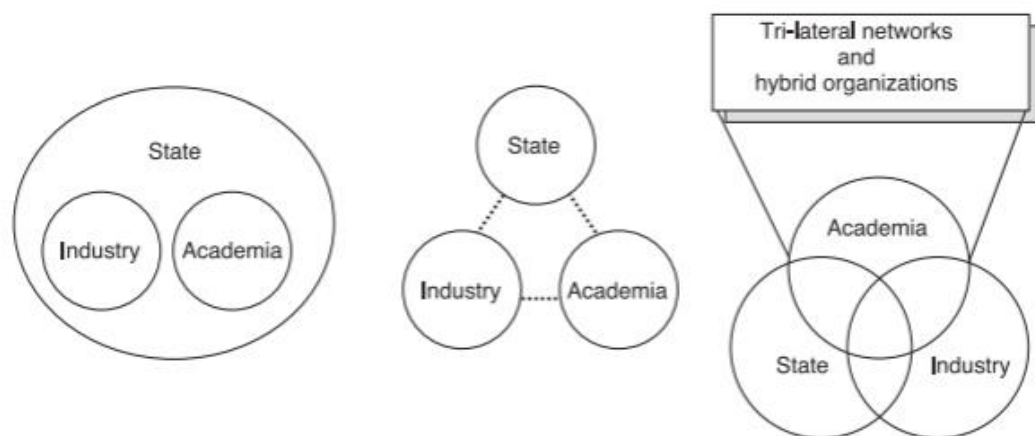
The Creative Spark programme was therefore designed to be delivered across a very large geographical area involving 7 partner countries and although the countries involved were all previously part of the Soviet Union, they maintained significant variances in their educational and political outlook. The adaptation of the programme to each country was combined with the relative influence of the Creative Industries in each locality which formed a further variable. The question as to whether the broad criteria and distinct projects run within HEI partnerships could effectively build momentum in EEE beyond the boundaries of the individual projects will be examined in this study. Addressing the third objective, the sustainability of the interventions are considered in terms of their influence on both the Creative economy and the development of EEE specifically within Kazakhstan in chapter 7.

6.3 The influence of Creative Spark on the Creative Industries

The role of universities as equal partners in creating innovation within industries and supporting governments in achieving economic goals is exemplified in the Triple

Helix model which places universities on an equal footing to government and industry (Etzkowitz 2003). The extent to which there is evidence of a move through the model from the state controlled first phase (Statist) through the separation from the state in the second phase (Laissez faire) and final achievement of integration will be analysed in the light of the primary research data.

Fig 6.1 Triple Helix Model



(Etzkowitz 2003: 302).

The support of both industry and of government is required to facilitate favourable conditions for EEE to be effective (Philpot *et al.* 2011, Radko *et al.* 2021). Whilst the more prominent role of universities in influencing entrepreneurship is leading to a greater profile for academics engaged in entrepreneurial activity, the actual value for both academics and industry is being challenged (Davey *et al.* 2015, Dalmarco *et al.* 2018).

It is claimed by the stakeholder participants that in Kazakhstan a Creative Industry sector per se did not exist prior to the commencement of the Creative Spark Programme. The term 'Creative Industries' is the most common terminology used but there is no specific criteria for this definition due to a lack of consensus on the 'connotation, translation and scope' of the term.

Whilst there was considerable activity relating to aspects of the industry for example the Arts, Music and Fashion, these were operating independently and not attached to a specific sector:

'So at the moment when Creative Spark started, there was no creative industry sector in Kazakhstan, so it's hard to say that there was an understanding in the universities about their influence or contribution to the sector, so the main focus was to develop entrepreneurial skills amongst students' (SH 1)

A gap in the development of skills for the Creative Industries was identified ([Creative Spark IFF report 2018](#)). According to the project managers the incidence of universities specializing in the arts were very limited:

'I think that primarily they wanted to increase interpersonal skills among students who study for creative directions. But what I think that probably there weren't or there aren't enough universities you know, focused in pure creative industries for example artists or fashion.' (SH 1)

The direct involvement of the government in the Statis phase of the Triple Helix was found particularly in Arts based institutions which appeared to still be integrated more directly within government control. Both an Academy of Arts and a

Conservatory were represented in the research and identified the concept of creative entrepreneurship as being a new concept, partly due to government interdependence. The lack of freedom amongst both academics and those working in the arts led to a lack in appreciation as to what opportunities might be available. This was reflected on by managers running project within 2 specialist institutions:

'Previously we thought entrepreneurship and arts couldn't be joined together, it goes separately and business and entrepreneurship, it is not something you can do with arts and fashion. The main problem was that everything connected to arts was sponsored and financed by government, all the theatres, any cultural establishments. Mostly people who do arts were doing it for government.' (KZ 24B)

'There are different types of musical industry, and the concern was mainly because it's in Kazakhstan, classical Kazakh music with the classical national instruments and you know, it's not the pop music. It's not something which is, you know, so the question was how these musicians could survive, and because academia is definitely raising the musicians, not entrepreneurs, they had to adjust as well and see what creative management should be introduced as a subject for the musicians to think about, even to be aware of such things. Because if I look in the past it was mainly if you play the instrument, if you are a musician, somebody else is looking after you, the government is looking after you. You know the performances are organised.' (UK 19A)

The level of interdependence and the amount of control held within the state would therefore have an impact on the extent to which the creative Industries have developed in Kazakhstan. The opportunities for those working in the arts to develop their own creativity was compromised through the funding sources being governmental and the curriculum and output being directed by the state.

Specialisms including music and fine art were taught at separate establishments and investment was driven towards large scale events and activities.

Entrepreneurial freedoms and the encouragement of a flourishing and vibrant arts and culture sector requires a greater emphasis on the funding of local level creativity and the encouragement of individuals to shape the landscape (Kim and Comunian 2022).

The conditions for the Triple Helix to facilitate innovation and entrepreneurship within a sector with the direct co-operation of both government and academia would require greater autonomy in higher education (Adambekova and Amankeldi 2015, Hartley et al 2016). The need for the business environment and the organisations within the creative sector to re-frame relationships with both government and education would be a further underlying principle of applying the Triple Helix model.

The influence of Creative Spark was regarded as timely by the stakeholders as it brought an opportunity to develop focus for the sector and to build specific skills as well as demonstrate the need for greater autonomy within the education sector:

‘This programme was quite, at a very good point in Kazakhstan, political and social economic situation when it came, and I think in the very beginning, it actually went under the arts project and under the art department. So it was monitored by our department, although that was cooperation mainly between higher education institutions and including creative organizations as well.’
(SH 2)

The nature and purpose of the activities proposed for the funding of each project were diverse, reflecting the needs of the specific institutions and their context:

‘actually that is a big plus of the programme because it gave freedom to universities, money wise and direction wise to do what they want under this, you know very broad objective. So that was actually a big asset of the programme. This freedom of choice and designing what you know what the universities wanted to do.’ (SH 1)

The initial ambitions of developing an ecosystem for the creative economy was recognised as being beyond the effective scope of the project, partly due to the flexibility afforded to the individual projects. There had not been sufficient understanding of the capability of the education sector to effectively contribute to the building of a creative economy and the skill sets expected from recent graduates or emerging entrepreneurs were not sufficiently specified. So the concentration shifted towards improving the quality of education:

‘We understand on the journey that I’m working with the creative economy sector or creativity in institutions, the ecosystem of a creative economy sectors is something different and something that should be taken as a separate interaction model or a separate programme’ (SH 2)

To support the requirement to gain a greater understanding of the creative economy the British Council commissioned a mapping of the sector to build a robust definition which was consistent with other national mapping exercises, and to identify the scale within Kazakhstan (Pratt *et al.* 2018). The report identifies a growing sector in which creative industries businesses numbered 18 000 which represented 3.8% of the total businesses registered. Activity was concentrated in the city of Almaty which had been the capital during soviet rule (45%) and the post-independence capital Astana (17%). The emphasis within entrepreneurial activity was on higher

added value services such as advertising, architecture and software programming (over 90%) with the 'classic' definition of Arts, Entertainment and recreation representing a small proportion of activity (Pratt *et al.* 2018).

To respond to this evolving landscape, it was incumbent on Creative Spark to ensure the projects were also evolving and addressing emerging needs. Not all the partnerships were maintained throughout the 5 years which led to a revision in both the partners involved and the focus of the projects. A change in both institutions and activity was identified by a stakeholder participant (Codes have been used to maintain anonymity of the institutions):

'U48 began with a social enterprise emphasis during their partnership with U11. When this ended and they started working with U97 when a gap analysis revealed there was a lack of information about the legal frameworks for the creative industries, so their focus moved towards this niche and a greater emphasis on curriculum development and research.' (SH 1)

There is evidence that the level of interest and interaction amongst the student body in entrepreneurship was heightened through Creative Spark. Whilst entrepreneurship modules had previously existed within the institutions, the nature of learning and teaching involved an emphasis on the theory and not practice. The approach was not fully supported through connections with industry and relied upon case material rather than personal interactions. The move towards greater connectivity with industry was reflected on by a Kazakh project manager who identified a change in practice which also had an impact on the students:

‘So this was like officially, but it wasn't so effective. But after we involved in Creative Spark project and we're interacting with professors who are in from the real world of business. And also we were interacting with a local businessman, business people and business government structures and all of them were interacting with our students. And it was very effective. I found that. And that programme had the sparkle eyes of students.’ (KZ 82A)

There are indications that a recognition of the value of greater connectivity between universities and industry was beginning to emerge. The initial stage advocated by Etzkowitz (2003) whereby strategic alliances with industry are instigated is in evidence. The second stage of one part of the helix influencing another is also in evidence. The question as to whether this will develop into mutually beneficial trilateral relationships which have a significant long-term impact on EEE is to be determined.

The initial concept for the Creative Spark programme was fully developed into a range of projects which responded to localised needs. The Tbilisi Statement ([Tbilisi Statement 21st November 2018](#)) was a broad ambition which was devised to give a general direction of travel whilst recognising the nuances within the requirements of the 7 programme countries and more specifically the location and nature of the HEIs involved in the projects. The advancement of EEE is referred to explicitly in the statement which is regarded as supporting social and economic development in the region. As identified in chapter 4, the Kazakh government have embarked on a direction of travel to modernise the Kazakh HEI system in line with a European style approach (Yeleussov *et al.* 2015). An aspect of the modernisation agenda is the development of English language skills (Aubakirova *et al.* 2019, Tlepbergen *et al.* (2022).

6.4 Modernisation of HEIs and English language skill development

The British Council, a UK centric organisation was funding and delivering a programme designed to link UK and Kazakh Universities in a very direct way through project delivery. The English language was to be used as the common language for communication throughout the programme. This was coupled with an intent for greater language skills to be developed within the Kazakh projects. This is consistent with the government initiative 'Trinity of Languages' (Mauderbekova *et al* .2015: 249) to support the Bologna Process (Bogatyreva and Shukuskeva 2020) and increase the emphasis towards multilingualism in Kazakhstan. The extent to which this was a valuable aspect of the programme and in turn valued by the institutions and beneficiaries was investigated.

The British Council had an agenda to improve English language skills throughout the region through a series of online workshops and access to resources. ([Creative Spark British Council](#)). Since the Bologna three-cycle system of education based on a European model was introduced in 2010 the incidence of teaching in English has increased dramatically in Kazakhstan (Tampayeva 2015). The intention of the adoption of English as a medium of instruction has been to increase the employability of students and to facilitate greater opportunities for accessing international markets (Tlepbergem *et al.* 2022). The concept of the 'Trinity of languages' was launched in 2007 to bring English, an **International** language to the same status as the Kazakh **State** language and the Russian **Interethnic** (Aksholakova and Ismailova 2013). This resulted in greater emphasis on students having the opportunity to study in the three languages. The Trinity approach has

been further supported by a decree in 2019 that the Kazakh language will be further modernized and become based on the Latin alphabet ([Language policy 2019](#)). The challenges which the Trinity approach creates are multifaceted due to the language proficiency of the lecturers, the tensions between an emphasis on a subject versus the English language, the availability of literature and resources and cultural dimensions (Seitzhanova *et al.* 2015).

The value of learning English is emphasised by the Kazakh academics:

‘students, or I mean youngsters, they have to adapt to the world because most of the books and research and everything nowadays, you know, everything is in English. So without knowing the language they will not be, they will not have the access to have to the original documents to original research and original news.’ (KZ 63A)

The language skills of the academics were called into question particularly in the College sector where it was claimed that the students can have a higher level of English than the staff teaching them, primarily through their exposure to popular culture and social media:

‘Yes language is difficult and we have all of the content that we’ve created. It’s available in English, but it is also available in Russian. Generally, within the colleges you find actually that in quite a few of the colleges the students have got a higher level of English than the staff that are teaching in them’ (UK 34A)

The language skills within a specialist music institution were equally restricted resulting in resources being provided in both English and Russian so as to be inclusive:

‘This course is in Russian and in English. The language is a secondary yeah? music doesn’t have a language, but however, how to communicate with people that in the English group is very small in U50 and we wanted to make sure that every person will understand’ (KZ 50A).

The Bolashaq grants identified in Chapter 4 have enabled staff mobility within Creative Spark project partnerships facilitating visits to the UK:

‘We’re able to select 20 academics from each of the universities that can teach the programme we are proposing to deliver the joint programme. OK, so they’ve identified the best 20 and currently they are going through an English language programme that will help them in applying for the Bolashaq scheme.’ (UK 63A)

This interconnectivity between the UK and Kazakh Institutions may lead to greater impact within the sphere of entrepreneurship and the creative industries but it is not likely to be a significant development given the current emphasis politically towards science and technology (Nurbek 2023).

