Social enterprises and NEETs: Ethical and effective entrepreneurial skills programmes?

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Objective:

If young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) participate in Entrepreneurial Skills Programmes (ESPs), delivered by social enterprises, there is an ethical responsibility to measure the outcomes of these programmes. So called 'hard' outcomes, such as new businesses created or jobs secured, are self evident but potential 'soft' outcomes, such as attitude to enterprise or general self-efficacy, are less evident. This exploratory study aimed to develop evaluation techniques for the assessment of 'soft' outcomes on participants after completing a six-week ESP delivered by a work-integration social enterprise (WISE).

Prior Work:

Evaluation of 'soft' outcomes resulting from engagement in ESPs is often undertaken by programme providers through participant evaluation gathered at the culmination of the programme. Often, these evaluations are undertaken by programme participants who complete evaluation forms compiled by the programme providers. These forms are usually designed to elicit participant opinion surrounding their experiences of the programme. These evaluation forms rarely have any theoretical underpinning and are seldom subjected to any form of rigorous analysis process based on empirical research methods. Results tend to be compiled, interpreted and reported anecdotally and consequently have no claim to academic validity or reliability.

Approach:

The current research is exploratory in nature and adopted an 'intervention' methodology focusing mainly on a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Data was collected from a group of participant NEETs both before and after engagement in a six-week ESP. Individual semi-structured interviews revealed the participant's perspective of their engagement in the ESP. Analysis of the interview data was conducted employing Constant Comparative Method (CCM), a procedure for the qualitative analysis of text validated in prior empirical research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition to the qualitative data described above, quantitative survey data was collected in order to test the appropriateness of the questionnaires employed and to provide an opportunity to triangulate the data.

Results:

Analysis of this rich and diverse data set revealed ten overall 'themes' (5 at Time 1 and 5 at Time 2), which were subsequently interpreted by the researchers as: 'experience', 'self-perception', 'the programme', 'perceived barriers' and 'maturity' at Time 1 and 'experience', 'self-perception', 'the programme', 'enterprise' and 'future' at Time 2. Changes in participants are demonstrated through differences in the themes between Time 1 and Time 2. Descriptive statistics revealed in the quantitative data provided support for researcher interpretations of the emergent themes at Time 1 and Time 2 via the process of triangulation.

Implications:

This study informs the process of providing a much needed method for the objective evaluation of the outcomes of ESPs. Rigorous and academically valid evaluation of ESPs will ensure their effectiveness in improving 'soft' outcomes for NEETs. It is proposed that 'soft' outcomes are as important as 'hard' outcomes in the development of future employment opportunities for NEETs.

Value:

If young people are to be empowered through engagement in ESPs, it is essential that both the 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes of these programmes are evaluated. It is through such evaluations we fulfil our financial and ethical responsibilities and ensure NEETs receive worthwhile training when following ESPs provided by WISEs. This study provides a theoretical framework for the development of objective evaluation of ESPs that focus on working with NEETs. It is suggested that the study has developed a transferable methodology for the measurement of 'soft' outcomes.

Introduction

Prior research has revealed that most young people do not consider themselves potential entrepreneurs (Athayde, 2009; Harding & Bosma, 2006) yet governments increasingly seek to empower young people to become more entrepreneurial (Hytti & O'Gorman, 2004; Matlay & Carey, 2007; Matlay, 2008), especially those young people not currently in employment, education or training (NEET). This drive towards entrepreneurship has produced an increase in enterprise skills programmes (ESPs) (Matlay, 2008), some of which are targeted at NEETs. However, this increase in ESPs has not been accompanied by the development of objective evaluation instruments designed to measure the impact of these educational interventions on the young people involved (Athayde, 2009; Matlay, 2008). The impact of enterprise education resulting in 'hard' outcomes (e.g., new businesses created) is self-evident and can be assessed quantitatively but 'soft' outcomes of enterprise education (e.g. changes in confidence and attitudes) are less evident, equally important and also require objective evaluation. This exploratory study investigated the possibility of designing a more academically rigorous approach to the evaluation of the 'soft' outcomes of ESPs.

