



Taken for granted or wilfully ignored? Seeking legitimacy for the entrepreneurship educator.

Journal:	<i>International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research</i>
Manuscript ID	IJEER-08-2023-0841.R4
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Enterprise Education, Entrepreneurship Education, Institutions, Institutional Theory, Learning

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

Taken for granted or wilfully ignored? Seeking legitimacy for the entrepreneurship educator.

Abstract

Purpose –This study offers insights into how the entrepreneurship educator is legitimised in higher education.

Design/methodology/approach – This exploratory study is based on content analysis of 73 university programme specifications, 61 university strategies, and 35 job advertisements. The study uses Suchman's (1995) conceptualisation of organisational legitimacy to assist in categorising the results according to type of legitimacy.

Findings –Connections are made between the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator and wider societal discourses surrounding the legitimacy of enterprise/entrepreneurship as expressed in university strategies. Attempts to legitimise the entrepreneurship educator specifically, as opposed to 'the educator' more broadly understood, are quite limited. Programme specifications mainly offer a cognitive form of legitimacy relating to teaching, with elements of pragmatic legitimacy arising from educators' links to industry and research prowess. Job descriptions are more focused on the educator's research as a form of legitimation.

Originality/value –The concept of legitimacy, despite widespread application in other disciplines, has found very limited application in the study of entrepreneurship education. Using three sources of data, the paper offers a first application of Suchman's (1995) conceptualisation of legitimacy to entrepreneurship education. It thereby offers a critical perspective on the role of the entrepreneurship educator as shaped by institutional norms.

Research implications: The study creates a baseline of knowledge surrounding the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator, which raises important questions as to how the educator is supposed to add value in relation to different stakeholders.

Keywords – Entrepreneurship education, enterprise education, entrepreneurship educator, legitimacy, strategic legitimacy, institutional legitimacy, systemic, cognitive legitimacy, pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy

Introduction

Despite, or possibly as a result of its "meteoric rise" (Liguori and Winkler, 2019, p.148), the issue of Entrepreneurship Education's (EE) legitimacy is rarely questioned directly (Foliard *et al.*, 2019; Le Pontois, 2019; Radu-Lefebvre and Redien-Collot, 2012). Certainly, within the UK recent work (Pittaway *et al.*, 2023) demonstrates that at a broad level EE is largely legitimized at a societal level. However, EE has faced legitimacy challenges (Kuratko, 2005; Katz, 2008); the purpose, outcomes and certainly how EE is taught continue to be questioned (Jones and Matlay, 2011; Loi *et al.*, 2021; Berglund *et al.*, 2020; Hägg, 2023). To date the concept of legitimacy is seldom applied explicitly to studies of EE despite legitimacy assuming an important place in the social sciences (Weber, 1924[1978]; Parsons, 1960) as it is used to explain individuals' behaviour, as well as the behavior of organisations (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Díez-Martín *et al.*, 2021). Legitimacy also features prominently in entrepreneurship in relation to new venture creation and growth (O'Toole and Ciuchta, 2020; Delmar and Shane, 2004; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002).

1
2
3 This study applies legitimacy theory to help understand the entrepreneurship educator role;
4 specifically, what is expected of the educator. There exists increased demand for entrepreneurship
5 educators (Hägg & Kurczewska, 2021) who are critical to the delivery of EE. Educators' actions
6 impact students' learning. But educators are not free to do as they please; entrepreneurship
7 educators operate in environments that legitimise them and their behavior. What counts as
8 legitimate reflects societal notions of value; society expects educators' behavior to conform to what
9 it regards as being valued.
10
11

12 However, an application of the concept of legitimacy to EE and even more specifically to the
13 entrepreneurship educator remains almost entirely absent from the literature (Le Pontois, 2019,
14 p.159, claims "the legitimacy of entrepreneurship teachers is rarely posed"). Exceptions include Le
15 Pontois' (2019) and Foliard *et al.*'s (2019) work although their studies adopt a more 'local' approach
16 at understanding the educator's legitimacy, that is, within the departments and institution within
17 which the educator is based. There is evidently nothing wrong with this individual approach, which is
18 also worthy of further exploration, and yet it is important to recognize the distinction to this paper.
19 Here we ask at a more fundamental level i.e. in broader terms how the entrepreneurship educator is
20 legitimized, what is the source of the educator's legitimacy? We do not explore how a specific
21 educator seeks legitimacy for themselves within a particular organizational setting (i.e. we are
22 looking at the category 'entrepreneurship educator'). This distinction is important because the
23 limited work on the educator's legitimacy tends to focus on this individual-educator perspective (e.g.
24 Le Pontois, 2019, and Foliard *et al.*, 2019).
25
26
27
28