Overall, despite the impetus for Bolashaq grants and the emphasis on developing English language skills, the English Programme provided within all Creative Spark projects was less successful than anticipated by the British Council. The reason for this was attributed to the wide range of activities being engaged in:

‘I think the English programme wasn't as I was hoping for and has not resulted in as much as I was hoping for because giving the enterprise skills, curriculum, model, training, workshops and all these activities, plus trying to improve the language skills of these young people didn't go hand in hand. It didn't go as perfectly as I was hoping for. ‘ (SH 2)

To support both English language development and as a mechanism for developing entrepreneurial mind sets, a competition was run through all partner countries. The aim was to encourage young people to develop innovative start up ideas, the competition was managed centrally by a UK partner. The Big Idea Challenge involved a video pitching competition with four categories:

1. Digital technology
2. Social impact
3. Creative
4. Climate change (supporting the COP26 programme)

[\(Big Idea Challenge\)](#)

Entrants from each partner institution were narrowed down to 3 per category, per country. The outcome data for year 4 (section 3.2) has identified 1064 new business ideas generated and 237000 engaged in the competition through participation or voting (de Braekeleer 2022). The competition provided a mechanism for all the partner country projects to be brought together with finalists from each country competing for prizes. Preparation for the competition included visits to the UK to engage in entrepreneurship bootcamp activities to build the skills necessary for the competition:

‘We selected seven teams, they were from different areas, but most of them, yeah, they were business very related they were not the students of U51 or U50 they were the young entrepreneurs in Almaty and their business related to the music and sphere of the music and with seven teams we went to the

U19 and we have the one week boot camp let's call it. Where they made the people at U19 the professors who were responsible for creative industries'. (KZ 50A)

Despite the high level of engagement which saw 1,064 new business ideas being generated (de Braekeleer 2022), the competition has been criticised for the high level English skills required whereby both the entry and video pitch had to be in English which was a barrier for some as well as the college students feeling intimidated by the perceived level:

'We've struggled with the big idea challenge to get good numbers. Each year we've had a few entries and but it is a handful of entries.....these are vocational students and we're showing them the fantastic entries that have been submitted in in previous years, it can feel quite intimidating for them' (UK 34A)

The Big Idea Challenge competition is deemed to form part of the legacy for the project which will be further explored in section 7.3.

The importance of the English language in the positioning of the education in Kazakhstan has been demonstrated through the governments' commitment to the Trinity of languages and the launch of the Latin alphabet (Ministry of Justice 2019). The role of Creative Spark in assisting with building skills and competences to support academics and students is therefore an aspect of the programme which supports government policy but has been limited in impact.

The influence on curriculum development and the building of entrepreneurship and enterprise education is now considered to address specifically the second objective for the study:

To investigate the nature of the Creative Spark programme within participating HEIs and the extent to which it influenced curriculum and pedagogy for the development of EEE in Kazakhstan.

6.5 Quality of EEE curriculum development and design

The alignment with the Bologna Process which has been encouraged by the Kazakh Government (Bogatyreva and Shukuskeva 2020) required structural changes within the education landscape (Tampayeva 2015) and a move towards competence-based pedagogy (Zelvys and Akzholva 2016). The Creative Spark project was designed to support the Bologna Process in the development of transnational educational relationships (Piven & Pak 2015) with an emphasis on upskilling academics (Altynbassov *et al.* 2015) and strengthening the language skills within HEIs (Aubakirova *et al.* 2019).

For this transition to be effective a recontextualising of education is required to consider the educational landscape, skill base and cultural differences which is captured through the concept of educational borrowing (Tampayeva 2015). The extent to which educational borrowing has been facilitated by the Creative Spark programme requires a consideration of the adaptation of UK centric curriculum, pedagogy and extracurricular EEE related activities. The outcome data presented in chapter 3 demonstrated widespread activity albeit at a macro level within the Creative Spark programme. The extent to which there has been an influence on

curriculum and pedagogy will be evaluated and the support for EEE within the hierarchy of institutions will be considered.

6.5.1 Curriculum and pedagogy

The impetus for university education to incorporate the development of entrepreneurial skills had been previously exemplified through a Kazakh Governmental mandate that universities should all provide an ‘Introduction to Entrepreneurship’ module as an elective for students. This 90 hour 6 credit module had been embedded into curriculum ([Curriculum Policy 2018](#)):

‘This is the one of the requirements of our government. It was introduced around 10 years ago, so every student has to be literate on entrepreneurial theme.’ (KZ 82A)

However, the effectiveness of a compulsory module as a strategy has been called into question by the participants from a number of perspectives. Whilst it is recognised that there is no one approach to teaching Entrepreneurship (Neergaard and Christensen 2017, Gabrielsson *et al.* 2020) a competence-based pedagogy is commonplace within the UK (Zelvys and Akzholva 2016). The extent to which this has been developed to is difficult to assess within the constraints of the Creative Spark project. The more business orientated universities were identified as naturally developing a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship education, as identified by SH 1 who reflected on the developments in Creative Spark in addition to the partner university of the researcher which had developed curriculum prior to Creative Spark:

‘U48 or U35 are doing full degrees and incorporating into the curriculum, so let’s say it’s like 3 universities who are actually with academic awards that are doing it. Others are training and developing hubs rather than designated academic courses’ (SH1)

It could be argued that institutions which concentrated on Business and Management had the skill sets within the teaching teams to provide an effective experience for learners. The researchers’ experience in supporting an institution towards embedding curricula and pedagogy which reflects a European style of EEE led to the development of an incubator and a minor award in Entrepreneurship in the Kazakh partner university. This partner institution invested considerably in both the infrastructure and the training of academics in driving a move away from the Soviet style of education within this subject (Zelvys and Akzholva 2016). The extent to which this learning had been implemented in a cohesive way to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation was limited and dependent upon the leadership within the institutions. Embedding of EEE requires a greater commitment from the institution than simple design of a new programme (Davey *et al.* 2015) if actual infrastructure needs to be provided to support the development of new businesses (Philpot *et al.* 2011, Hagg and Gabrielson 2020, Cunningham *et al.* 2021). This factor has been a challenge within the researcher’s own institution whereby the infrastructure to support innovation and start-ups is complex and requires significant investment.

There is evidence that the level of interest and interaction amongst the student body in entrepreneurship was heightened through Creative Spark. Whilst

entrepreneurship modules had previously existed within the Institutions, the nature of learning and teaching involved an emphasis on the theory and not practice. The approach was not fully supported through connections with industry and relied upon case material rather than personal interactions:

'It's very important, we agree however there is a lack of entrepreneurial skills because even when they are coming, they don't know even the basics of finance. They don't know the basics of management they told us we don't need the general information that we told them before. Yeah, we need specific cases from our industry. (KZ 50A)

This is in contrast with the approach taken in the UK which encourages a greater connectivity with businesses with less reliance on case material:

'We tend to organize every quarter and events for businesses, and we work really, with businesses. And then the actually the objective is to invite you know, expert from the industry to come and serve as guest lecturers to our students. So we tend to do that frequently, right. Most modules maybe twice or three times. You know, we're in the module delivery cycle. The academics would invite an expert from the industry to come and speak to students. So we tend to do that. I work with colleagues in finding such experts.' (UK 63A)

Participants reported that the more arts-based organisations did not only lack the skills amongst the faculty to provide the relevant connections and education but there was far less rationale and imperative due to the nature of governmental involvement in the Arts. The traditional route for those studying Music, Arts, Drama and creative subjects were primarily based on governmental mandates as to what should be delivered. This was an aspect of the Soviet style of state intervention which had remained in place following independence (Kim and Comunian 2022).

Employment opportunities and the funding associated with the outputs were also identified as being primarily through the State.

Entrepreneurism was seen as a branch of business management studies rather than relevant to the teaching of creative arts subjects. The lack of space in the curriculum and concentration on building subject (or instrument) specific skills were identified as factors reducing the impact of Creative Spark projects:

‘U51 and many other universities that are related with creative business, especially music or something like that. They have very strict curriculum, no changes. As I understood. Not so many free electives and we were just told that this kind of discipline as entrepreneurship or introduction to management must be required or at least inside of the elective courses.’ (KZ 50A)

As a result, prior to Creative Spark any entrepreneurial education was actually provided outside of the curriculum as a free-standing elective course delivered by a partner institution which the students could take online in addition to their studies. No provision was made within courses to facilitate this despite there being an interest in building entrepreneurial skills.

A change in mind set to recognise the value for both the students and the academics within the institutions would be required (Haag and Gabrielson 2020, Cunningham *et al.* 2021). The opportunity to build in a major and a minor stream within a degree programme due to a relaxation in the requirements of the State may provide more flexibility and an opportunity for a broader curriculum but whether this is being implemented is questioned:

'For example, compared with three years ago there is more academic freedom. Now we had a chance to experience this before, but I know that others university start to do it so a major, minor major that you mean yeah program specification and the minor is like additional one from other school' (KZ 50A)

The opportunity for cross-faculty curriculum could therefore be made available but the extent to which this was being embraced was not established. There was a recognition that curriculum and teaching would need to be adapted to the specific needs of the institutions and learners, this was identified by a UK participant (UK 19A) who researched their Kazakh partners to determine criteria and developmental needs:

'We didn't have a perception thinking that, OK, we know we we've got we Business School, we know what they have to do. We try to listen to the musicians themselves.....so listen to the musicians all through the survey and questionnaires and understanding what it would be and for example. Now they said that it would be interesting for them to learn the experience of other counterpart other musicians like in the UK, how they almost compare the notes, how they survive.' (UK 19A)

Equally interviewee KZ 24B stated that the main objective of the Creative Spark project was to implement entrepreneurship as an academic subject and they investigated the mind set competences required independently of their UK partner who provided greater support on the practicalities of business start-up. A confidence that entrepreneurship education will become 'normal' in arts institutions over the next 5 – 10 years was supported by Philpot *et al.* (2011) and the need for this to become part of the ethos of the institution.

The educational system in Kazakhstan has been moving towards a European approach with the decision to join the Bologna Process (Maudarbekova *et al.* 2015, Lodhi and Ilyassova-Schoenfeld 2022). An example of a competences model was introduced to participants to further evaluate the extent to which European style of education has been implemented within the Kazakh HEIs. The Entrepreneurship Competences Framework (EntreComp Bacigalupo *et al.* 2016) was introduced to the participants during the interviews:

Fig 6.2 EntreComp framework

(Bacigalupo *et al.* 2016).



As identified in chapter 2 section 2.6, the EntreComp framework has been criticised in terms of the extent to which it has been tested in industry (Cambell *et al.* 2020) and a lack of sensitivity to entrepreneurial characteristics (Joensuu-Salo *et al.* 2022). But the value of the approach in programme design has been recognised to introduce competence-based curriculum (Dinning 2019). The extent to which this or similar frameworks were being used and their value was investigated with participants. The Kazakh participants identified that they were working on something similar to the EntreComp but were not familiar with the breadth of the framework. There was also some confusion between competencies and learning outcomes which are also being introduced through the move towards a UK centric model of HE. Whilst the framework was seen as being of value it was questioned as to whether such an approach would be taken by Kazakhs due to an impatience to get to the end goal of 'into action' (green) . The framework indicates this should be preceded first by creativity and identifying opportunities (blue), followed by identification of resource needs (orange) followed by taking the initiative and applying a plan. It was felt that the research and planning stages are often bypassed in order to move straight to a solution:

'I think in Kazakhstan it goes first from green. I mean like the so first it goes green. Then it's blue, then it's orange. It's a bit reversed.....In Kazakhstan it changes so rapidly, like where they live here. You know you can find in the same spot like two or three shops changing. So you don't get that longevity so you don't get that passing down of expertise and you don't get that sort of consistency.' (SH 1)

This view was supported by a project participant who identified a lack of willingness to engage in a structured approach to problem solving and the role of mentors to try and encourage a more considered approach:

‘They want just to get the solution or a real decision how to resolve all the type of the problems, but now plus the business and like they expect that somebody will give them the pill they that they will get the success and prosperity but it doesn’t work. Yeah. So mentor just goes there. OK, really the mentor just shows the way.’ (KZ 50A)

This demonstrates the challenges in implementing educational borrowing (Tampayeva 2015) whereby educational models and practices are adapted within post-Soviet countries. This points to a need to recontextualise the environment and to recognise the cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurial endeavours within Kazakh society (Kuraev 2015). The development of effective teaching strategies to support entrepreneurial endeavours requires a recognition of the challenges within the business environment which does not necessarily support start-ups or the building of an effective analysis of a market prior to launch. Similarly the availability of mentors to support cultural and entrepreneurial endeavours is restricted through the challenges in developing more of an urban culture (Kim and Comunian 2022). Whilst the Chamber of Commerce Atakemen provides support for start ups the resources within this organisation are very stretched, again reducing the opportunity for mentoring support.

Starting of a new business has reportedly become much more straightforward and accessible in the past 5 years according to participant KZ 24B who claims that there is no taxation for a turnover below 3m Tenge (£5000) and it has become more

straightforward to open a business online through a government portal. This could be contributing to the number of businesses which open and subsequently fail, as identified by participant SH1 who identified a lack of research, experience and entrepreneurial expertise as being at the base of this.

An attitude of moving straight into action was exemplified as the creation of new entrepreneurial businesses amongst academic staff is being actively encouraged in one of the participating universities. Resources to facilitate start-ups (accountancy legal, IT and seed funding) are being made available within this private institution (KZ 82) to directly encourage entrepreneurial activity:

'When someone starts the business and I am encouraging our professors, I'm saying to them that I can do all of these things because our university already has. I mean 10, I think 10 accountants we have we have 10 IT specialists around 5 lawyers, we have everything. So I'm saying I'm telling to them that you don't need to open a company. Even we have the company and you just do the business itself and I will support you with all of this.'
(KZ 82A)

The UK partners were not aware of the specific Entrecomp framework but were using competencies as the basis for curriculum development. The content and impetus of the framework was familiar to all participants as a broad approach which was being taken whether within curriculum or extra-curricular:

'most of the elements in here, there are things that would normally do OK in terms of the stages, the stages, you know that students and even non-students should follow when it comes to, you know, turning ideas to real business.' (UK 63A)

The value of the framework in encouraging a more considered approach to problem solving and a need for a greater emphasis on research and analysis was emphasised by a UK participant:

'If you do the problem solving project with them, they'll tell you the problem and then they'll tell you the answer in two minutes. Not having done any research at all.....Because they think they are clever enough to jump to the conclusion.' (UK 38A)

Encouraging problem solving amongst academics who have traditionally not challenged or questioned approaches to learning and teaching could further compound the levels of impetus in re-designing curriculum. The project which worked with a range of colleges confirmed this assertion:

'Another thing we observed with the teachers is still on the whole, and this is generalising because there is difference between institutions and between teachers, but there is a mentality for doing what is asked of you. You need to plant the seed first of all. They don't always necessarily think for example, that actually this is really relevant to the curriculum or we need to do more to kind of embed this within our curriculum' (UK 34A)

The limitations of the model were recognised by UK participants who, whilst recognising the elements, questioned the simplicity of the approach:

'in real life so many businesses don't go through this cycle... things happen in different ways depending on circumstance, context, availability of funding support people get. (UK 63A).