Much of the prior research into the outcomes of enterprise education has focused on 'hard' outcomes and has been conducted by university business schools with their own student population (Brown, 1990; Matlay, 2005b; Vesper and Gartner, 1996). To the authors' knowledge, there is little or no empirical research that focuses on investigating the impact of enterprise education, delivered by work integrated social enterprises (WISEs) on NEETs. The current study addresses this 'gap' in the literature.

The paper begins by examining the need for objective evaluation of WISEs and their interaction with the NEET population. It continues with a presentation on the complexity of NEET groups, often erroneously perceived as a homogeneous group (Yates & Payne, (2006). Following on from this, there is an examination of two psychological concepts, 'general self-efficacy' and 'attitude to enterprise', which are presented as potentially important impacts of ESPs on NEETs. An investigative study, which piloted a methodology for the academically rigorous evaluation of ESPs, is then presented and findings are discussed in relation to the proposals outlined above.

Work integrated social enterprise (WISE)

As government policy increasingly looks towards organisations such as WISEs to provide ESPs, a need for the evaluation of ESPs and their delivery organisations arises. Evaluation is required to provide policy-makers with 'evidence' of the positive benefits of ESPs, provided by WISEs. Also, there is a moral and ethical imperative to evaluate the impact of these interventions on disadvantaged and often vulnerable young people (Peattie and Morley, 2008; Alter, 2006). At present there is very little academic research into the performance of social enterprises (Paton,

2003). The limited prior research available, has reported some positive benefits of WISE interventions (Borzaga and Loss, 2006), but this prior research lacks academic rigour. This lack of academic rigour stems from a sub-optimal methodological approach to research that involves WISEs evaluating their own performance. These often subjective and anecdotal evaluations form the majority of research into WISE performance and tend to focus on overall unemployment interventions that fail to examine specific unemployed groups such as NEETs. Another potential problem with this type of research is that it tends to regard NEETs as a homogeneous entity.

Not in employment, education or training (NEET)

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

Models that define the heterogeneous nature of NEETs are useful but only provide surface level insights into the diverse range of individuals that make up each subgroup. Yates and Payne (2006) also propose that the term NEET is not 'politically neutral' and that it defines young people '…not by what they are, but by what they are not…' (2006: 336-338). Other prior research highlighted the diverse reasons behind NEET status, reporting that NEETs range from those individuals who are long-term unemployed and suffer disadvantage, to those young people for whom NEET status is only a fleeting experience or even choice (Furlong, 2006; Ofsted, March 2010). In essence, there are a myriad of potential reasons that can result in NEET status, and each individual classified as NEET will have a unique experience contributing to their NEET status. In addition, Bentley and Gurumurthy (1999) view the NEET definition as too narrow. They propose that in focusing specifically on NEETs, policy-makers are failing those school-leavers who enter into employment straight away but into jobs that are transient and insecure.

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

General self-efficacy

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

general self-efficacy (GSE) has been shown to be a reliable predictor of performance in educational and vocational activities (Locke, Durham and Kluger, 1998).