29 Drawing on legitimacy theory, and in particular Suchman's (1995) work, this study firstly seeks to
30 understand how the institutional environment (societal discourses) legitimises entrepreneurship
31 (institutional legitimacy) in university strategies, the legitimacy of entrepreneurship providing a
32 necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator (see
33 Figure 1 and in particular the arrows depicting institutional legitimacy). This university strategy
34 perspective does not solely serve to establish that there is legitimacy for entrepreneurship, which
35 we may well expect given the largely positive regard towards entrepreneurship in society, but it tells
36 us something about the nature of this legitimacy, which has implications for the foundation of the
37 entrepreneurship educator's legitimacy. The study thereby responds to Pittaway *et al.*, (2023),
38 specifically their recognition that any one approach at understanding the phenomenon of EE's
39 development and place in society is only going to provide a partial perspective. Therefore, further
40 studies that draw on a range of data are required to provide a fuller picture relating to the status of
41 EE in the UK (Pittaway *et al.*, 2023). With its focus on university documentation (strategies,
42 programme specifications and job advertisements) as a hitherto under-explored source of data
43 relating to EE in the UK, this study provides an HE-specific focus on the nature of the
44 entrepreneurship educator's legitimacy.
45
46
47
48

49 <FIGURE 1 APPROXIMATELY HERE>

50 As we can see in Figure 1, strategic legitimacy is a response by individual organisations to
51 institutional legitimacy pressures (Suchman, 1995). Strategic legitimacy seeks to signal to society the
52 legitimacy of the organisation. By understanding strategic legitimacy we are able to infer what is
53 valued in society (here in relation to the value of entrepreneurship). We do not suggest the way
54 entrepreneurship is presented in university strategies provides a complete picture of EE's legitimacy
55 in the UK, and yet we do suggest that university strategies will reflect to a large extent how
56 universities interpret institutional legitimacy as it relates to entrepreneurship. We suggest that
57 universities act as both receivers of institutional legitimacy signals, and conveyers of strategic
58 legitimacy (see Suchman, 1995). The study then explores how universities are legitimising the
59
60

educator more directly in programme specifications and job descriptions. Both sources of data should, as outward facing documents (i.e. 'consumption' outside the university), provide some strategic legitimization of the educator (because the university seeks to demonstrate its legitimacy). According to legitimacy theory, university documentation will reflect what societal expectations are regarding entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education and the entrepreneurship educator.

Our overarching research question therefore is "What is the foundation of the entrepreneurship educator's legitimacy in higher education?" whereby our setting is the United Kingdom (UK). The following research sub-questions are proposed and are elaborated upon in the literature review but see also Figure 1:

1a) How is entrepreneurship legitimized in university strategies/how do universities respond to institutional legitimacy?

1b) How do undergraduate enterprise/entrepreneurship programme specifications and job descriptions for entrepreneurship educators legitimize the entrepreneurship educator?

1c) What is the connection between the legitimacy of entrepreneurship as expressed in university strategies and the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator as expressed in programme specifications and job descriptions?

We do not seek to provide a definitive answer, which a single study is not likely to be able to provide, but offer evidence from a base of data and using a theoretical foundation that has hitherto not been offered in the literature.

The paper unfolds as follows: The literature review begins by reviewing the concept of legitimacy and provides an overview of Suchman's (1995) work specifically, distinguishing between institutional and strategic legitimacy. Subsequently, we review the literature surrounding legitimacy in entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education and also that of the entrepreneurship educator. This follows the logic that the starting point for understanding what provides the entrepreneurship educator with legitimacy is the legitimacy of entrepreneurship education. The legitimacy of entrepreneurship education must itself be based on the legitimacy of entrepreneurship. The study then outlines the three sources of data used in the study: university strategies, entrepreneurship programme specifications and job descriptions for entrepreneurship educators, alongside a rationale for why these sources were selected and how they were analysed. The study's findings are then similarly structured around these three data sources with a discussion and conclusion drawing together the broader meaning of the results. Limitations and implications are provided.