This supports the work by Seikkula-Leino *et al.* (2021) which emphasises the need to take a more flexible approach than might be indicated by the framework. A tension between didactic and pragmatic approaches to venture creation programmes is emphasised by Haneberg *et al* (2022) who furthermore consider the multidimensional nature and the need to leverage learning opportunities through 'failed' ventures which is not effectively addressed within the EntreComp framework.

The Creative Spark programme did not have any specific requirements other than the inclusion of English Language training through the British Council. However, participants commented that had a framework like this been part of the project there would have been greater consistency in approach. Despite the limitations of the framework, had the EntreComp or a similar framework been an integral part of the Creative Spark project a less ad hoc and more consistent approach would have been achieved. This could have facilitated the building of a more comprehensive network of institutions engaged in entrepreneurial activity with a greater degree of commonality. The commonality of activities between the projects may have led to more coherent outputs and opportunities for the sharing of best practice.

The degree of support which was forthcoming within the hierarchy of the institutions emerged as a key factor in the development of EEE.

6.5.2 Academic support and training

A significant aspect of the Creative Spark programme was to expose Kazakh academics to UK working practices and pedagogies as part of the move towards educational reforms. If educational borrowing is regarded as being at the basis of

this intervention, previous research indicates that the influence of the leadership within educational institutions is a significant factor (Harris *et al* 2016: 167). The attitudes of management towards the Creative Spark interventions provided insights into the extent to which changes were being implemented at an institutional level.

An impact of Creative Spark was recognised as the attention it has received from top management in some, but not all of the participating Kazakh universities who were now ready to support this agenda as recognised by participant KZ 24B. It was claimed that the project changed the understanding of entrepreneurship and has influenced attitudes towards taking arts-based degrees:

‘We didn’t think the arts could be entrepreneurial based. Something that we can make business in. These changes are what Creative Spark brought here. ‘ (KZ 24B)

Examples of where this has been embraced by the leadership amongst the participant institutions resulted in significant changes being implemented.

Participant KZ 82A identified the change he perceived in his institution following the Creative Spark interventions;

‘Everyone was now working together towards a common goal – students, professors and top management were on the same page. It brought a different level of interaction between us like partners working together.’ (KZ 82A)

This was not the case however in all arts based institutions. Less enthusiasm towards the development of entrepreneurial skills was found with a willingness to listen but not necessarily act on making changes towards building entrepreneurial skills into curriculum or extra-curricular activities:

‘Actually they are open, they’re smiling. We had many meetings. Yeah, but this progress from the meeting to the real actions didn’t happen’ (KZ 50A).

The extent to which the inclusion of entrepreneurship education should be a standard provision needs to be challenged as there is an implied suggestion that EEE will be valuable for all students. Not all students will have a desire or interest in becoming entrepreneurial in terms of business start-up (Thompson 2009). It can however be argued that developing an entrepreneurial mind-set which encourages creativity, opportunity spotting and innovation can be valuable transferrable skills to be embraced in whatever career path is chosen. The nuances of entrepreneurship were not necessarily being recognised according to a UK participant:

‘So, and this is something that relates the particularly to Central Asia where as soon as the word entrepreneurship is heard. There’s an immediate rush that this is a panacea and solution to everything. But to be honest, if you’re the National Gallery, you need intrapreneurs, not entrepreneurs. (UK38A)

Within this context the concept of being enterprising not just entrepreneurial has been explored. There is strong evidence from participants that activities leading towards an ability to view opportunities in such a way as to create flexible careers which involve building marketable skills is emphasised:

‘And their future is earning as independent individuals. So they may be part of a creative industries workforce, working as I say independently for themselves. But what they've done is analysis of what they have in terms of knowledge, skills, approaches and where that may be marketable.’ (UK 38A)

UK partners recognised the need to flex the development of entrepreneurial education to the local environment in the context of a gradual move from the Soviet education model and delivery of knowledge to a more western approach of delivery of techniques for problem solving (Adambekova and Amankeldi 2015). The conditions identified by Yeleussov *et al.* (2015) to achieve a transition through the Bologna Process includes reducing the gap between the quality of education and real world practice.

A Kazakh project which exemplified this approach concentrated on working with the equivalent of UK Further Education Colleges. A lack of understanding about entrepreneurship was a challenge faced within the colleges due to a focus on employment in industry despite the nature of many courses which might lead to entrepreneurial activity. The concept of self-employment and building skills for freelancing were not evident in the curriculum. Practical courses such as hairdressing or tourism incorporated financial training but support was required through external agencies Atakemen and Talap to support more entrepreneurial education (UK34A). These support agencies could offer elements of mentoring and start-up support but did not provide the depth of understanding and embedding within the college experience to provide effective long term business start-ups. A comprehensive programme of training and support was launched to train a core of academics from 9 colleges. They were brought to the UK for training with the

partner and become 'masters in enterprise'. Their subsequent role was to further disseminate the training amongst the 19 colleges in the partnership.

Many of these colleges were based in the regions where there is less use of English so the in-country training was enabled through this translation of materials and training workshops into Russian. The development of enterprise hubs which operated outside the curriculum with specialists who had completed the training facilitated an extra-curricular mechanism for providing support. As identified by Hodge *et al.* (2014) the move from theoretical education to experiential in the west has been to facilitate adaptations to the speed of change in markets. The very practical approach taken by this project brought widespread impact across the college network through an effective dissemination of training of academics and the delivery of workshops:

'We brought 9 of them, one from each college over to London for 2 weeks to do an intensive training programme around entrepreneurship and showed how we teach entrepreneurship, embed it in our curriculum and how we offer it in the enterprise hubs and how we offer entrepreneurial activities around the college. Then in year 2 we looked to cascade the learning to the new colleges that came on board. Using the initial 'masters in enterprise' as we called them and with support from Atameken we looked them to train the teachers up and share the information with them. So they had an understanding of what our expectations were in terms of entrepreneurial content. (UK 34A)

This very direct intervention which involved both training of academics and the dissemination through a cascade mechanism meant the subsequent training could be in Russian and be culturally harmonised with those working in colleges in the

regions where there is more restricted use of English. The provision of resources to support this initiative can further lead to an element of sustainability.

6.5.3 The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic

The Covid 19 pandemic occurred in the third and fourth years of the Creative Spark project and resulted in a change of focus for the projects and the relationship between the UK and Kazakh partners. The pandemic brought a specific need within the specialist arts institutions to find alternative ways of operating and reaching their target audiences. The impact on arts institutions was severe across the country as all performances were stopped and the level of resilience was compromised through the lack of infrastructure which had a significant impact on the Kazakh performers (Khlystova *et al.* 2022).

Whilst advantages were recognised in the opportunity to build skills in digitalised sharing of music and performances and reach a wider audience outside of Kazakhstan, the need for students to become more independent and able to control their own future became paramount. The influence of the UK partners was invaluable as a new mind set became developed as it was identified they would like to learn from those in the UK and how they manage with uncertainty.

A round table with the UK HEI and Kazakh Arts University partner was set up to facilitate discussion and debate but the principal impact was the realisation that musicians in the UK will have more of a portfolio career, blending different ways of playing music with earning a living and building a reputation:

‘in the UK where the musician was saying that I am in fact the head of the musical department in a private school. I'm a composer and organist in the church and I also like my jazz band....., our Kurmangazy people said WOW, because it was mainly if I am a musician, I'm just doing my music’
(UK 19A)

‘So yeah, in this case, yeah, they were asking about how to enter the international market, what the best way. How to communicate because there is the list of the activities how to enter the international market like exhibitions..... It's very important for the networking they need to have very developed soft skills.’ (KZ 50A)

The Creative Spark project demonstrated alternative ways of operating which might not otherwise have been recognised. This led to an increase in online performances and the building of entrepreneurial skills

‘The fact that, you know you produce the product for which people would like to pay online. That is already showing that you are not only entrepreneur, but you're a first class musician. I mean, nobody pays for bad music.’ (UK 19A)

‘Oh and in in the world we have several groups which flourished during this time who were able to find the way you know to not only survive but to build their own audience widely, not only related to one country, but the downloads would be from different parts of the world. ‘ (UK 19A)

Creative Spark was thus providing an alternative view of the concept of a musician and introducing the importance of building autonomy and control through financial independence.

The lack of preparedness of the project partners in Kazakhstan to teach remotely provided significant challenges as neither the IT infrastructure or the ability of staff to teach and students to learn online were in place. The UK partners were able to support the transition with resources and encouragement and greater experience in distance learning education. This was particularly enabled where a strong partnership had been built, often prior to the start of Creative Spark:

'it's not our first project. We already had Kazakh British Centre for Competitiveness built on the previous projectso in a way, we already had that period of adaptation somewhere else. So when the when the Covid, you know, came OK, it was unfortunate. The human side was diminished, but still, you know, in the circumstances it was not a huge impediment because we had we had already knowledge of each other.' (UK 19A)

Greater support and training might have been made available if there was more fore-warning of the pandemic although the infrastructure would have still provided challenges:

'If I had known that COVID would have been, would be serious, would have done, you know, some online teaching for them..... They don't have things like blackboard, canvas like we have here in the UK, so they were forced to use MS Teams or Skype in talking to students. And then they were sending resources via e-mail. So that's what they even still do till now. They don't have platforms the way we have here in the UK' (UK 63A)

As identified by Tlepbergen *et al.* (2022) both skills and IT resources are seen to vary significantly in the regions compared to the larger cities, The value of online education for convenience was highlighted by 52% of participants but also its value

in developing language skills. The use of multimedia visual aids were believed to enhance and facilitate understanding of both grammar and language. The proficiency of academics and students during the 2 year period of the pandemic in adapting to new technologies and platforms also had a significant impact.

The veracity of the Tlepbergen *et al.* (2022) study may be called into question as the broader context within Kazakhstan is not considered due to the selection of participants from the 'top four' universities. A similar study from the regions and lower ranking universities is likely to provide a different outcome based on the experience of the Creative Spark partners where in the author's experience the lack of IT infrastructure created more significant challenges.

The author's own project identified major concerns amongst the academics who were forced to convert teaching to online during the pandemic. Training sessions were held to share the approach to blended learning which incorporated problem based activities to support student engagement and to build the confidence of Kazakh academics in their delivery. This training was in turn disseminated with partnered regional universities to provide support and resources. The reputation and levels of trust in relation to online education was raised by a participant who argued that a certificate gained through an online course had less value than one gained through face to face teaching. This was the view of employers as well as the students and linked closely to the concerns around corruption (Oka 2019). This Kazakh participant emphasised the importance of returning to face to face teaching and learning, partly due to a lack of trust expressed in relation to online learning and assessment:

'In Almaty the young and the adult population, they prefer an offline format, face to face format of education rather than online. I know why people don't trust online or among them companies. The value of the Diploma or certificate. If the person obtained offline format face to face is higher than the certificate, if they obtain it online..... potential Employers they recognize offline format and don't trust online format. So many ways to checking for cheating. (KZ 50A)

The concern for the quality of education and the level of trust within the systems is raised by participants (Polese 2008, Oka 2015) and continues to be a concern in the modernization of education which is likely to include a greater emphasis on the use of technology in the delivery, and assessment (Piven and Pak 2015).

The specifics of the building of skills for entrepreneurship, creativity and employability will now be investigated to explore the extent to which the programme has influenced this activity, specifically in relation to industry engagement.

6.6 Engagement of industry in the curriculum and student experience

The involvement of industry in the development of curriculum and pedagogical design is common place within the UK (Gabrielsson *et al.* 2020). The advantages of this in terms of employability and ensuring preparedness for the workplace have resulted in increasingly close relationship (Hägg and Gabrielsson 2020). In Kazakhstan there is greater influence by government and less connection with

industry. The role of the government in supporting enterprise education is emphasised by SH 2:

'We wanted to raise awareness of the policy actors through engagement with them so that they can understand the importance of enterprise skills, how it could be developed and how they can be more supportive. in terms of regulatory environment and for the enterprise, education.' (SH 2)

The Triple Helix model (Ezkowitz 2003) combines universities, industry and government to achieve knowledge transfer for economic impact. The model suggests that the level of technical expertise in an industry will increase if there is a corresponding greater level of academic training and sharing of expertise. Intellectual capital becomes as important as financial capital. The model identifies conditions for successful implementation. The extent to which this can be achieved will be dependent on the skills within the organisation and the level of industry engagement. A lack of personal commercial experience by the academics themselves is seen as a distinct challenge in supporting others into entrepreneurship:

'Something we didn't plan but realised we needed it was making the – facilitation programme for the professors, for those who teach the programme to the students. We understood we were delivering the programme during the year and realised we needed something to give the professors better skills.' (KZ 24A)

Employing proxies to personal commercial experience is identified as a further mechanism for building expertise within the academic staff:

'We have been encouraging them to engage with industry. We did some sessions around the entrepreneurial eco-system, developing this network around who can support activity. Also monitoring your alumni and see what they go on to do, thinking about them as your best asset.' (KZ 34A)

A UK partner took this further to express the concern that the skills required to teach entrepreneurship curriculum were not evident within their partner institution, even towards the end of the project:

'I think and based on where we are right now, even if we create an entrepreneurship programme for them. We would have to find a way to recruit the relevant members of staff that will be able to teach it, because the expertise is not there. Even though the desire is there from their senior management, but then they will need to recruit the relevant members of staff to teach it' (UK 63A)

A lack of connectivity with industry and academic roles being perceived as separate to industry can lead to a disconnect and mistrust on both sides. Both the integration of industry and the development of EEE should go hand in hand to provide for an authentic student experience and to build employability skills. One UK participant perceived that the industry and academic sectors currently operate independently of one another with career progression in academia being focussed on higher level of qualifications as opposed to industrial experience:

'they've never done it and there is very little respect for the practitioner. Within the education area, so you know everything is based upon previous forms of advancement which are getting your degrees one after the other and they disrespect practice.' UK 38A

If the European model of entrepreneurship education is driving towards closer relationships with industry to facilitate pedagogies which are more practice-orientated, (Hagg and Gabrielson 2020) the recruitment of staff with associated skills and experience is arguably a method of addressing this gap. This was emphasised by the project which specialised in working with the vocationally orientated colleges:

'Through our engagement with them, we've really tried to kind of promote is for them to understand the advantages and or the and the benefits that industry will get from engaging with them.....The colleges need to better promote to industry how better to engage with them.' (UK 34A)

A participant university situated in the west of Kazakhstan has evidenced a specific increase in industry engagement as a result of Creative Spark. In this region large gas and oil conglomerates operate due to the availability of natural resources ([Energy Resource Guide 2021](#)). Closer working practices with this industry is leading to companies becoming more involved in curriculum design and development, which had not happened previously:

'We are constructing the curriculum not by ourselves. We are constructing them by getting them. involved. Uh employees of local companies. They're very big companies because we are located in the western part of the Kazakhstan which is the richest part of the Kazakhstan because all the oil and gas is here' (KZ 82A)

The progression of government policy to put universities at the centre of training and development and facilitating growth is cited as being an aspect of this closer

industry involvement. Transnational education through a Postgraduate Masters with their UK partner is a further aspect of this strategy.