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

Attitude to Enterprise

One reason for the paucity of objective enterprise evaluation instruments is the lack of consensus surrounding the efficacy of enterprise education itself and what outcomes actually represent improvement in entrepreneurship (Athayde, 2009; Matlay, 2008). A review of the literature reveals disagreement about whether or not entrepreneurship can be taught effectively (Johannison, 1991; Kirby, 2004; Kuratko, 2003; Rae, 1997). Often, courses focus on teaching *about* entrepreneurship and measuring success through new venture creation, rather than focusing on teaching *for* entrepreneurship and measuring success in the development of entrepreneurial skills, attributes and behaviours in their students (Kirby, 2004). When designing a tool to measure changes in entrepreneurial skills it is important to consider changes in participant's attitudes to enterprise rather than their personal traits because, from a conceptual perspective, attitudes are dynamic whereas traits are fixed (Gibb, 1993, 2000). Also, attitudes avail themselves to measurement of change because they can manifest themselves in three ways: cognitive (beliefs), affective (emotions), and behavioural (actions) (Rust & Golombok, 1989). A recent study, Athayde (2009), developed and validated a research instrument specially designed to measure young peoples' attitudes towards enterprise (the ATE test), which was based on previous measures employing Attitude Theory (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

Quantitative instruments in the form of questionnaires, such as the NGSE and ATE test, could be very useful tools for measuring changes in participant's 'general self-efficacy' and 'enterprise potential' after engaging in enterprise education. However, if used in isolation, quantitative instruments such as these can potentially miss subtle but important individual participant perspectives not elicited through the questions posed in a questionnaire. This viewpoint has particular significance when investigating a widely heterogeneous group like NEETs. Investigative studies, based on inductive rather than deductive approaches to data collection have the potential to reveal greater insights into the concepts under investigation. Inductive, qualitative studies often reveal and clarify concepts for investigation in future quantitative studies. The qualitative paradigm adopted in the current study assumes that reality is subjective and multiple, offering participants the opportunity to perceive their world in many different ways. During investigatory research, participants may therefore be regarded as the most appropriate informants (Forsman, 2008).

Aims of the research

As the research was both investigatory and inductive, the aims of the research were broadly to investigate any changes in participant NEETs revealed after engaging with a six week ESP that was designed to influence their motivation to find employment, re-enter education or training or consider starting a new business.

Method

Participants

The participants were six young people aged between 18-22 years (5 male, 1 female) who volunteered to engage in the six week ESP delivered by a WISE at a youth centre in Northamptonshire. The young people were identified as being not in employment, education or training (NEET).

Procedure

The research was a small scale investigatory study designed to explore potential procedures for a future, larger scale quantitative study evaluating the efficacy of ESPs run by WISEs. An intervention procedure for data collection was adopted within a mixed, qualitative, quantitative methodology. Participants engaged in individual semi-structured interviews and completed questionnaires before commencement of the six week ESP [Time 1] and at the end of the ESP [Time 2]. Individual, semi-structured interviews at Time 1 and Time 2 were conducted by the researchers in a room specifically designated for this purpose. The open-ended questions employed by the researchers were designed to, at Time 1, provide the participants with an opportunity to recall their prior experiences and describe their expectations of the ESP they were about to embark on and, at Time 2, reflect on their experiences during the ESP, evaluate those experiences and the impact the experience had on their viewpoints related to future employment, education or training. Interviews were recorded to a digital audio recorder and transcribed for qualitative analysis. Scales, validated in prior research, designed to measure general self-efficacy (NGSE) and attitude to enterprise (ATE) were employed in order to trial their appropriateness with this representative NEET participant group and to provide the opportunity for triangulation between the qualitative and quantitative data. The New General Self Efficacy Scale (NGSE) has been tested in prior research and found to be a reliable and valid instrument for measuring general self-efficacy (Chen *et al.,* 2001; Scherbaum *et al.*, 2006). The ATE test was designed to measure 'enterprise potential' in young people and contains five dimensions of latent enterprise potential, which are all consistently associated with theories of entrepreneurship that have been measured previously in empirical studies that assessed entrepreneurship (Athayde, 2009). The five dimensions are: achievement, personal control, creativity, leadership and intuition and it is important to stress that it is young people's attitudes to these dimensions that are measured rather than the dimensions themselves.