Literature Review

To position the study, we firstly review its relationship to legitimacy theory. Numerous perspectives of legitimacy exist (Woodward *et al.*, 1996), but frequently the concept is regarded as the conformity of actions to societal expectations (Suchman, 1995; Dornbusch and Scott, 1975). Within the organisational legitimacy literature, a strong focus has been on legitimacy seeking behaviour. This is where Suchman (1995) distinguishes between institutional and strategic legitimacy. The former relates to an 'outward looking in' perspective, that is it relates to the institutional pressures faced by the organisation that determine what is legitimate. Understood in this sense organisations operate under a societal mandate without which they would cease to exist (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Shocker and Sethi, 1973). There are strong links here to Institutional Theory (e.g. North, 1990;

Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 2001) with its emphasis on cultural norms, values and beliefs which help explain organisational behaviour.

Strategic legitimacy is 'inward looking out' in that it relates to the organisation's attempts to garner legitimacy, i.e. having an understanding of what is regarded as legitimate via societal discourses, the organisation attempts to convey via legitimating behaviour and signals its legitimacy to the environment (Figure 1). In this paper the focus is primarily on strategic legitimacy, and yet institutional and strategic legitimacy are two sides of the same coin (Suchman, 1995). Strategic legitimacy is a response to institutional legitimacy; by observing strategic legitimating behavior we also learn about what society regards as legitimate, specifically in relation to entrepreneurship within higher education. Focussing only on one source of data, here university strategies, to gain insights into the institutional legitimacy of entrepreneurship education is only going to provide a partial perspective. Nonetheless, we maintain it is a valid source of data and one that has to the authors' knowledge not been the focus of EE's legitimacy to date (in the UK). It is also particularly instructive in helping understand the educator's legitimacy as the universities set boundaries around what the educator can and cannot do, what is, and what is not expected of them (Wraae and Walmsley, 2020).

In seeking legitimacy, not only must the organisation demonstrate it is behaving appropriately (in accordance with laws and customs), but it also needs to demonstrate the relevance (or usefulness/value) of its activities (Woodward *et al.*, 1996; Parsons, 1960). This is also reflected in Suchman's (1995, p.574) frequently-cited definition of legitimacy which refers to desirability as well as appropriateness of behaviour. Thus, strategic legitimacy goes beyond appropriateness but needs to demonstrate value and desirability. Applied to our paper this would mean identifying how the educator adds value and/or undertakes activities that are regarded as valuable/desirable. What is regarded as valuable/desirable must draw in part on institutional legitimacy (see Figure 1).

Suchman (1995) identified three different 'behavioural dynamics' (Suchman 1995, p.577) at play in strategic legitimacy. The first, pragmatic legitimacy is a kind of 'exchange legitimacy' where the organisation seeks to achieve certain behaviour outcomes on the part of its constituents (or stakeholders) as a result of its legitimacy seeking behaviour (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975); for the individual higher education institution (HEI) this desired behavior could be student enrolments, receiving university funding, collaboration with other HEIs, approval from quality assurance bodies etc. Moral legitimacy on the other hand is not about whether legitimacy seeking behaviour might benefit the evaluator, but rather whether they will judge the organisation's behaviour as morally appropriate (the 'right thing to do' Suchman, 1995, p.579). As Suchman (1995) recognises, this prosocial behaviour may not be entirely free from self-interest and the corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature has covered this perspective in some detail (e.g. Du and Viera Jr., 2012).

A final form of organisational legitimacy proposed by Suchman (1995) is termed 'cognitive legitimacy'. Rather than relating to an evaluation (whether moral or beneficial), cognitive legitimacy is about resonance with an individual's (stakeholders') belief systems; it is about trying to make something understood by meshing it with the audience's experience of their daily lives (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). Essentially, it is based on the notion of being able to be understood; we accept something if we can understand it/if we are familiar with it. These three forms of strategic legitimacy provide a framework with which this study seeks to understand legitimacy-seeking behaviour as it relates to the entrepreneurship educator.

Entrepreneurship Educator Legitimacy

Whereas the previous section established the broader theoretical framework in legitimacy theory, this section locates the study within an EE setting. Because of the very limited reference to legitimacy theory in the EE arena, we are not suggesting this study builds on a clearly developed and developing body of work, but do acknowledge how this study contributes to contemporary debates. Specifically, this section firstly considers the broader societal context surrounding the notion of enterprise/entrepreneurship. Secondly, the importance of entrepreneurship education's legitimacy is discussed. Finally, we discuss how the educator (i.e. the category 'entrepreneurship educator') and their legitimacy is also bound by HE sector and individual university norms and values. Thus, what is legitimate in society is passed down via institutions to the HE sector. Here, university strategies offer a dual function of picking up societal cues and conveying these to stakeholders within the organisation, while also trying to legitimise the university to external stakeholders (society) (see also Figure 1). Programme specifications and job descriptions fulfil more of a strategic legitimisation function (see Figure 1).