Through a Creative Spark project being delivered in the capital city Astana, a close relationship with creative industry influencers has been fostered. An incubator situated within a major University has delivered 3 key activities, jointly designed with their UK partner. The incubator is specifically aimed at building a creative community and provides a co-working space with equipment for designers, e-illustrators, video and film makers and photographers. It is described as a creative lab for developing media products. Incubators can provide an effective focus and build infrastructure to support both EEE and start-ups but investment and long term commitment is required by the institution to provide a sustainable provision. This particular institution benefitted from significant government support and a range of activities developed through the Creative Spark funding has led to involvement from a wider community than those directly in the co-working space:

Firstly, the Markethon has been delivered to 272 participants from 6 countries:

‘The markethon is one of the best events which organized with Creative Spark programme, and this time we organized it 5 times and then the main goal of this programme is collaboration with company. It's a huge company, like a bank, huge organizations of Kazakhstan where this company give us their case and their tasks real tasks ‘ (KZ 59B)

Secondly ‘Pimp my freelance’ was an activity designed to support those within the creative industries who were developing freelancing skills. It was commented that the name came from their UK partner and whether this term was culturally

understood was not clear. The concept was taken from the American TV show 'Pimp my ride' meaning to enhance or customise a car and was being re-purposed into freelancing. The short courses provided have been very popular with 7 mentors supporting 25 participants. The involvement of 'famous' people from the industry has been a significant influence on the popularity:

'It's a programme for the freelance who work, who have who has experience, but small experience from six months to until two year, who have an education in the digital field. They can apply for this programme and can get the opportunity to work with this famous person' (KZ 59B).

Thirdly, a 'Creative Spark Case competition', a 24 hour competition supported by large companies to build the creative potential of the students. Three of these competitions have taken place each with around 100 participants with challenges being set by companies such as Mars Foods. The Creative Spark project has facilitated the increase of this extracurricular activity through the partnership providing support and processes:

'On this competitions show that our students or, it's our young people, can do it and they have a skills.....And then also according to this programme creates a spark which give to young people give ability for them showing demonstrating their skills because if they're going to need them in a company.....it gave a place for the critical thinking, creative thinking and the create something in you' (KZ 59B)

These initiatives were evidently creating enthusiasm amongst students and support through extra-curricular activities but the longevity and support once the funding has ceased may become problematic. The sustainability of the activities provided from

within the funded project is uncertain. The umbrella of a well-funded university with state support is also at the base of these initiatives. The replication elsewhere would require the same level of investment and infrastructure.

At the other end of the scale, closer connections between small businesses and vocational colleges are facilitating a better understanding of the skills required and therefore how students can be more effectively prepared for the workplace, as they are more likely work in small businesses or become self-employed. Further opportunities to network and build stronger communication are still required but there have been improvements in the levels of engagement with industry (UK34A):

‘Some activity was happening anyway but only 20 or 25 students involved, now 100 or 200 are joining competitions and participating in the activities. So lots of people are now interested in business related competitions and processes.’ (KZ 82A)

The concentration on the creative industries and the close involvement of UK HEIs has led to a significant change in mind set for arts-based institutions within Creative Spark according to the participants. It is claimed that those operating within the industry are now ‘taken seriously’ (KZ 24B) and there is an emphasis on finding ways in which to commercialise arts activities for both students and staff. It is claimed that the project had a significant impact through gaining the attention of top management who were now giving support for entrepreneurship to be taught and encouraged for arts graduates and staff:

‘In the beginning they had this problem they had to explain it all to everyone what is creative entrepreneurship, what is creative industries. Why we are

doing this project and what will be the impact. And now they don't have to explain it to anyone. The top management they know and understand and are ready to support.' (KZ 24B)

This view is supported by a UK participant who believed that previously entrepreneurship was only seen as a part of business and management teaching and not applicable to arts subjects as identified by participant UK 38A in section 5.3. The extent to which this influence will reach institutions which have not been directly involved in the project is less clear. To facilitate this there is an opportunity for the Kazakh Chamber of Commerce Atakemen which was formed in 2014 with the following stated purpose:

'The mission of the Chamber of International Commerce of Kazakhstan: Facilitation of growth and dynamic development of entrepreneurship through conducting international economic activities.'

([Atakemen Chamber of Commerce 2014](#)).

Atakemen was a partner organisation for a Creative Spark project and is therefore well placed to build upon the impetus which has been created. There is evidence this process has started through an increased interest in engaging in entrepreneurial activities alongside academic study:

'They became interested in other activities apart from the academic part. They have 3 students who went the Atakemen and won money. They are very active outside the curriculum. They make money using their skills. They look for freelancing jobs and finding project work.' (KZ 24B)

However, despite this move towards greater independence for those within the arts the influence of government is still perceived to be significant and part of the cultural landscape:

‘They still need time to develop their first class product. So to say that they will be, you know, Jack of both sides [sic] that it doesn't work like that they might do little things for themselves, but generally the cultural sort of programme of awareness should be done by the state I would say.’ (UK 19A)

The breadth of activity within the Creative Spark project in Kazakhstan has been articulated and the extent to which direct connections with industry have been established. However there have been limitations and challenges experienced by project leaders in the achievement of the objectives of the various projects.

6.7 Limitations and challenges of Creative Spark

Despite the success of the Creative Spark programme in terms of the numbers of beneficiaries (identified in Table 3.1 in section 3.2) and the level of engagement, it was called into question whether there is justification for imposing UK centric or European values to those who have a very different culture. Some participants found this problematic:

‘.....Through some of the British Council's agendas we are inflicting our priorities and values on groups of people who have different priorities and values. The assumption is that ours are the ones that should be attended to.’ (UK38A)

There was a further belief that not enough time had been taken to fully understand the culture and the variations in the different regions of the country:

‘.....Not understanding the culture is another issue, you have got about five different traditions to choose from depending on which section of the country you come from.’ (UK 38A)

The specifics of certain parts of the creative industries were also felt to require a tailored approach which would have negated any attempts by the British Council to require common outputs from the various projects:

‘it was almost like creative industry is in need of the certain business skills, but the but the point there is it's not generally OK, I'll tell you how to do business. It's how to do the specific business which is you know music is very, very you know difficult and specific.....the problem, the challenges are two folds. You have to be excellent and you have to have skills to promote yourself and survive in the in the sort of business environment.’ (UK 19A)

This would suggest that the decision to enable the project partnerships to design and develop bespoke projects, tailored to the specialisms within each Institution resulted in an effective level of adaptation to the specific context of individual institutions. Each project was evaluated against the criteria set within the objectives as opposed to collective expectations. So the question is whether this has led to a more effective approach towards building entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills to support the Creative Industries. It is also recognised that the Creative Spark programme has varied in the different countries, partly due to the cultural and economic context but also the extent to which the British Council were directly involved in supporting the project leads:

‘So I think that it really depends on the context where the programme was set and It was really dependent on the British Council office here and also on the partners involved who could push, you know, the agenda, who could see the links and is also really I think depends on the Champions like in our country.’
(SH 1)

The lack of a consistent approach to the delivery of Creative Spark not only across countries but within the countries has been cited as a reason why it is believed by one stakeholder to have had a limited impact on influencing government educational policy:

‘if we talk about Kazakhstan. So it's nine different models absolutely different. Like you can't make them general and you know put it into government policy and say that's how it's going to work.’ (SH 1)

The scope of the project and laissez faire approach to design and delivery have therefore been seen as limitations of the reach and effectiveness of Creative Spark.

Chapter 6 has presented the findings pertaining to the first two objectives of this thesis and evaluated the primary data in the light of the literature presented in chapter 4 and the contextual data presented in chapter 1. The challenge of achieving a long-term legacy will now be examined in greater detail in chapter 7. The longer-term impact and influence of the Creative Spark Programme is considered through addressing the third objective and applying the theoretical models examined in chapter 2.

Chapter 7 Wider context results and discussion

7.1 Introduction

An exploration of the sustainability of the interventions by the Creative Spark programme are discussed in this chapter which addresses specifically the third objectives of the thesis:

To explore the sustainability of the interventions by the Creative Spark programme for both Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education and the Creative Industries in Kazakhstan.

The theoretical frameworks examined in chapter 2 will be applied to the findings to evaluate the challenges of moving towards an entrepreneurial, knowledge-based economy through EEE. Results from the research pertaining to the wider context within Kazakhstan will be the focus of the chapter and considerations of the extent to which long term impact is likely to be seen.

7.2 Sustainability and trajectory to entrepreneurial universities

The purpose of the Creative Spark programmes articulated through the Tbilisi statement in section 3.2 was to assist in the advancement of entrepreneurship and enterprise related education, especially within the creative economy sector. The role of universities and other educational institutions were seen as a key part of achieving this aim within the partnerships. There is evidence that the partnerships have addressed the stated aims but whether there is long term sustainability for the partnerships and how this might manifest needs to be considered.

The sustainability of the project will partly be seen in the development of curriculum and pedagogy but also through the cultural enablers which provide an insight into the extent to which the influence has been seen at an institutional level. The Creative Spark partnerships have facilitated joint research activity leading to publications where data collection has been enabled through the programme (Altinay *et al.* 2023, Khlystova *et al.* 2022, Kromidha *et al.* 2022, Khlystova *et al.* 2021 Altinay *et al.* 2020).

The development of entrepreneurial capabilities which are derived in the education sector is regarded as a mechanism to achieve knowledge spill-over leading to the effective exploitation of opportunities which are generated through academic endeavour (Audretsch 2007, Radko *et al* 2022). The concept of the entrepreneurial university was discussed in chapter 2 section 2.2 and 2.3 whereby institutions are designed to teach and research but also commercialise activities (Cunningham *et al* 2021).

Whilst as identified in section 2.2, a consensus on the definition of entrepreneurial universities has not been agreed upon, there is value in examining the OECD (2012: 4-17) framework which determined 7 commonly identified features. The features have been applied to the data to establish evidence of the level of activity indicating where the Creative Spark programme is deemed to have supported a trajectory towards entrepreneurial university activity.

7.2.1 Leadership and Governance

The involvement of the State in leadership and governance within the university sector will have an impact on the extent to which individual institutions are able to evolve and innovate. The level of autonomy experienced in the sector is recognised as a limiting factor and closely linked to quality assurance processes (Hartley *et al* 2016, Abdramanova *et al.* 2019).

The scoping of the Creative Spark project in 2018 by the British Council included discussions with ministries of education, education world forum meetings and networking events in Central Asia to determine the needs and problems which could be addressed to support higher education. Based on these conversations and the baseline study conducted by IFF research, enterprise skills and the creative economy were consistently deemed to be in need of intervention and support across the Central Asian region. The aim was to raise the awareness amongst the policy makers in understanding the importance of enterprise skills and how they could be supported through the regulatory environment:

'it was also repeated many, many times that and like employability skills are very much in need of a support. The capacity development of young people can like improve their confidence to become independent..... creative skills intrapreneurial skills are in, uh are needed in this part of the world. So that's why we wanted to focus on this area with Creative Spark.' (SH 2).

The development of new academic programmes are permitted by the Kazakh Government. However, the balance of private to state institutions has shifted following independence from Soviet rule to a point where the number of private institutions (69) outweigh the public universities (55) (Sagintayeva and Kurakbayev

2015). It is argued by a stakeholder participant that the private institutions tend to be risk averse due to financial pressures. This manifests through a lack of innovation in curriculum, particularly into new disciplines where they may not have the teaching expertise and are concerned for student numbers:

‘all private universities might be scared to start something new because they might be closed. They have to make sure they have enough students, make sure they have the quality and programmes are well thought through and they have the relevant academic staff’ (SH 1)

However, the change in attitudes amongst academic staff has been given greater priority than changes in educational policy by one Kazakh participant:

‘policy and the education policy can be changed. I mean we can change it very easily. It's fine. I mean there is a sufficient amount of academic freedom is given by the ministry. So we can change it, I mean lots of things in the documents. But for me, uh, the changing of minds comes primarily.’ (KZ 82A)

Whilst the influence of the State in determining curriculum is becoming less significant there are other limiting factors such as the acceptable level of risk and the expertise amongst the academic staff, the training and resourcing.

7.2.2 Organisational capacity, people and incentives

Providing training for academics in the delivery of alternative pedagogies was a feature of the majority of Creative Spark projects as evidenced by the British Arts Director and of the British Council through the full project data (de Braekeleer 2022).