The intervention

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

Data

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

Analysis

The method employed to analyse the transcripts of the participant individual semi-structured interviews was 'Constant Comparative Method' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Constant comparative method is an iterative procedure designed for the qualitative analysis of
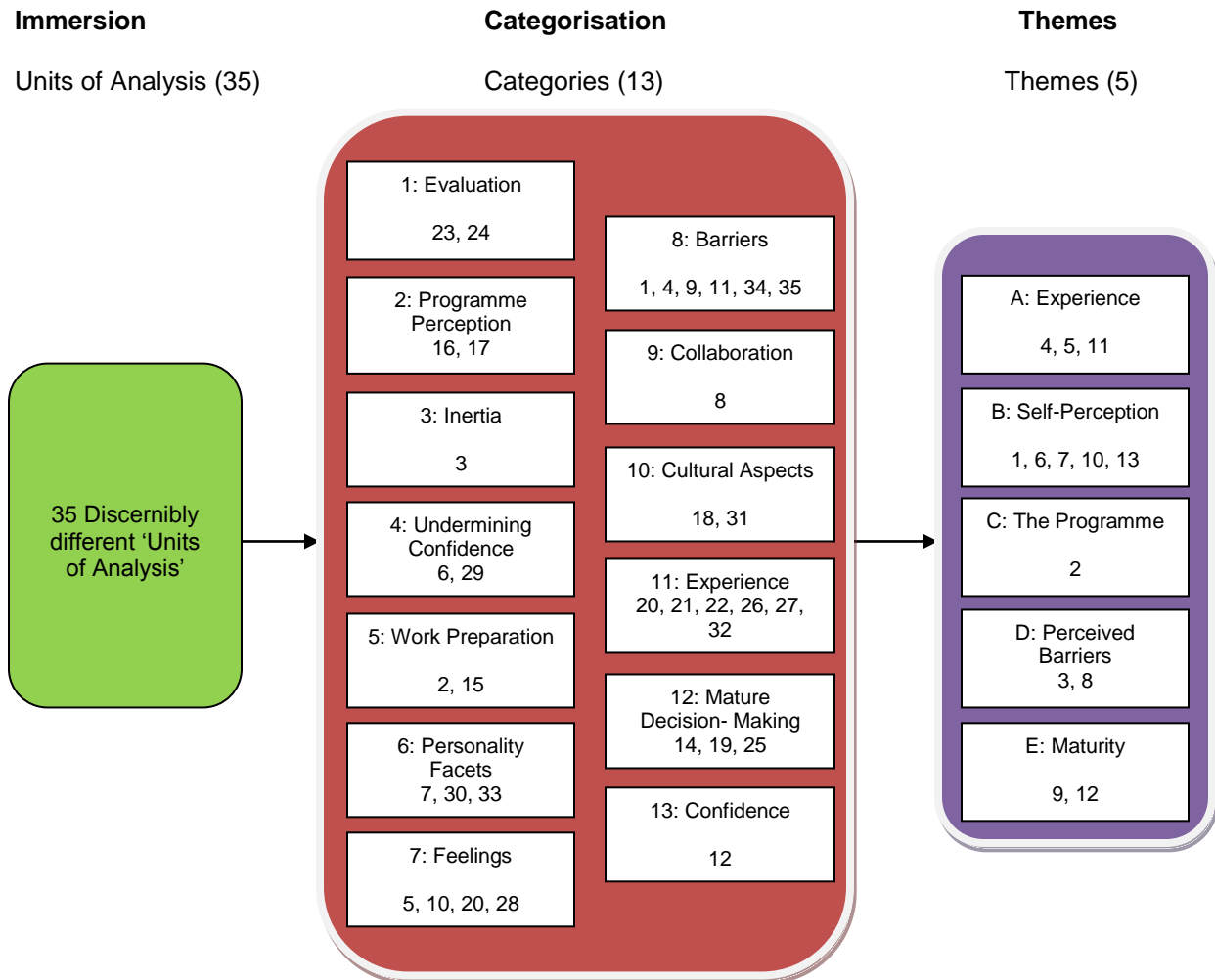
text and is based on 'Grounded Theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constant Comparative Method has been successfully applied in previous studies across a wide range of disciplines from social venture creation (Haugh, 2007) to music composition strategies (Seddon & O'Neill, 2003) and musical communication (Seddon, 2004 & 2005). This method of analysis focuses on a process where categories emerge from the data via inductive reasoning rather than coding the data according to predetermined categories (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Constant Comparative Method involves five main stages and these are listed below.