Legitimacy in entrepreneurship is largely applied in the context of new organisations tackling the liability of newness (Stinchcombe, 1965; Bruton *et al.*, 2008; Yousafzai *et al.*, 2015). Less emphasis exists in relation to how public sector organisations seek legitimacy via their entrepreneurial credentials, though some universities try to present themselves as entrepreneurial (Johannisson, 2016; Henry, 2020). Johannisson (2016) also suggests that in some instances little evidence of being entrepreneurial actually exists, the main thing for the university is to be seen as being entrepreneurial (which underlines that an entity may be regarded as legitimate whereby it is not). Further studies have considered the legitimacy of entrepreneurship as a field of research/study (e.g. Gartner, 1990; Thrane *et al.*, 2016).

In trying to understand the legitimacy of the educator we can seek to understand what threats might question their legitimacy. Institutional legitimacy is provided by cultural understandings, the norms within which behaviour takes place (mirroring Institutional Theory, North, 1990; Scott, 2001; Meyer, 1977). Not only is entrepreneurship facilitated and/or constrained implicitly by social norms, explicitly, legislation and policy prerogatives equally shape the environment within which entrepreneurship occurs (see for example Pittaway *et al.*, 2023, and Wadhvani and Viebig, 2021). Here we argue that regarding social norms and cultural understandings, the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator cannot be separated from the legitimacy of entrepreneurship. Put differently, the cornerstone of the entrepreneurship educator's legitimacy is the legitimacy of entrepreneurship itself. In this context it is worth noting that societal legitimisation can also result in homogenisation of what is being offered, the so-called McDonaldisation of EE provision (Brentnall *et al.*, 2023; Hytti, 2018). Institutional constraints put boundaries around what does, and does not, count as legitimate entrepreneurship education which may lead to uniformity of EE provision.

Even though enterprise and entrepreneurship (henceforth we mean both when we write of entrepreneurship) tend to have the ear of policy makers because of their relationship to economic growth and development (Acs, 2006; Baumol, 2002), the policy environment surrounding the provision of EE and therefore also what EE means and how it is legitimised changes over time (Gibb, Pittaway *et al.*, 2023; Wadhvani and Viebig, 2021). Furthermore, entrepreneurship does not have to be regarded as uniformly positive, and in certain circumstances EE must seek to legitimise itself (Radu-Lefebvre and Redien-Collot, 2012). Gibb (2011) recognises ideological barriers to the delivery of EE among some educators who associate it with capitalism and commercialisation, similar to Cooper *et al.*, (2004) who acknowledge that the entrepreneur may be associated with greed, exploitation and unseemly behaviour, acknowledging that "some academic faculties give little

1
2
3 credibility to entrepreneurship as an appropriate area of study“(Cooper *et al.*, 2004, p.12). Along the
4 same lines, Berglund and Johansson (2012) argue for what they term a polarized entrepreneurship
5 discourse that idolizes the entrepreneur with its disconnection from the everyday life of acting
6 entrepreneurially. Hytti and Heinonen (2013) then also indicate how this discourse may negatively
7 affect students’ engagement with EE. In other words, we only get insights into the “bright sides of
8 entrepreneurship”, i.e. the typical policy discourse about entrepreneurship’s contribution to
9 economic growth and development which also idolises entrepreneurs. This discourse has hence
10 affected how individuals and collectives believe how to enact entrepreneurship (Berglund and
11 Johansson, 2012), with potential implications of what and how entrepreneurship should be taught.
12 We are nonetheless reminded by Neck and Corbett (2018) that there is a great deal of variation at
13 an international level as to what counts as EE, and how entrepreneurship should be taught.
14
15