Each of the project manager participants made reference to training of Kazakh academics through the project:

‘And you know there needed to be to be training academics in order to change students. So they get the entrepreneurial skills is very important for our government nowadays because nowadays there are so many government supports and there are so many financial grants and competition. Everything is directed so that students get these kinds of skills. (KZ 82A)

‘And I know they're doing very well now in almost giving a boost in their careers and, you know, development. The point is, it's almost like they are able to transmit the message because they they've been there, they engage, they are doing’ (UK 19A)

‘We have a comprehensive support process now because we have the training and knowledgeable trainers who can cascade the learning and we have the materials which were designed around that’. (UK 34A)

‘The people on the ground, particularly in the hub, they are now qualified because of the projects they've done, they're going to get European money The partners, they themselves are now competent in a way they weren't before the partnership. They have ambitions as individuals.....There is an assumption that we come in, we do good, we go. But we've upskilled a whole range of people who will want to do other stuff (UK 38A)

The value of this training has therefore been in terms of the benefits to students and developing curriculum but also the career aspirations of the academics themselves and their preparedness to work in other more western environments which can be further supported by the Bolashaq scheme. However, there is less evidence as to

the extent to which this is a permanent change and the reach of the training to support a trajectory towards an entrepreneurial university is sufficient.

7.2.3 Entrepreneurship development in teaching and learning

The influence of the UK pedagogy is seen as a factor in the sustainable influence of the Creative Spark project. Whilst the subject was previously taught, the approach to learning and teaching has become more in line with a western approach which has included extracurricular activities to support the development of ideas.

‘Then there is a subject which is entrepreneurship, and it was very theoretical and it was like one of the other subjects usually you know, I think in UK it's the same, usually students they don't want to study it is it's very boring to study..... after Creative Spark, I found that students and also professors, our teachers teaching staff. I found them they have a spark and they got the vision. And I think even if I want to stop now, I will not be able to stop this now because they got the vision ‘ (KZ 82A)

A change in mind set within particularly arts-based institutions has led to participants believing there will be a longer-term legacy of the programme:

‘The main sustainable impact the project will have is in terms of the academic programmes. It will become normal for academies and arts institutions to teach Entrepreneurship for the arts. As time goes on it will become normal to study entrepreneurship with the arts. It will change the thinking of the students, that they are not just studying arts but they also are supposed to know how to commercialise it. It is something which is still new but in like 10 – 15 years it will become normal. (KZ 24B)

There is considerable evidence of the impact of the Creative Spark programme on the embedding of curricula and the training of academics (section 6.5) with an emphasis on pedagogy. The sector which gained the most comprehensive embedding of training was within the vocational colleges. At the pre-university level there are 2 organisations which are supporting colleges: Atakemen (small business chamber) and Talap (Ministry of Education department). Atakemen provide the links between vocational education and industry with some responsibility around quality and recognition of qualifications, Talap are more focussed on ensuring standards and facilities within the colleges.

The Creative Spark project which concentrated on the college sector focussed on building a set of resources which can be trained and cascaded throughout the college system to provide a mechanism for building enterprise education at a time when there is reform in the system. It is outside of the formal curriculum and dependent on enthusiastic champions but is providing a resource not previously accessible:

‘it has helped to raise the profile of that kind of UK education and at this kind of national level with them at a time when their education system is very much going through a reform.’ (UK 34A)

‘And we’ve got this guide to setting up a hub. And so that kind of supports any a new college that comes on board with setting up a hub. And then we’ve got these materials that can be delivered through their entrepreneurial activity.’ (UK 34A)

The college sector could be better placed to support the development of entrepreneurial activity with less emphasis on academic outputs for the staff and a greater emphasis on vocational subjects which readily align with entrepreneurship.

7.2.4 Pathways for entrepreneurs

The provision for structured entrepreneurial activity outside of the curriculum was identified through extracurricular activities and the setting up of enterprise hubs. The project was located in two previously established enterprise hubs; one was located as a satellite part of a high-profile university in the capital Astana, the second was part of a worldwide network of social enterprise hubs, located in Almaty. The hubs became joined with regional universities to enable wider participation in their activities:

‘Also, we will continue this work on incubators and accelerators and working with our students, also mentoring them. We have mentors also in in Astana City we have the Astana hub. This is the platform that is also providing with the mentors and which is organizing hackathons, incubators and accelerators, all of them at the same time. So we are also part of the that Astana hub as well.’ (KZ 82A)

The extracurricular activities were particularly in evidence in these organisations with the emphasis being on opportunities for engagement in the Big Idea Challenge competition. In total for the Creative Spark project throughout the wider region 23 new Enterprise hubs were established and 237,000 people took part in the Big Idea Challenge (de Braekeleer 2022). Previous to Creative Spark Enactus was proactive in the region and there were competitions organised by Atakemen but there is evidence to show there has been a significant increase in the number of participants:

‘They were happening anyway, but our involvement wasn’t so active as it is now. For example, I can say to you that if there were joining maybe 20 or 25 students before who were active in all of these competitions. But this time we find like maybe 100 or 200’ (KZ 82A)

The role of extra-curricular activity was particularly important to those who were not embedding enterprise education into curriculum:

‘OK so there is some evidence of some parts being embedded into the curriculum but for the majority of the partners it is run as extracurricular activity so in addition to their curriculum. We have been working to establish enterprise hubs. Through these hubs students are accessing these activities and support available rather than being embedded into the curriculum and class. It is something separate to it.’ (UK 34A)

A significant challenge identified pertaining to this was the lack of additional resource to run the hubs and organise extra-curricular activities. The levels of expertise have also been raised as a potential barrier to the success of the hubs:

‘They wanted us to create an enterprise hub. For that to happen, they need the relevant members of staff, they need to invest. So those are the few barriers. You know, maybe if we started in year one would have got to that stage to create an enterprise hub. With the creation of that, they may be able to employ one or two academics with expertise and entrepreneurship to help use the hub in helping students. You know, translates from their ideas to reality. OK. But currently that is not there.’ (UK 63A)

There is therefore recognition of the particular skills and expertise needed to support incubation activities and mentoring of nascent entrepreneurs. The

importance of the extra-curricular activity in providing a legacy for Creative Spark was emphasised by a stakeholder:

‘What we tried, you know, for the for the last year, we try to make sure that there is legacy left. And that is done through there either internal portals like the universities would create shared resources where they would have, you know, video trainings or you know like entrepreneur speakers that can be, you know, transferred. Even though that they may not have Big Idea Challenge or not have further support from the UK University, they will still have this resources that they can use for their extracurricular activities and for others.’ (SH 1)

7.2.5 University-Business/external relationships for knowledge exchange

The Triple Helix model has been applied to consider the extent to which external relationships with industry and government have evolved and need to become more interdependent (section 7.3). It was reported that the involvement of UK universities and creative organisations at this point provided the expertise and kudos needed to build a larger platform and to contribute to the national policy in terms of support for the Creative Industries:

‘So I think that it started with narrow focus, but now it becomes a very like large framework for role of education. Not only higher but general education in shaping creative industries in Kazakhstan’ (SH 1)

This was supported through the development of the Creative Central Asia organisation in 2017 [Creative Central Asia \(2017\)](#):

Creative Central Asia has contributors from across the Creative Spark partnerships. The author attended a conference in 2019 in Tashkent which provided an effective platform for increased connectivity within the industry and university sector. There is evidence that the outputs from the Creative Spark programme have been effective in other partner countries. The UK partners recognised reforms are being embedded throughout the region, not just in Kazakhstan (Adambekova and Amankeldi 2015) as co-learning and discovery are becoming more prevalent as teaching methods. A comparison was drawn with Uzbekistan by a UK partner with Creative Spark projects in both countries. They observed that a change in educational policy which has led to faster developments:

'government involvement, it's moved much faster in Uzbekistan because they've made all of the universities independent' (UK 38A)

This viewpoint would however appear to contradict the previous claim by a stakeholder that independent universities are risk averse and will be less willing to invest in innovation. Similarly, Kyrgyzstan has seen more widespread changes in curriculum and pedagogy as observed by a Stakeholder with responsibilities for the Creative Spark project in all the participating countries:

'It influenced some of the universities approach their programmes, shaping, rethinking their educational programmes. In Kyrgyzstan at their National conference the universities were saying this programme really helped them to revise other academic programmes not related to entrepreneurship to use approaches and practice used in the UK. So they would restructure and include practical models.' (SH 1)

7.2.6 The entrepreneurial university as an international institution

Future partnership working has been identified by participants who identified that there were plans being put in place for a satellite campus to be investigated following a delegation by Kazakhs senior management to the UK partner:

‘So the legacy is going to be more about the sort of the ongoing relationship with these different opportunities for staff to come and learn from the UK and for students and student exchange and that sort of thing.’ (UK 63A)

The partnership with UK 63A identified a total of four strands of activity which will continue, partly funded by additional grants and governmental support which will specifically impact the career development of faculty beneficiaries. These comprise:

1. British Council Interlinks small grant for Transnational Education (TNE) – a dual Master’s degree programme is being investigated using the fund to support the development between the two partners. To help facilitate this, sessions with Kazakh academics to prepare them to work on a transnational basis looking at aspects such as UK pedagogy, developing a curriculum model, leadership in higher education, English for academics. This is designed to support the academics in applying for Bolashak funding from the Kazakh government to visit the UK partner for 6 months and is open to academics from a range of Kazakh institutions beyond the Creative Spark partnership
2. Joint PhD supervision is being considered for the Kazakh partner staff members who are interested in higher degrees.
3. Within the annual supporting of 100 students to travel abroad, 2 or 3 will go to the partners in Kazakhstan.

4. A satellite campus from the UK partner to the location of the Kazakh partner is being considered in the longer term.

The UK participant commented:

'In terms of sustaining our relationship, it's TNE has given us that opportunity..... some of these plans that we have some would require them to invest, others would require us to support them you know with our time.'
(UK 63A)

Creative Spark participants were invited to bid for funding for an Interlinks Grant scheme providing small grants of up to £15k specifically to support the development of transnational Education by the British Council. A further legacy has been the 'Creative Flame' offered to Kazakh partners providing membership for one year of Enterprise Educators UK (EEUK) with access to the EntreComp toolkit, funding opportunities and participation at the International Enterprise Educators Conference in 2023 ([Creative Flame 2023](#))

The benefits of a wider community beyond the country borders which have been facilitated have been further commented on in relation to these legacy activities:

'We are also members of Flame. There are 20 countries and also I met with new friends on new partner in another from the Georgia from the Belgium and Italy. I think it is the best opportunity for the community for the creation of communication. It's a sharing of information between us and this community gives us an opportunity for them to know about all these events, we are running too. (KZ 59B)

The opportunities for Kazakh universities prior to Creative Spark to build close relationships were limited. The Erasmus academic mobility scheme was a

mechanism used by the author to work with colleagues in Alma U in building relationships and contributing to curriculum development. This was however a less effective mechanism than the Creative Spark programme which also brought Kazakh universities together with a common thread and led to the opening of effective sharing of experience and, to an extent, resources.

7.2.7 Measuring the impact of the entrepreneurial university

Evidence has been provided that there have been changes within organisations in terms of attitudes toward entrepreneurial education, the development of extracurricular initiatives to support entrepreneurial activity and some, albeit limited, developments in government policy. There is further evidence that the wider creative industry has been influenced by the Creative Spark project through the direct engagement with music, the arts and the author's own project which was situated within the fashion industry. Opportunities for those operating within each of these industries were provided through joint working and invitations to take part in events, the Big Idea Challenge competition and employability initiatives. The longer- term sustainability of these UK-Kazakh relationships needs considering and whether it might be anticipated that relationships will change and develop to increase the embedding of EEE.

The application of the OECD framework has highlighted the areas in which the Creative Spark programme has influenced a potential trajectory towards the emergence of entrepreneurial universities. The spectrum of 'soft' to 'hard' initiatives proposed by Philopt *et al* (2011) would place the universities as being in early stages with limited evidence of tangible forms of entrepreneurship being

demonstrated. Whilst soft skills in terms of teaching and learning, academic publishing and skill building are in evidence, the more measurable outputs of patents, licensing and spin-offs are not visible. In addition, the lack of funding for humanities and social science projects is unlikely to further support the development of resourced, funded activity. The transition to EEE being fully embedded within universities is now considered through the concept of organisational architecture within entrepreneurial universities.

7.3 Organisational architecture and entrepreneurial universities

The conceptual framework provided by Cunningham *et al* (2021) investigated the organisational architecture of entrepreneurial universities and sought to provide a model to identify the infrastructure required to effectively support the transition.

The model, presented in section 2.4 (Fig 2.3) classifies the stages as exploration and exploitation.

The exploration stage is where the activities in Creative Spark have been in evidence:

- Latent - exploring opportunities and raising awareness including entrepreneurship education and orientation.
- Emergent - Undertaking gestation activities, necessity or opportunity driven, market validation and business planning.

The exploitation stage has only been seen through the large-scale incubator in Astana whereby the funding and resources have enabled the 'hard' elements identified by Philpot *et al* (2012)

- Launch and growth. – Assembling resources, taking to market, IP, market testing through to sustaining growth patterns, securing additional funding and exploring further opportunities

Whilst the desire by government and in many instances the universities themselves to build entrepreneurial expertise and to exploit innovation within the university sector the move towards achieving this ambition requires significant investment and support. The initial stages are in evidence, but many variables will also influence progress. These include the level of autonomy, skills within the academic faculty, the preparedness of academics to move into entrepreneurial roles, the competition for resources and the willingness of institutions to take on the risk required to build spin-off activity.

A lack of connectivity with industry will further inhibit this progression. As identified in section 2.1 the Triple Helix Model emphasises the importance of an effective relationship between industry, government and universities for building an entrepreneurial knowledge-based economy. The research results are considered below with the application of the Triple Helix model (Etzkowitz 2013).

7.4 Application of the Triple Helix

The Triple Helix model presented by Etzkowitz (2013) identifies the importance of building external relationships to build an effective ecosystem to support EEE. The Triple Helix has been applied to the data and analysis from the primary research to provide insights into the extent to which the Creative Spark programme has been effective in supporting a transition towards more entrepreneurial universities.

The focus of the model is primarily concerned with the relationships between industry, universities and government in the context of knowledge production and technological development leading to innovation (Etzkowitz 2003, Chung 2014). Whilst the context of this thesis is within the development of entrepreneurship and the creative Industries as opposed to innovation in science, the value of examining the trajectory by applying the Triple Helix model lies within the direction of travel and the level of preparedness to embrace changes in relationships and co-dependence. EEE is a key component in this development (Cunningham *et al.* 2021).