1. Immersion; 'units of analysis' are identified.
2. Categorisation; 'categories' emerge from the 'units of analysis'.
3. Phenomenological reduction; 'themes' emerge from the 'categories' and are interpreted by the researchers.
4. Triangulation; support for researcher interpretations of 'themes' is sought in additional data.
5. Interpretation; overall interpretation of findings is conducted in relation to prior research and/or theoretical models (McLeod, 1994).

Time 1

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

Figure 1 – Phases of CCM Analysis at Time 1:

Immersion	**Categorisation**	**Themes**

Units of Analysis (35)　　　　Categories (13)　　　　Themes (5)

35 Discernibly different 'Units of Analysis'

Categorisation boxes:

1: Evaluation
23, 24

2: Programme Perception
16, 17

3: Inertia
3

4: Undermining Confidence
6, 29

5: Work Preparation
2, 15

6: Personality Facets
7, 30, 33

7: Feelings
5, 10, 20, 28

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

9: Collaboration
8

10: Cultural Aspects
18, 31

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

12: Mature Decision- Making
14, 19, 25

13: Confidence
12

Themes boxes:

A: Experience
4, 5, 11

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

C: The Programme
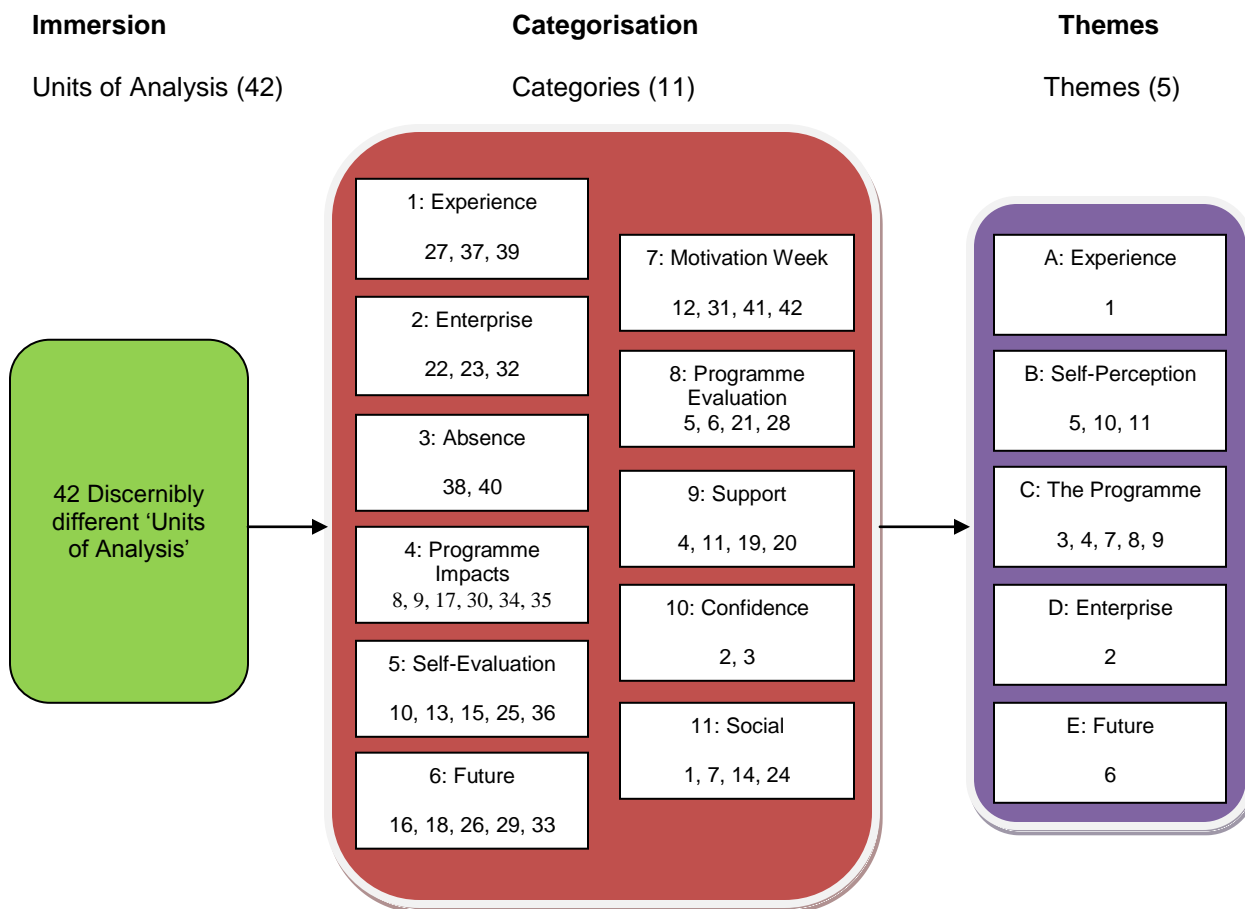2

D: Perceived Barriers
3, 8

E: Maturity
9, 12

NB. The numbers displayed above in Fig. 1 in the 'categories' boxes correspond to the relevant units of analysis contained in that category. A full list of these units of analysis is provided in Appendix A. The numbers in the 'themes' boxes correspond to the relevant category contained in that theme.

Time 2

