



Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enterprise at the United Nations in Geneva

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On 19-21 January I was pleased to represent enterprise educators at the 2011 Multi-year Expert Meeting on enterprise at the United Nations in Geneva. The discussions highlighted a view that entrepreneurship education should be embedded as an integral part of economic development and that a life-long learning approach to entrepreneurship was needed, with governments being encouraged to pay particular attention to providing access to these types of study

The Deputy-Secretary General of UNCTAD (United Nations Council for Trade and Development) indicated that the emphasis on entrepreneurship education and innovation policies could not be timelier and that educational and public research institutions should receive particular attention, as they were central elements of the national innovation system. It was further emphasized that policy should support a better reflection of technical and human capital requirements of firms, both in university curricula and decisions regarding research agendas.

Australia was represented by Colin Jones of Tasmania, who many of you will know from the very first EL-SIG and the closing plenary at IEEC 2010 in Cardiff. Together with Canadian Victoria Lennox of the international student enterprise body iCUE, we strove to get educator and student perspectives across to the 300 or so international delegations, most of whom were appointed government representatives from their respective embassies. Following our presentations, and acting very much as a team, we took questions alongside ten other state nominated 'experts' for over two hours.

A key discussion surrounded the issues of who was best placed to deliver enterprise education, with the consensus being that only appropriately trained educators could lead the learning process. Teaching the teachers will become a priority and the European Union representative informed us that this would be the focus of an imminent policy meeting. It was accepted that not all educators had the capacity to undertake this, as teaching should be innovative and experiential - learning by doing. The development of an appropriate 'ecosystem' to support educators was also considered important, so

that strategic partnerships between educators, students and industry would be more easily facilitated.

Mindful of last year's CMI / NESTA research, which criticised the lack of innovation in business leadership courses, specifically with regard to the need to develop abilities to generate ideas, not just to evaluate them, I made arguments that, due to assessment issues within the HE sector, we need to refocus on process indicators, as opposed to purely outcome assessment. I am pleased to say that this issue, often discussed within the EL-SIG, has been referenced in the draft report.

As many of you will already know, this year I also chair Enterprise Educators UK, a network that includes HE and FE educators from beyond the business school environment. A lesson learned some time back and highlighted by the HEA's Paul Ramsden, was refreshed in the discussions at the UN in Geneva. This is the simple fact that trans-disciplinary approaches are needed in enterprise education, and the more that we listen to colleagues beyond our disciplinary boundaries, the more able we will be to address the UK government's call for this to be the most enterprising of decades.