

## Chapter 18

# ICT, Enterprise Education and Intercultural Learning

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### ABSTRACT

*Little attention has been paid to the role of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in enabling schools to work together in joint enterprise partnerships. This article reports on a school-based enterprise initiative which involved both primary and secondary school teachers working across an international frontier. The main findings of this research show that when ICT was used to link schools, it enabled a wide range of enterprise work to be carried out, particularly in the development of 'soft' skills. In primary schools, the ease of linking enterprise to the curricula in two different jurisdictions by teachers in well-established school partnerships led to high use of communication tools and strong collaborative learning. In secondary schools, in spite of timetabling difficulties and lack of prior experience between partners, links were made between a range of business studies courses and ICT helped to make enterprise far more than an academic subject. Overall, the evidence suggests that when students were working closely in teams across a national boundary, they developed a wide range of inter-personal skills that have been identified as important characteristics in enterprise work (Man & Yu, 2007) and for intercultural understanding (Deuchar, 2004).*

### INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was to examine how Information Communication Technology (ICT) might be used to support the theme of enterprise in a group of primary and secondary schools in

Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The objectives of the study were to examine the effects of ICT usage on pupils' understanding of enterprise and to examine whether working towards a common enterprise goal impacted on pupils' intercultural understanding.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-2017-9.ch018

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Analysis of previous work on enterprise education in schools indicates that while there has been extensive government support in developed countries for the promotion of ‘enterprise’ as a discreet or embedded aspect of the curriculum, (Atkins, 2005; Broz, 2003; Lewis & Massey, 2003; Miller, 2006; Paterson, 2009; Rolfe & Crowley, 2008) there remains considerable debate about the precise nature of such work, and in particular whether enterprise should be closely aligned with the needs of business or should be seen as a wider means of promoting imagination, risk-taking and creativity (Fagan, 2006; Leffler, 2009). There is also discussion about whether entrepreneurship can be taught (De Faoite et al., 2003) and whether skills such as cooperation can be learned and motivation improved in an entrepreneurial context (Hyatti & O’Gorman, 2004). The importance of social interaction in enterprise activities has been highlighted in a study carried out in Hong Kong (Man & Yu, 2007) which concluded that, for effective implementation of enterprise programmes and activities, it is necessary to develop participants’ interpersonal skills through group learning activities. This is particularly relevant for the work we undertook. Research in Northern Ireland echoes the need for more training in enterprise skills, particularly those affective skills such as communication and team work which are emphasized by many researchers as essential (McGuinness et al., 2008).

The common thread in the reports on these school-based enterprise projects is that learning is made meaningful by linking it with the real world and developing broad-based skills such as enterprise and communications - which is why employers have been keen to support such initiatives.

The curricula in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland show signs of moving towards a greater emphasis on skills and capabili-

ties at the centre of learning rather than discreet subject knowledge (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment 2010, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 1999). In Northern Ireland, there has been a particularly strong drive to promote enterprise because of the relatively high level of the work force employed in the public sector (Austin & Anderson, 2008). Schools in both jurisdictions have been supported by voluntary organisations set up to promote enterprise, Junior Achievement in the Republic of Ireland and Young Enterprise in Northern Ireland.

Analysis of previous research on enterprise in schools reveals that little work has been done to examine the role that ICT can play in enabling schools to work together on joint enterprise partnerships. This is surprising given the critical role that ICT has been found to play in increasing productivity and revenue in business, (Qiang, Clarke, & Halewood, 2006) and in the ways that ICT work in schools has been linked to the needs of the economy (Northern Ireland Economic Council, 1989).

### **The Role of ICT in School Partnerships for Intercultural Education**

There has been a limited recognition of the place of ICT in making links between schools to forge intercultural education but recent work has started to show some important differences about the purpose and management of such links and the ways that different technologies are deployed. Research by Austin et al. (2010) has consistently stressed the importance of group to group learning, based on the principles of social psychology and in particular of the contact hypothesis (Tausch, Schmid, & Hewstone, 2010). In support of this their work has made use of both real-time video-conferencing links in addition to group discussion in a Virtual Learning Environment and face to face contact to enable teachers to use almost any

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