Chang (2014) identifies the value of the model for emerging economies as a move towards a knowledge-based society which might require a reform in governance structure. The current emphasis within the Kazakh government is towards the development of science and technology and building strategic alliances with international universities to achieve knowledge transfer with key priorities being:

1. Accessibility of education including Bolashaq grant scheme
2. Advanced personnel training to synchronise with the needs of the labour market
3. Digitalisation of Higher education to enhance educational platforms
4. Internationalisation including branches of foreign universities and geographical cooperation
5. Autonomy of HEIs to increase academic freedom, corporate governance and quality assurance
6. Infrastructure development including 20 centres of excellence and a research hub.

Source: (Nurbek 2023, Minister for Science and Higher Education)

Etzkowitz (2003) identifies two academic revolutions. Firstly, the move from a teaching institution to a research university. Secondly the research university to the entrepreneurial university. The entrepreneurial university is characterised through independence from the state but the maintenance of a high level of interaction with the State and industry.

There are two main factors which may lead to a more Laissez-faire relationship between the university sector and government. Firstly, through increased autonomy within the institutions and stronger governance (Hartley *et al.* 2016). Secondly, the implementation of more comprehensive quality processes may mitigate the previous challenges regarding corruption (Oka 2019).

The question emerges as to whether the support of science and technology is mutually exclusive to entrepreneurship and the creative industries. The Bolashaq scheme recognises the value of international education for both students and academics but encourages a return to Kazakhstan by students studying abroad to facilitate the raising of standards and expertise.

Stages in emergence from Statist stage to Laissez faire:

1. Internal transformation with universities putting knowledge to use and the building of strategic alliances for research and development

There is evidence through the data that a more external focus has been emerging from the universities with greater emphasis on the interface with entrepreneurial activity and academia. This has been present through the creation of on-going relationships with UK partners leading to transnational education opportunities and the sharing of best practice.

2. Influence of one Helix on another

The relaxation of government requirements for business start-up has been identified including more favourable taxation and a reduction in bureaucracy. The governmental support in universities becoming more autonomous appears to have commenced through the evidence from Creative Spark participants and the commitments from the Ministry of Education. However, a system of quality assurance needs to accompany a further move towards autonomy which would facilitate greater regulation across the sector. A change in mind set amongst academic staff will also be required with a move towards greater responsibility and a mutual trust between institutions to permit a more integrated approach to the determination and integration of standards.

The commitment towards enterprise hubs and the embedding of entrepreneurship within curriculum with an opportunity to drive towards a competence-based model and the sharing of best practice in pedagogy has been identified and facilitated through the Creative Spark programme. The longevity of extra-curricular activity to support entrepreneurship and enterprise support will require significant funding and resourcing in conjunction with industry.

The direct influence of Creative Spark on the creative industry is less clearly defined as the programme was, for the most part, concentrated on activity within universities. This researcher's own project being an outlier which was centred within the fashion industry where direct involvement of small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures led to the development of a fashion cluster. The project provided skill development to academics, students and to those already operating in the industry. The wider influence on the creative industries has been more difficult to ascertain but would form the basis for further research.

3. New overlay of trilateral networks from interaction among helices – cluster formation

The cluster formation of project participants has been further supported by Creative Flare and the Interlinks project. Through a mapping exercise a greater understanding of a defined Creative Sector has been facilitated. This has led to the formation of a more robust commitment from central government to facilitate the growth and development is required to enable effective support and encouragement of entrepreneurial activity and curriculum. Whilst the Creative Spark project existed for 5 years greater evidence of the formation of an Industry – University – Government body which might oversee the support of the creative industries has been lacking. There is an opportunity to create a defined cluster with the Creative Spark participants both in the UK and Kazakhstan to further research interests, curriculum and pedagogic development and academic skill development but this requires governmental resources and support. Without the support and influence of the British Council there is a requirement for a cluster to self-manage and the relevant organisations to co-ordinate. There is little evidence of this to date.

For the Laissez-faire triple helix to be realised an equal and symbiotic relationship between the helices is required and would need to be developed from the current position.

4. Recursive effect – transformation of entrepreneurial dynamic within academia and from government policies which change relationships between the 3 helices

The transition towards entrepreneurial universities, the changing relationships between the creative industry and the government are pre-requisites for a recursive effect. The current extent of control within the Arts, the lack of academic expertise and interest in entrepreneurship and the lack of connectiveness between industry and universities combine to restrict the direction of travel. Whilst transitional steps have been taken it is early stages in this journey. Investment in incubation and enterprise hubs will continue to raise the profile of entrepreneurial activity.

However, to build an effective educational stream the proficiency of academics and the ability of universities to attract those with entrepreneurial experience into academia will be key. The development of closer working relationships between academia and industry will be required to see effective long-term growth.

There is recognition of the particular skills and expertise needed to support incubation activities and mentoring of nascent entrepreneurs. The importance of the extra-curricular activity in providing a legacy for Creative Spark was emphasised by SH1:

'What we tried, you know, for the for the last year, we try to make sure that there is legacy left. And that is done through there either internal portals like the universities would create shared resources where they would have, you know, video trainings or you know like entrepreneur speakers that can be, you know, transferred. Even though that they may not have Big Idea Challenge or not have further support from the UK University, they will still have this resources that they can use for their extracurricular activities and for others.' (SH 1)

Considerable efforts have been put in place by the partners and by the British Council to ensure there is an effective legacy from the Creative Spark project which will allow for sustainable relationships between the Institutions in the longer term. The effectiveness of Creative Spark from the perspective of the UK project managers was articulated by one of the respondents:

'It has accelerated the incidence of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education and increased awareness of skills and competences being embedded. Without Creative Spark this would have been likely to have taken a different route' (UK 63A)

The application of the Triple Helix has demonstrated the challenges in applying a Western approach within a post-Soviet context. Priorities still lie in the ensuring of sound processes and whilst the full benefits of integration might be felt within specific high profile institutions the support throughout the sector has not yet been realised.

Improvements in the quality of entrepreneurship education was emphasised by Uvaleyeva et al (2019) who investigated the relative international rankings of post-

Soviet universities in entrepreneurship education. They claim that in a modern context of high-level competition the economic development of a country can be determined more effectively by the quality of its entrepreneurial education system than the quantity of activity. The requirement for Creative Spark Programme participants therefore to concentrate on raising standards and supporting project partners in increasing quality over quantity of activity needed to be the main focus.

This chapter has presented the findings from the primary research study and triangulated them with the literature and secondary research data to achieve the third objective of the study. The conclusions of the thesis and implications for research and practice will now be considered.

Chapter 8 Conclusions and recommendations

This study has examined the role that the Creative Spark programme has had in developing EEE within the higher education sector in Kazakhstan. The research gap which has been addressed is the extent to which the European style Creative Spark Programme has influenced the development of EEE within HEIs in Kazakhstan and the degree to which this has been effective.

In this conclusions chapter the research will be evaluated to determine how the objectives have been addressed and the contributions to professional practice and knowledge are identified. The objectives are re-visited in the context of the study.

8.1 Objectives

Objective 1. To critically examine the modernisation of the higher education sector in Kazakhstan and explore how Enterprise and Entrepreneurial Education is evolving in this context.

The development of EEE within Kazakhstan is in a state of flux. There is clear evidence of a move towards the development of a more European approach to learning and teaching and some recognition of the value of a competence-based approach. However, the full context needs to be considered. The post-Soviet model of higher education is being revised through the Bologna Process and a rationalisation of the number of universities. Whether the Bologna Process has been an effective mechanism to achieve a move away from a Soviet style of higher

education has been the subject of debate. Whilst the Bologna Process has led to greater synergies with the structure of education, this study indicates that underlying approaches to teaching, pedagogy and skills development have not been addressed throughout the HEI sector in Kazakhstan. The reduction in the numbers of private universities is providing a more stable environment. The challenges of inconsistencies and a lack of a fully operational quality network to underpin the HEI sector is restricting the spread of good practice and the interconnectivity between individual institutions. The experience of running a Creative Spark project demonstrated to the author that whilst cordial relationships between institutions are in place there is no recognisable system comparable to the QAA in the UK and the external examiners which provide a mechanism quality assurance. The data provided evidence of concerns regarding quality procedures and the need to develop a more integrated HEI sector for sharing of best practice.

The relationship between autonomy and state control is a further area of transition which restricts the amount of freedom within institutions to revise curriculum and pedagogy. There are however strong indicators that the State influence is reducing. Whilst some respondents reported greater academic freedoms there is still evidence of governmental control and influence in the curriculum and especially within the specialist arts institutions. According to the data in this thesis there been an indication of a change in mind set within the management of art institutions whereby recognition of the value of EEE has been acknowledged and a gradual change in emphasis towards embracing the principles of EEE has been identified.

There are implications for the educational borrowing which both the Bologna Process and Creative Spark have incorporated. The UK system of teaching and learning, quality alignment within the HE sector and strong connections with industry can be implemented to an extent but the cultural context is crucial, and the legacies of the previous Soviet education system should not be underestimated. Cultural aspects identified within this study included a lack of integration with industry and a lack of mutual trust between academics and industry. As a result, the extent to which integration with industry and moving through the stages of the Triple Helix model will be severely limited.

To conclude the aspects of modernisation identified in the literature were consistent with the results of this study. However, the influence of both cultural and government policy factors provided limitations to the speed of change and adaptation.

Objective 2. To investigate the nature of Creative Spark programme within the participating HEIs and the extent to which it influenced curriculum and pedagogy for the development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in Kazakhstan

The Creative Spark Programme provided an opportunity for direct and embedded influence on the development of particularly pedagogy and to an extent, curriculum. The readiness and preparedness of Kazakh institutions to build EEE was varied and inconsistent.

The more business or management orientated institutions, for example Alma U were already teaching EEE incorporated within programmes. Through Creative Spark new curriculum and pedagogy were introduced with an emphasis on teaching resources and skill building amongst academics. A greater emphasis on connections with the creative industries was further enabled within the Kazakh partner institutions.

The arts-based institutions started from a different standpoint whereby EEE had not previously been considered. There was, however, significant demand for entrepreneurship teaching from both staff and students. The relationship with the state regarding sponsorship of the arts provided a particular cultural context which was significant and had an impact on the attitudes and expectations of those working within these institutions. The post-Soviet cultural context was therefore more in evidence within the arts-based institutions.

The levels of interest in the Creative Spark programme amongst students and academics was identified in the outcome data in chapter 3 (table 3.1), and through the participant interviews, significant levels of support and enthusiasm for developing EEE were demonstrated. This manifested more through extra-curricular activities than curriculum development, again as evidenced through the outcome data presented in table 3.1. However, the experience of the colleges demonstrated a very practical and effective approach to the training of academics and cascading of knowledge through the college network to provide entrepreneurship training to those on vocational courses.

Interestingly, the prominence of the creative industries in the Creative Spark programme became less influential as the programme progressed. Whilst the initial mission made specific reference to the creative economy sector the emphasis moved towards activities within institutions and a concentration on EEE regardless of sector in some cases. This further demonstrates the lack of importance given to integration with the commercial sector.

The integration with academics from the UK with corresponding specialisms was particularly impactful during the Covid-19 pandemic. The support of UK academics through direct interventions in training for online teaching and learning has demonstrated the demand for mentoring and training.

The overall reach and impact of the Creative Spark initiative throughout Kazakhstan has been severely restricted due to the small numbers of participating universities and the inconsistencies between the various projects. Greater sharing of best practice and governmental support is required to provide a more sector-wide influence.

Objective 3 To explore the sustainability of the interventions by the Creative Spark programme for both Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education and the Creative Industries in Kazakhstan.

Creative Spark was an ambitious project with far reaching aims and an expectation that long term relationships would be forged between the partner organisations.

There is evidence from this study that there will be a longer-term impact with

transnational education being further facilitated through the Interlinks project which facilitates joint curriculum development and the Creative Flame project providing additional UK networking opportunities for academics in Kazakh institutions. From the perspective of the individuals involved, the experience of working in Kazakhstan for the UK project managers has been a positive one.

Examples of hubs and incubators which have been launched during the Creative Spark Programme are in existence. In addition, further relationships with UK counterparts for transnational education opportunities including joint degrees, franchise arrangements and satellite campuses provide the potential significant long term relationships. The Bolashaq scheme for mobility will be utilised to further the connections.

However, significant differences between the institutions and the nature of the individual Creative Spark projects led to a lack of cohesion throughout the programme. The nature and purpose of each project was designed to address the needs of individual institutions. This was both a strength and a weakness of the Creative Spark programme. The lack of consistency and cohesion between projects limited the overall impact and the extent to which a cohesive plan for long term sustainability could be implemented.

To enable the building of greater systemic change, direct investment and support is required from government, industry and the participating institutions.

8.2 Contributions to professional practice and knowledge

Through conducting an exploratory study to investigate the value of the Creative Spark programme in Kazakhstan conclusions have been drawn which provide contributions to both professional practice and knowledge.

Kazakhstan has been undergoing a transformation of its education system and the insider view provided in this thesis has enabled an innovative approach to understanding the wider implications of the Creative Spark programme but also the potential for a lasting legacy.

Firstly, it should be recognised that the embedding of EEE within universities has proved to be challenging within the UK. The subject requires a particular set of skills and infrastructure which are significantly different to other business and management education. If EEE is to be successful in generating new businesses with growth potential, exploiting innovation and contributing to an entrepreneurial knowledge/based economy the provision must go beyond curriculum and pedagogy. In the author's experience support is required from senior leadership to provide incubation, support and funding for student and graduate entrepreneurs. Significant investment in resources and infrastructure is required which is not easy to obtain. The ability of universities in Kazakhstan to make transition to providing effective EEE has been limited by the following:

- The lack of antecedents to provide organisational learning
- The level of expertise and experience in industry amongst academics

- The need for greater autonomy in curriculum design and pedagogy, taking the UK approach which has been presented and to an extent embedded and transforming it into a Kazakh context
- The need for a recognition at senior leadership level of the value of EEE and the resourcing required
- A need for greater involvement of industry in curriculum design, project work, placements, joint ventures to provide a stronger basis for development of EEE in the Kazakh context.

On presenting the EntreComp framework within the qualitative research, both stakeholder participants and those from the universities commented that there is a tendency to go 'straight to green'. The implications of this being a lack of research, planning and testing of ideas and new ventures. This point is significant as it underpins the analysis of a trajectory towards entrepreneurial universities, that is the need for greater involvement in industry and the emphasis on activity over outputs.