The same procedure for Time 1 described above was repeated at Time 2. During immersion 42 discernibly different concepts emerged from the data for example, 'business idea'; 'mentoring'; 'assertiveness' and 'career plan'. These concepts were regarded as 'units of analysis'. 'Categorisation' resulted in 11 'categories' emerging from the 42 'units of analysis'. During 'phenomenological reduction', five 'themes' emerged from the 11 'categories'. These five emergent 'themes' were subsequently interpreted by the researchers as 'experience', 'self-perception', 'the programme', 'enterprise' and 'future'. A diagrammatic illustration of this qualitative analysis process is provided for further clarification (see Fig.2 overleaf).

Figure 2 – Phases of CCM Analysis at Time 2:

Immersion

Units of Analysis (42)

Categorisation

Categories (11)

Themes

Themes (5)

42 Discernibly different 'Units of Analysis'

1: Experience

27, 37, 39

2: Enterprise

22, 23, 32

3: Absence

38, 40

4: Programme Impacts

8, 9, 17, 30, 34, 35

5: Self-Evaluation

10, 13, 15, 25, 36

6: Future

16, 18, 26, 29, 33

7: Motivation Week

12, 31, 41, 42

8: Programme Evaluation

5, 6, 21, 28

9: Support

4, 11, 19, 20

10: Confidence

2, 3

11: Social

1, 7, 14, 24

A: Experience

1

B: Self-Perception

5, 10, 11

C: The Programme

3, 4, 7, 8, 9

D: Enterprise

2

E: Future

6

NB. The numbers displayed above in Fig. 2 in the 'categories' boxes correspond to the relevant units of analysis contained in that category. A full list of these units of analysis is provided in Appendix B. The numbers in the 'themes' boxes correspond to the relevant category contained in that theme.