16
17 Furthermore, largely positive societal views of entrepreneurship do not necessarily mean EE is
18 regarded as a legitimate subject of study in higher education (this is a further challenge to the
19 legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator). Society may regard entrepreneurship positively, and
20 yet not believe it is possible to teach entrepreneurship. In the UK, for example, there has been
21 growing questioning of the value of certain degrees as they are not seen as sufficiently vocationally
22 orientated – Le Pontois (2019) in her investigation of the legitimacy of the educator also points to a
23 tension between the culture of the university and entrepreneurial culture. Here we draw a
24 distinction between having a positive view of entrepreneurship and having a positive view of
25 entrepreneurship education. Discrepancy between positive attitudes to entrepreneurship and
26 negative attitudes towards the teaching of entrepreneurship at universities would undermine the
27 legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator. This is not a purely academic consideration as the
28 content, scope and efficacy of EE continue to engender debate (Loi *et al.*, 2021; Berglund *et al.*,
29 2020; Pittaway *et al.*, 2023) with implications for practice. In this regard Matthews (2018, p.xvii)
30 claims: “I know of no other academic (or non-academic for that matter) discipline that has allowed
31 itself to be so abused and ultimately hijacked by others when it comes to what the discipline actually
32 is.” This confusion is also reflected to a degree in Neck and Corbett’s (2018) findings where in a
33 Delphi study of international ‘top’ entrepreneurship educators some consensus but also variation
34 existed as to the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of EE. Furthermore, entrepreneurship is not a traditional academic
35 subject, and, as an “action-based phenomenon...rather than focussing on the conventional delivery,
36 testing and critical assessment of knowledge inputs” (Gibb 2011, p.148) may undermine its
37 legitimacy within the traditional academic community (Decker-Lange *et al.*, 2024; Hägg and
38 Gabrielsson, 2020; Le Pontois, 2019). Similarly, a number of recent papers question the overly
39 positive messages conveyed about entrepreneurship in EE, with a concomitant downplaying of the
40 negative or ‘dark’ sides of entrepreneurship (Bandera *et al.*, 2020; De Sordi *et al.*, 2021; Tamalge and
41 Gassert, 2020), where Shepherd (2019) sees much merit in entrepreneurship scholars exploring the
42 negative aspects of entrepreneurship.
43
44

45
46 On the assumption that society, in the main, values entrepreneurship, and that society can see value
47 in entrepreneurship education, the question arises as to what the characteristics and behavior of the
48 legitimate entrepreneurship educator are? Thus, what the educator does is similarly shaped by
49 sector values and expectations (Foliard *et al.*, 2019), whether these have been made explicit (for
50 example in subject benchmark statements) or implicitly via HE cultural norms. As our data also
51 demonstrate (see further details in the findings section), there is much consistency in university
52 strategies (see ‘McDonaldisation’ as per Brentnall *et al.*, 2023 and Hytti, 2018). Key themes and
53 presentation formats are understandable where institutional agendas are set via government policy
54 and societal expectations (institutional legitimacy at the macro level), but an element of ‘mimetic
55 isomorphism’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) very likely also plays a role; institutions copy other
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 institutions in their sector that they feel are legitimate. Thus, the entrepreneurship educator in
4 general may be regarded as legitimate, but only insofar as they adopt certain behaviours (e.g.
5 teaching approaches, also engage in research, whether they have created and run their own
6 businesses etc.). We speculate there may be some variation therefore with regard to what counts as
7 a legitimate entrepreneurship educator at an individual institution (university) level (see also Le
8 Pontois, 2019, and Wraae and Walmsley, 2020).
9

10
11 This leads to a final point we make in locating this study theoretically. An emerging body of literature
12 has started to explore the concept of an entrepreneurial education ecosystem to which the
13 individual university is key (Belitski and Heron, 2017; Brush 2021, 2014). Gibb (2011) although not
14 mentioning ecosystems directly identifies how interpretations of entrepreneurship at the level of
15 the university will determine how EE is embedded and delivered throughout the institution (how it is
16 legitimised). Other studies have empirically demonstrated how interpretations of entrepreneurship
17 and managerial practices affect teachers' attitudes toward EE as well as its implementation
18 (Hämäläinen *et al.*, 2022; Peltonen 2015). This systems perspective is also found in work that looks
19 at EE being constituted of dialogic relationships between its stakeholders at the community level
20 (Jones and Matlay, 2011; Wraae and Walmsley, 2020). From the entrepreneurship educator's
21 perspective, planning and executing EE is linked to support they perceive they have from their higher
22 education institution (Lee *et al.*, 2015; Nikou *et al.*, 2023), which we argue will similarly reflect
23 societal expectations (Figure 1). Le Pontois' (2019) investigation of the legitimacy of the
24 entrepreneurship educator takes this more localised approach, and rightly from this micro-
25 perspective suggests the educator's legitimacy derives from a number of sources: students, the
26 institution (university), peers, external organisations, and the educator him/herself. In this study we
27 tie the educator's legitimacy (regarding the category of the 'entrepreneurship educator') to a macro
28 perspective of institutional legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). This macro perspective will nonetheless be
29 reflected to a degree in individual stakeholder beliefs and attitudes towards EE.
30
31
32
33
34