The contribution to pedagogy of Creative Spark has been significant, particularly in relation to the training of academics in building a competence-based models for developing entrepreneurial skills and capabilities. However, without systems and processes to facilitate the sharing of best practice and industry-university support organisations the impact of Creative Spark in the university sector as a whole will be limited.

8.3 Recommendations for Facilitating growth in EEE in Kazakhstan

The following conditions to facilitate growth for EEE within Kazakhstan are recommended:

- Commitment from leadership in universities towards developing EEE and providing the infrastructure to support incubator activity.

The data identified that in particularly arts-based institutions which were strongly influenced by government, a realisation of the relevance of EEE had emerged (section 6.5.2). The government needs to appreciate the significance of this in supporting both the institutions and the creative industries sector. The building of expertise within the universities is needed to support the artists, musicians and creatives in identifying and exploiting opportunities on a global stage facilitated through particularly online communities (section 6.5.3).

- A reduction in State control over curriculum and quality assurance.

For greater responsiveness to changes in the external environment and to build upon expertise, which is being brought into HEIs through TNE, more independence in the development of curriculum and pedagogy is required. For universities to engage effectively in EEE and to build a sustainable approach to encouraging and supporting entrepreneurial activity both autonomy in decision making and development of quality control mechanisms are necessary (section 7.2).

- Build industry-based organisations to support the development of entrepreneurial universities for mutual benefit.

To achieve the pinnacle of Entrepreneurial Universities, significant investment and support are required from both government and industry. This is unlikely in the short term, therefore, greater connectivity between industry and academics for joint working and bringing a stronger employability focus is required. The responsibility must be laid with all three sections of the Triple Helix; universities, industry and government to facilitate greater connectivity and to enable universities to prepare graduates more effectively for employability (section 7.4). A recognition by government of the need for mechanisms to bring industry and universities closer for mutual benefit could be realised through the creation of City & Guilds style organisations which in the UK support a range of opportunities including apprenticeships.

- Government policy support in encouraging international mobility, campuses, and franchise arrangements for further Transnational Education (TNE) opportunities, supported by the British Council.

The emphasis within the Kazakh Government has been within the STEM subjects due to an impetus to exploit natural resources within Kazakhstan (section 4.2) and the need for expertise in engineering. However, the creative industries sector has growth potential as identified by the mapping exercise (section 6.3) conducted within the auspices of Creative Spark and needs support (Pratt *et al* 2018). Encouraging long term relationships between Creative Spark partnerships where trust has been

built is likely to facilitate fruitful TNE agreements. The British Council needs to take a role within this having secured and supported the partnerships through the Creative Spark programme. The effectiveness of the Interlinks projects (section 7.2) which had short time frames was limited. Identification of further funding streams and the supporting of TNE could be effectively facilitated by the British Council.

- The British Council to support The Creative Central Asia network to provide opportunities to further develop relationships and connectivity within the Kazakh creative industries.

Through the implementation of the Roadmap Green Paper and engaging the support of the Creative Spark project partners (section 7.2) the British Council need to leverage the success of the Creative Spark programme. The result needs to be a stronger, more robust and interconnected network organisation to influence policy and grow the sector.

8.4 Summary

To summarise, this thesis has achieved its objectives of examining the role of Creative Spark in the development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in Kazakhstan. The author's position as a project manager within Creative Spark in Kazakhstan and therefore an insider-researcher enabled the research to be conducted but also brought insights which gave further context to the qualitative data. The addition of grey literature, the experience of attending conferences and fora and the opportunities to discuss the project with colleagues gave a deeper understanding of the implications and potential legacy of the Creative Spark programme.

An analysis of key theoretical concepts relating to entrepreneurial universities and the Triple Helix model have been instrumental in identifying the stage of the trajectory and the potential for universities to make the transition in Kazakhstan. Whilst there are pockets of excellence and best practice the significance of the impact is restricted due to a lack of cohesiveness in the university sector, lack of skills and governmental support. The British Council have a further role in consolidating the success of Creative Spark and ensuring a wider dissemination throughout the higher education sector and ensuring the legacy is protected through transnational education and Creative Central Asia.

8.5 Recommendations for future research

A comparative study to investigate the extent to which the Creative Spark programme has influenced the development of EEE in the remaining 6 partner countries would provide insights into the sustainability of the project on a wider scale. By applying the research method used within this study comparative data would emerge to provide more robust recommendations for both the British Council and the university sector in the partner countries.

The application of the Triple Helix model provided insights into the current phase of transformation within Kazakhstan and the extent to which modernisation is being realised and influencing the development of EEE. A study to solicit the views of wider stakeholders including policy makers, university leaders and industry contributors would further illuminate the application of the Triple Helix model and the extent to which the various agencies are in a position to move towards greater interconnectivity.

A quantitative study which concentrated upon the incidence of EEE and the views of students within the HEIs across Kazakhstan would be beneficial in gaining a clearer understanding of the influence and interest in EEE. The potential for effective and sustainable entrepreneurial spin out ventures and the true potential for developing an entrepreneurial/knowledge-based economy requires a greater breadth of data than permitted in this study.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Participant information

Appendix 2 Consent Form

Appendix 3 Transcript

Appendix 1 Participant information



*University of Northampton
Faculty of Business & Law*

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title

An exploration of the development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in Kazakhstan: Case study the Creative Spark programme

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study which will involve an interview. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of the study is to investigate the development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in Kazakhstan and to explore the influence of the Creative Spark project on curriculum and pedagogy within the participating Higher Education Institutions.

The intention is to understand the approach taken to deliver the project by the various partnerships and to explore the relationship between this and any developments in curriculum and pedagogy. In addition a range of stakeholder organisations are invited to participate to provide contextual perspectives.

Why have I been invited to participate?

Your position as either a Creative Spark Project Leader or as a stakeholder within a support organisation in Kazakhstan

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw your data within 14 days after the interview without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The data collection will comprise an interview with the researcher. This will either be face to face if travel and covid 19 restrictions allow it or online via Teams. The interview will last for a maximum of 45 minutes. If required, translation into English will be provided. The benefits of taking part will be an opportunity to reflect upon your role and involvement in the project and to consider ways in which the project might be influencing both teaching and curriculum development for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in the participating universities and the role of the Creative Spark project within this.

Will my information in this study be kept confidential?

The identities and the organisations of participants will not be identified in the reporting. The discussion will be recorded and transcribed, this will only be accessed by the researcher and the supervisory team. Published outputs may be sought as a result of this research in which the identities of participants will be kept confidential as far as possible. On completion of the study the recordings will be deleted. The transcripts will hold information which does not contain the names of individual participants, a numbering system will be used to indicate contributions and job roles. This anonymised transcript data will be stored within a secure password protected data archive.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you are willing to participate in the interview please respond to the invitation email and identify your availability.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be used to fulfil a DBA thesis. There is not a current intention to publish the results, if there is a later decision to incorporate the research into an article or paper for publication or wider availability than the supervisory team, permission will be sought from the participants.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being conducted as a doctoral student at the University of Northampton and the Faculty of Business and Law.

Who has approved this study?

The research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Northampton

Contact for Further Information

Dr Marcella Daye

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for agreeing to take part in the research study

Date

1st December 2021

Appendix 2 - Consent form



University of Northampton
Faculty of Business and Law

CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Title of Project: An exploration of the development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in Kazakhstan: Case study the Creative Spark programme

Dear Participant:

You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

Tick the appropriate column for each item if your answer is “yes” or “no”

	Statement	YES	NO
1	I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and know what the research involves.		
2	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.		
3	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project		
4	I understand that I have the right to withdraw my		

	Statement	YES	NO
	contribution within 14 days of the interview, without having to explain my reasons for doing so.		
5	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me		
6	I understand and agree that my participation involves taking part in the interview and being audio recorded and /or video-taped.		
7	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.		
8	I understand that the data will be kept at a specialised data centre at the University of Northampton and may be used for articles or reports as an output of this research project, but my confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained as far as possible.		
9	I do not want to reveal my identity in this project and in any output of this research and understand that my identity will be kept anonymous as far as possible		
10	I agree to work with a translator if required and that an agreement will be secured that the anonymity of my participation will be maintained		

	Statement	YES	NO
11	I agree to participate in this research procedure as outlined to me above		

Thank you

Researcher: Gill Gourlay

Participant Name & Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3 - Transcript

Interview SH 2 25/03/2022

Researcher

Creative spark. Uhm, I'm sort of starting off really with the motivation and from your point of view, what was the motivation for launching the Creative Spark programme?

Respondent

OK. Going back to 2018, it was a time that we were making and we were scoping and with the countries who and we were also discussing with the Ministry of Education in these countries is a through the Education World Forum meetings and networking events, trying to explore what are the needs and problems that we cannot dress to support in education field. And based on these conversations plus uh, the baseline reports that we have conducted with a IFF research team in the UK, we have find out that. enterprise skills uh and creative economy are areas that has been repeated by the ministries and I has been mentioned in the baseline research that that needs some intervention that needs some support, needs a little bit more awareness on the topic, so that UM that could be developed.

And we also talked to the country teams in the British Council offices to see which countries are available and which countries are in need of such kind of intervention program.

And at the end we have identified the countries who are involved in Creative Spark programme come and we came up with an activity plan, intervention plan and design of the project to kick off in 2018.

And just to mention, it was also repeated many, many times that and like employability skills are very much in need of a support. Uh capacity development of young people come like improve their confidence to become a independent. As people who can explore job opportunities also explore international opportunities. Uhm, and some creative skills intrapreneurial skills are in, uh are needed in this part of the world. So that's why we wanted to focus on this area with Creative Spark.

Researcher

Right, right. So the determination of those countries, that was sort of based on some, some baseline research, whether other countries that wanted to get involved that you decided we're not ready or.

Respondent

Yes.

Yes, uh, since this is a wider Europe regional program, uh. Other countries we also explored if the other countries in the region would be a target country, for instance, Turkey was in our discussions. However, a we have find out that Turkey, I mean uh Turkey is a bit more advanced in terms of uh, that particular area. So the intervention plan that we have wouldn't perfectly fit.

To the current uh, if I mean current situation of the country is UM, no. How on this specific area. So we mainly designed the program in three levels like institutional level, systemic level and beneficiary level and both institutions in systems and the beneficiaries are a bit more in advanced level compared to the intervention plan and activities that we have in design. So that's why we said OK.

Maybe Turkey shouldn't be programme country, but if we if we do something different in the next phase is we can include them in.

Researcher

Right, right. So it was sort of initially where you are, you're concentrating on those countries

But are they also, all ex-Soviet bloc countries?

Respondent

Yes, it is also because of that, because this is a programme, funded initially by CSSF which is mainly working in EX conflict zones, a Russian neighbouring countries.. That's why we prioritize those.

Of course, we didn't limit it with those. But uh, these countries also mentioned that this is a need that we should be here.

This is including the unemployment rate in this country is a young people who are struggling with finding a job or improving their skills on the area.

Researcher

So within this region you've you've still got a fair amount of diversity. And so how did

that work through in terms of putting out an overall call?

For bids and did you have a lot more bids coming in then were approved and what were some of the criteria for determining what was what was going to be something which could be supported or not and was it different criteria in different countries?

Respondent

Uh, when you say criteria, you mean in terms of establishing partnerships?

Researcher

Yeah, determining whether or not you're going to support that particular birds and that funding.

Respondent

I'm uh, we actually we have standardized that because this was one of the first pilot programs in the region who has been run regionally. So all all structured is established in the same in the same format in each country. The only area that we have made a Taylor Made intervention is the systemic level, because in every country political context, UM and stakeholders are different. So the intervention in terms of policy engagement is a taken different in every country. But other than that, all the grant partnerships and individual beneficiary focused interventions are planned same everywhere.

Researcher

Right, right. So the the sort of design was the same but. From what I understand

from being part of this the actual delivery and the approach has been quite different within different institutions and different partnerships?

Respondent

The activities planned by the partnerships are different, correct. Uh, they, I mean, I'm talking about. Yes, I meant what I meant was the format and the governance model and the structure of the grand scheme was the same. However, the interventions having quite different and diverse in each partnership project because the need was different because we didn't want to be very strict with what they should be delivering. So we just make it as flexible as possible, based on the needs of that particular institution and particular context. That's why all these models in and projects, uh and the outcomes are quite different than each other.

Researcher

And would you say that it's been more driven by the UK in terms of the projects and their design and the activities or would you say it's been more driven by the in country partners?

Respondent

It really depends, Gill, because in some partnerships it's really driven by the UK leads and I can see that they're involvement is quite strong, but in some other cases, uh, some local partners are really confident about what they need and what they know, what they don't know and what kind of consultants they need from the UK. So in those partnerships, it was most led by the country lead partner rather than

the UK. But if you want to make it general, I mean on average the UK leadership is heavier, I would say.

Researcher

Right, right. Probably because of, you know, the amount of experience, which is kind of the point of the project. Really. Yes. OK.

Respondent

Yeah, of course.

Researcher

So in terms of the main objectives of the project. So I think I think we have covered those those main objectives. And in what ways do you feel that they've been fully achieved, partly achieved or objectives have actually changed and priorities of moved through the through the programme because we have been running for four years now.

Respondent

Yeah. Uhm, I mean improving the quality of enterprise education in higher education sector is the overall objective of the program. And we did this through three level of intervention. As I mentioned earlier, one in beneficiary level offering some tools, products, opportunities for young people who would like to become intrapreneur as secondly in institutional level and we have offered grants to institutional partnerships so that they can go with their own pace and with the self decided interventions and activities for improving the quality of education in this particular universities. And

thirdly, we wanted to raise awareness of the policy actors through engagement with them so that they can understand the importance of enterprise skills, how it could be developed and how they can be more supportive. in terms of regulatory environment and for the enterprise, education.

So if we, if I go back and look at what we have done so far, I would say, , beneficiary level interventions were successful, uh. Met the targets that we planned for. However, I think the English program wasn't as I was hoping for a haven't resulted as much as I was hoping for because giving the enterprise skills, curriculum, model, training, workshops and all these activities, plus trying to improve the language skills of these young people didn't go hand in hand to hand like it didn't go as perfect as I was hoping for. So because students were have their academic.