Results and Discussion

Ten overall themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data (five at Time 1 and five at Time 2). Three of the researcher interpreted themes that emerged at Time 1 (i.e., 'experience', 'self-perception' and 'the programme') re-emerged at Time 2. Two of the themes that emerged at Time 1 (i.e., 'perceived barriers' and 'maturity') did not re-emerge at Time 2 but were superseded by two new themes ('enterprise' and 'future'). It is proposed that an examination of the similarities and differences between the themes at Time 1 and Time 2 will provide insights into the impact of the ESP on these NEET participants. In the following discussion the participant quotes selected represent examples taken from a 'unit of analysis' relating to each relevant theme.

'Experience'

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

> "So then, like from the years messing about every day, the teachers started not liking me. So, every time I walk in my lesson, she'll be like: 'No you're out because I know you are

going to mess about'. So, I wouldn't say it's my fault……But it didn't really work out and now I've gotta do everything again and I don't really want to but I'm just going to have to do it." (P4)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The above examples from the T1 interview transcripts, related to prior educational experience, support prior research that reported a link between NEET status and 'social exclusion' predicated on poor academic achievement, low levels of school attendance and exclusion from school based on truancy or bullying (Payne, 2002). The above examples from the T1 interview transcripts, related to prior employment, indicate the transitory nature of employment found by these young people and provides support for research by Bentley & Gurumurthy (1999) who reported that focusing on too 'narrow' a concept of NEET status can lead to failing young people who find transient and insecure employment. The above example from the T2 interview transcript is an example of reported positive impact of the programme on the participant's perceived 'experience'. It is proposed that this example indicates an improvement in participant general self-efficacy based on experiencing some success, positive experience, verbal persuasion and improved psychological state by engaging in the programme and provides support for the findings of prior

research by Chen, Gully & Eden (2001) that reported the augmentation of self-efficacy in relation to these experiences.

'Self-perception'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'The programme'

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

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

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

"It [the programme] *sounded like something that could move my life on from where I am rather than being stuck in the same place like I have been for the past two and a half years."* (P3)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Well at first, just because of the way it was explained to me, it was explained to me that I thought it was about building a business plan and I thought it was like E2E business links. I was expecting something similar to that but it wasn't it was different. You got to coming up with your own ideas but this one is about getting you to go forward with what you want

to do and that's what your mentors come in and do and that's what they help you with. They try and get you to set your goals and then they try and get you there. It was good." (P5)

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

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

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

The above examples from the T1 interview transcripts reveal that the participants expected a range of activities and outcomes from the programme. Some participants saw the programme as an opportunity to get a work placement, others an opportunity to develop a business idea. Some thought the programme would result in a 'paper' qualification but they all saw it as an opportunity to 'move forward' in their lives, which they felt had stagnated. It is interesting to note that the comments at Time 2 centred on intrinsic changes in the participant's outlook, described as 'different frame of mind', 'sorting my head out' and 'motivating', resulting from what they describe as unexpected course content and delivery, rather than the extrinsic outcomes they described at Time 1. It is proposed that by raising the participant's awareness of enterprise through providing programme content that taught *for* enterprise rather than *about* enterprise (Kirby, 2004) and providing positive role-models through the 'mentors' (Curran & Blackburn, 1989; Lewis, 2005) participant's attitudes to employment, education and enterprise were transformed.

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

'Perceived barriers'

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

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

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

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

In contrast to the 'perceived barriers', some participants revealed a more 'mature' approach to their future employment prospects by articulating that sometimes, initially, you might have to take a job that you don't like and doesn't appear to have prospects in order to create more future opportunities; or that you may have to relocate to find work or collaborate sometimes to start a business:

'Maturity'

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

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

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

The theme 'perceived barriers' outlined above exemplifies how young people who have suffered from social exclusion, predicated on poor academic achievement or debilitating psychological states can develop negative self-efficacy, which can impact on their ability to succeed in finding employment or engagement in enterprising activities (Lucas & Cooper, 2005; McLellan, Barakat & Winfield, 2009). However, not all of the participants expressed these levels of negativity. Some adopted a more 'mature' approach as exemplified above and this differentiation highlights the problems of treating NEETs as a homogenous group (Yates & Payne, 2006).