Researcher

OK. Sure, sure.

Respondent

Because students they have their own tasks. Plus these Creative Spark activities they're involved in and. As well as trying to improve their language skills was the little bit of struggle and maybe too much.

So that's one thing.

In terms of policy engagement, I think it was quite successful in many countries. We created an awareness we have connected with the right people who are our stake holders, the Ministries of Education, Ministries of Culture and they have become a

champion or patron of the program in many cases. And they have promoted the program in in all the platforms that they could.

We also signed some MOUs in some countries with these ministries so that they can, invest on enterprise skills development in those countries. We also have become in the policy development or strategy development groups of the Governments either through the UK universities or through British Council. So it became a consultant on that area in those programme countries, which is quite a quite a good result, I would say.

Researcher

So in terms of Kazakhstan specifically, because, I'm sort of concentrating on Kazakhstan in this thesis.

To what extent do you feel that it's really managed to influence government policy and push things in Kazakhstan.

Respondent

I think it is successful in terms of raising awareness of the national stakeholders on the importance of creative education and entrepreneurial skills because, UM, if I'm correct. A British Council has become a part of the policy group as a consultant on how to develop policies around that area. So that's a good result and. I can't remember if there's any policy. I think Nadia can give you more specific details about what else has been achieved in terms of policy in Kazakhstan

And yeah, it the about the third intervention, which is a partnership's, uh, I mean

you, you know, you are one of those. You have worked quite a lot in terms of establishing sustainable products or systems or models in your partner organisations like toolkits, curriculum models, online platforms on like educational platforms or courses on creative entrepreneurship

Researcher

Right, right. So I'm kind of interested a little bit in the, UM, the relationship between what is in curriculum and extent to which curriculum has moved and changed and the extent to which some of these activities sit outside of curriculum and they're more extracurricular. Whatever it is you're studying, you can get involved in, you know, big idea, challenge or in entrepreneurial activities. Have you got a sense for the extent to which it's really having a direct impact on education versus extracurricular?

Respondent

Uh. You mean in formal education?

Researcher

I mean, yes, formal education, so degrees and awards and yeah.

Respondent

Formal

If I understand your question correctly, if it's, if you're asking for the impact on the formal education or beyond formal education?

Researcher

I'm asking to both really so to what extent is formal education changed and developed?

And to what extent has the sort of the extra curricula changed and developed?

Respondent

OK. Ah, I think both. Uh, in, in terms of formal education, as I mentioned, uh this.

Curriculum models and the courses that have been developed are in application in implementation now, so the partners involved in the projects, almost all of them has established some kind of model or curriculum or content or a course in their project partnership, and it is being in practice as a part of the academic curriculum.

Uh, but not just that , some of the partnerships have also been involved in organization of like events and city level or national level organizations like Creative Almaty Forum like creating Almaty days, some digital talks, UM, some extracurricular trainings for the people who are out of the university. I mean who are not enrolled in the university, some business education programs and so on and this kind of content and uh engagement with the National or city level activities is the outcome of the project. I would say which is not specific to curriculum development.

Researcher

Yeah.

Respondent

I think one of the was it maybe Coventry and Narxos partnership, they have and co-

authored the first mapping of creative economy in Kazakhstan and there's also research results like that I can say.

Researcher

OK.

Researcher

So there's some research that started to come out of this as well.

Respondent

Yeah, yeah.

Researcher

OK. Has anything being published in that space to now?

Respondent

Uh, I think it is or it is about to be published, so again Nadia can give you the concrete information about if it's.

It's now or not.

Researcher

OK.

So it's it's sort of having that ripple effect, isn't it? And I think that's the that's the piece that's the hardest to measure almost. You know, we know what the activities are and we know what we've done and what we've been doing, but how how is that ripple effect starting to work and where does it start and finish I guess.

Researcher

Have you got your sense of whether or not that can be captured, I know that you're

doing the research through the returns, but also through icorus but in terms of the ripple effect. Are you able to capture that or is that maybe something which is going to be much more difficult to identify?

Respondent

Uh, I think it is me. I mean it's it is not easy to measure that in short term obviously. But we are capturing these results as well through the interviews and you know, uh, some systemic trackers that we are monitoring just to see not just to capture not only the partnership level results but also like more higher level. Impact results and outcomes of the program in each country. So I think these will be, I mean, uh, if you have went through the annual report evaluation report, you can see some glimpse of it. But uh, like five years impact report which we will conduct this year by the end of this year is going to capture all these like a bit more long term results and transformations that Creative Spark has supported you'll be more visible on that report.

This will be the comparison that very started and where we are at the moment.

Researcher

Yeah. Yeah, great. Yes. I mean, I'm not, I know there's a lot of a lot of data is being collected.

I'd just like to move onto a thing called the UM, the European Entrepreneurship Competencies Framework. I don't know if you've come across this framework at all. are you familiar with it?

Respondent

I'm not in the detail, but I just know that that it exists.

Researcher

You know, you know to exists. So I wonder if I could just sort of show you the framework just for a minute. And what I'm interested in is to see the extent to which this framework.

Respondent

Yes.

Researcher

Uhm, sort of works and sets with these particular educational activities that are developing through Creative Spark in the UK. Here we've been in our university, for example, we've been teaching entrepreneurship probably 20 years.

And we've recently rewritten our course because we've realized that we need to teach it differently. And one of the things that we used was having a look at this competence framework to sort of think about, OK, well, how can we write it, which is looking very much at competences and build curriculum around that rather than maybe some other traditional, more academic approaches.

I'm interested really to see whether, because it's not being taught, particularly as a subject in Kazakhstan previously, whether there's a bit of a leap through to going

direct to competence framework approaches, or whether it's much more about building towards that.

If you see what I mean, sometimes we jump in technologies, don't we? We jump in it in approaches and it's about sort of trying to understand whether that that leap has being taken or whether in fact the steps need to be taken to understand how to evolve entrepreneurship education.

So if I just put the framework on the screen.

So this is the framework that I'm referring to and.

Respondent

Ah.

Researcher

Is that familiar? Yes. So we've got the purple area, which we're sort of starting with in the way that we design our program, where we starting with the ideas and opportunities and getting students to understand how to be creative, how to visualize ideas, how to spot opportunities and work with some of the sort of understanding of the environment. And then it moves into the orange part, which is the resources and how do you actually take that nugget of an idea and work out what resources need to be put around it in order to pull it into fruition. That might be about people and it might be about finance. Might be about all sorts of resources. And then finally into the action, which is the green section, the actual doing of it and

building a business plan, but then actually implementing it and taking the initiative.

So we sort of built up on new programme in that way so that you can see it mapped clearly from the first, second or third year of the of the course.

Researcher

Do you have any feeling for how entrepreneurship education is moving through these Creative Spark projects?

And whether it is moving in this sort of direction or do you think it's going much more to a more traditional theoretical perspective?

Respondent

Are you asking the overall program Level or because every country is quite different in terms of how to take it forward.

Researcher

Mostly in Kazakhstan. So do you have a uh, a sense of the way in which this is maybe being done in Kazakhstan?

Respondent

It's hard to tell for me to say something specifically Gill and to be honest, deal because I'm overseeing the program in like in regional level and the country teams are the right people who can answer.

Researcher

Yes, yes.

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Which is the most which they have used in Kazakhstan. I think Nadia cannot answer to that. So I do, I don't want to give a wrong assumption by just making a guess.

Researcher

Sure.

Yeah, yeah, sure.

Respondent

So if it's OK, you can check if not, yeah.

Researcher

Yeah, absolutely.

Well, the area as well for the academics and to say, well, what, what is it that you're doing? I was just wondering if you had a sense of it from what your role is in that?

Researcher

So in terms of, I was looking back at the Tbilisi statement which was developed when obviously on that very first startup meeting in Georgia and I was wondering do you feel that that Tbilisi statement still holds or do you think that It could be revisited and developed and changed.

Respondent

Let me quickly open it.

Researcher

I'm sure it's a while since you've looked at it.

Respondent

Yeah it has been a while so I need to refresh my memory.

OK.

No, I find it. I just need to look. Read it again.

Yeah, this definitely still stands.

However, a slight shift that we have, throughout the journey is a mostly focusing on educational institutions in higher education institutions rolled up in that social development, economic development, because we understand on the journey that I'm working with the creative economy sector or creativity in institutions. The ecosystem of a creative economy sectors is something different and something that should be taken as a separate interaction model or a separate program, maybe because bringing those two together wasn't always easy and still we have done lots of things about liketo bring them together, to talk to each other, to understand what the sector needs from the higher education, like what kind of skill sets they are expecting from the recent graduates or emerging entrepreneurs to become successful in the sector. So we still talk to them is to connect with them, but we decided that our priorities investing the quality of education, higher education sector for enterprise education and by hearing what the feedback we received from the businesses and a creative economy sector. But interventions will focus on higher education. So we have a slight shift on that sense.

Researcher

I think it's a challenge. I mean we have a challenge on this in the UK, you know as an HEI trying to connect with various of its sectors and it's very difficult to get something which is consistent. You know you'll have an initiative and things will work really well and then things sort of go quietly again and then they have to reinvent it again. I think in certain areas such as technology where it's embedded, it works very, very well. But where it's really giving sort of advice and guidance and support and you know skills for employability or entrepreneurship. It tends to sort of go in and peaks and troughs, really It's not a very consistent experience. Would you say that's the kind of experience?

Respondent

Yeah, I think it is the same. It's it's not consistent, it's sometimes quite strong engagement in some levels, but sometimes we lose the connection in in, in certain levels, so it is not always in a consistent way. Our engagement with the sector throughout the project.

Researcher

I think with our particular project we were very sector based right from the start because of delving into the fashion industry and making the fashion industry one of our key beneficiaries, I don't think that's being true of a lot of the projects as it did not necessarily been treating the industry as a beneficiary. , the industry is treated as a backdrop and an influence. But not, essential part .

Respondent

The primary. Yeah, yeah. True. Not in the most of the project, by the way. We have recently launched the new British Council program, a Creative economy program. It doesn't have a specific name yet, but it is focusing on supporting the sector.

Directly through a British Council funded project program, it is a two year or three years funding. I can't remember, but it is being launched now and this is going to particularly focus on developing skills of the people in the sector and also developing the skills of the policymakers.

Who are working with the sector because it is not necessarily and they are not necessarily very much informed about what creative industries are like, how they can support them. All these like bureaucrats working in the working connected with these businesses. So on these interventions hopefully will help to bring them closer to each other.

So that's the new, uhm program that is on the pipeline now.

Researcher

And it's that I'm going to run the same regions.

Respondent

Yes. And some additional Turkey also included. Kyrgyzstan is not involved because we don't have operations in that country.

Researcher

Right. Yes, it's been kind of put with Kazakhstan up to this point, wasn't it?

Respondent

Yeah.

Researcher

OK. Well, that's very interesting because we're sort of looking for how we can managed to sort of continue a lot of the work that we've been doing, particularly with the fashion industry, because we do have this sort of bank of 80 beneficiaries who we've been working right the way through the projects and there's things that we can do which will sort of hand over to them to an extent. But if there's other types of projects that we could help to keep that momentum going, I think, I mean my my ambition in the longer term is to have some sort of industry body that could be created.

I mean we have many of them in the UK. You know, we have lots and lots of institutes of City and Guilds for and liveries for and you know, we have all these different types of sort of organisations that that are there to support and to lobby a lot of the time lobby, government and raised the profile and they're also pull people together for skills and experience and understanding and bringing on the, you know, the youngsters who were coming out of university and give them support and further industry based training as well.

Respondent

Uh-huh.

Researcher

I'm and I think there's a real opportunity to find a mechanism for doing something like that in Kazakhstan. Whether it's ready for it at this minute. It's a different question, but some I think it's, you know this, this is part of the journey of Creative Spark and that could be another part of the same sort of journey as well. So that's really interesting. Let me go back to my DBA questions, make sure I'm not deviating too much.

Respondent

Sure.

Researcher

I think we have covered most of the areas that.

That I wanted to talk to you about.

Will you be involved in this creative economy? Is that something that you're?

Respondent

I am not going to be involved, but it is going to be managed by Claire de Braekeleer, who is the new CEO of the Creative Spark. So she's going to be the senior of that creative program. So I have an arms length with the team and they consult with me

in some cases and I'm going. I'm asking them if there's any opportunity that we can plug in Creative Spark network. We will be working together.

Researcher

Yes, that's great.

Respondent

So, and I'm gonna inform you and all the program partners about that very soon. Like, what are the upcoming opportunities for the UK sector and the programme countries?

Researcher

Brilliant. That's brilliant.

So. I think I've covered the areas, that's that I really wanted to cover where what are your plans? What are you? What are you going to do? because? This has been your. This has been your life, hasn't it?

Respondent

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Uh, it is. It is a in weird feeling for me to like establishing the program. It's it feels like my baby and then now it's coming to an end. Uhm yeah, I mean I will. There there's some internal transformation work going on in British Council, so there will be some changes in terms of roles and profiles. So I'll see where I'll be settled in. And, yeah. If not, yeah. Some external projects I will look for.

Researcher

Excellent, good, good. And I think you've done a brilliant job of making this whole thing work and make it all hang together. Because. It's a real challenge when you're dealing with so many different, diverse partners. Through each got their own agenda and you know it's a real challenge to make this sort of thing work. And I think I think it has, but brilliantly.

Respondent

Yeah, yeah, I I hope we can end the. I mean, my plan is to establish a kind of legacy program like us and connect the programme network to an international sector body for sustainability. I know they will be sustainable in terms of the products I have developed in their own project, but uhm, I don't want the network to be felt abundant, especially the country partners.

Once we cut off of the support so uh, if we if we can uh develop a kind of partnership with enterprise educators UK with a different membership, special membership offer maybe that that will be really great result of the program. I would say which I will I'm exploring now.

Researcher

It would be great to have a sort of special interest group within that, wouldn't it? Of Central Asia, where the Creative Spark family can be sort of part of it and then expand and grow as things start to build with more project work and so on, yeah.

Respondent

Yeah, exactly.

Researcher

That's everything covered. Thank you very much for the interview.

Respondent

No problem and if you have any further questions feel free to send me an email

Researcher

Thank you