A theme of 'enterprise' did emerge at Time 2 but starting a business was considered to be a possibility for the more long term future rather than something they would engage with in the immediate future. However, the emergence of this theme would suggest that participant's attitude to enterprise had changed in as much as they now considered it a possibility for sometime in the future. For this NEET group, change was manifested in two of the three ways proposed by Rust & Golombok (1989) (i.e. cognitive, affective and behavioural) participant NEET's beliefs (cognitive) and emotions (affective) changed but accompanying actions (behavioural) may not manifest themselves until much later.

'Enterprise'

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

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

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

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

'Future'

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

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

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

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

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

"Finding jobs that I want to do rather than just doing it for money. Do you know what I mean? I would rather do something that I am liking than just go to a place for money." (P5)

Summary

Researcher interpretations of the emergent themes from Time 1 and Time 2 reveal the positive impact of this ESP on participant NEET's motivation, confidence and attitude to enterprise. It is proposed that increases in confidence articulated by the participants were actually increases in self-efficacy because they were often expressed in relation to specific tasks completed during the programme. Successful task completion creates mastery experiences, which are at the centre of efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1997). Also, increased motivation and positive self-perception are two personality facets that have been linked to self-efficacy (Pajares, 1996; Lucas and Cooper, 2005). The emergence of the theme 'enterprise', which was based on positive changes in participant's beliefs (cognitive) and emotions (affective), adds support to the notion that 'enterprise potential' can be measured through young people's attitude to dimensions of latent enterprise potential (Athayde, 2009).

Support for researcher interpretations of the emergent themes was found in the results of the quantitative data collected in the NGSE and ATE questionnaires and participants reported no problems completing them. Descriptive statistics produced from this quantitative data revealed overall increases in general self-efficacy and attitude to enterprise in this participant NEET group. The small number of participants involved in the current study negates any possible statistical significance or generalisation based on these descriptive statistics however; the results do provide support for researcher interpretations of the emergent themes through the process of triangulation (McLeod, 1994). It is also good to be able to report that five of the six participants from the current study are still positively engaged in employment, education or training indicating the success of this programme in terms of its 'hard' outcomes.

Based on the findings of the current study, the researchers propose that future evaluation of ESPs delivered by WISEs with large groups of NEETs could be undertaken by employing questionnaires designed to measure general self-efficacy (NGSE) and attitude to enterprise (ATE) within an intervention methodology. The advantages of this type of quantitative procedure would be the potential to produce statistically significant difference between Time 1 and Time 2 revealing a relationship between positive outcomes for participant NEETs and the ESP delivered. A significant result with a sufficiently large participant group would enable generalisation to the wider NEET population. This type of evaluation would be useful for WISEs reporting back to funders regarding the efficacy of their ESPs. The potential problem with this quantitative approach is the underlying assumption that NEETs are a homogeneous entity, which is arguably, inaccurate (Yates & Payne, 2006). Given that prior research has reported that NEETs are a heterogeneous and complex entity (Yates & Payne, 2006), which is supported by the findings of the current study, it is unlikely that a 'standardised' ESP would prove effective for all NEETs. Perhaps the only truly valid and reliable evaluation of ESPs are small scale qualitative studies that allow for the delivery of 'bespoke' programmes that take into account the heterogeneous nature of the NEET population? Future research could address these important issues. The results of the proposed research could ultimately provide a rigorous and comprehensive means to evaluate ESPs delivered by WISEs for the benefit of NEETs. Valid and reliable measures of soft and hard outcomes of ESPs also provides the opportunity to fulfil our ethical responsibilities by ensuring WISEs deliver high quality ESPs for the benefit of these vulnerable young people.

Appendix A – Units of Analysis Key - Cohort 1 at Time 1:

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

Appendix B – Units of Analysis Key - Cohort 1 at Time 2:

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

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