35 In sum, the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator is contingent on the legitimacy of
36 entrepreneurship and the legitimacy of entrepreneurship education. While societal discourses will
37 largely shape this legitimacy, there is also scope for individual institutions' interpretation of what is
38 legitimate. Different universities will set their strategy and agendas upon their interpretation of
39 societal prerogatives. Universities operate both as conveyors of legitimacy signals internally, while
40 also acting to present themselves as legitimate institutions externally (strategic legitimacy)(Figure 1).
41 This can be done via pragmatic (exchange legitimacy - trying to demonstrate value to society), moral
42 (because it is the right thing to do irrespective of whether it benefits the university) or cognitive
43 (because it makes sense – legitimacy comes from being able to be understood) legitimacy (Suchman,
44 1995).
45
46

47 **Methodology**

48 There are no other studies, to the best of our knowledge, that have researched the legitimacy of the
49 category of the entrepreneurship educator from an institutional perspective. Therefore, the study
50 does not test any specific theory or hypotheses but explores what the foundation of the educator's
51 legitimacy is, drawing on Suchman's (1995) conceptualisation of legitimacy. The study draws on
52 content analysis of three types of documents: university strategies, undergraduate programme
53 specifications in enterprise/entrepreneurship and job specifications for entrepreneurship educators
54 (see Table 1). Although the study deals therefore with text rather than numbers, we do not equate
55 our analysis with an in-depth interpretive inquiry; rather we document what value is ascribed to
56 entrepreneurship in university strategies, and what value is associated with the entrepreneurship
57 educator in programme specifications and job descriptions. We then also attempt to categorise the
58
59
60

1
2
3 nature of strategic legitimacy as it pervades these documents drawing on Suchman's (1995) three-
4 fold strategic legitimacy classification.
5

6 University strategies were selected for analysis because they are key strategic legitimisation
7 documents. Although not the only function of a university strategy, they do play a crucial role in
8 conveying the value the university offers to its stakeholders, and society more generally. Because
9 the starting point for the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator is the legitimacy of what s/he
10 teaches, i.e. entrepreneurship, we seek to understand the extent to which universities use
11 entrepreneurship as a legitimisation mechanism (research question 1a). University strategies were
12 selected from those universities that offered an undergraduate programme in
13 enterprise/entrepreneurship (see below).
14
15

16 The second source of data comprises the entirety of programme specifications/course descriptors
17 for undergraduate courses with either enterprise or entrepreneurship in their title for the academic
18 year 2021-22 in the UK. Identifying all programmes was made possible because in the UK all
19 undergraduates have to apply for a university place via a centralised system. Individual programme
20 specifications are key strategic legitimisation documents; they typically offer an overview of the
21 rationale, content and value, i.e. legitimacy of individual programmes. They may then also try to
22 underline the legitimacy of those who teach on the programme. While, at first glance, they may
23 appear to be 'neutral' in their message, simply outlining content and design of courses, as Potter and
24 Wetherell (1987) maintain, texts are cultural and psychological products with even the most
25 seemingly neutral descriptions attached to evaluative prose that serves a purpose. Programme
26 specifications serve to achieve 'buy in' to the programme from a range of stakeholders (current and
27 prospective students, their parents, external examiners, educators and HE managers etc.)
28
29
30
31

32 The third source of data are job advertisements for staff who teach entrepreneurship. On four
33 separate occasions over the course of 9 months data were sourced via the online academic job
34 platform 'jobs.ac.uk'. Other non-academic job platforms were initially also searched, but these
35 revealed few results and none that were not already on the 'jobs.ac.uk' platform. The rationale for
36 the inclusion of job adverts is that explaining what the institution is seeking in an entrepreneurship
37 educator reflects the value it associates with the educator, i.e. their legitimacy. In this regard, job
38 descriptions are key legitimisation documents. The analysis of programme specifications and job
39 descriptions allows us to address research question 1b. The combination of 1a and 1b enables an
40 answer to research question 1c. Table 1 presents an overview of the data sources.
41
42

43 <TABLE 1 APPROXIMATELY HERE>
44

45 *Data Analysis*

46 Qualitative data analysis software Nvivo was used to support the analysis of all three data sources,
47 via coding and the aggregation of information to each code, but also via Nvivo's word search
48 function (for an overview of codes and their frequency see Table 2). More specifically, the
49 programme specifications were first reviewed by two researchers who independently summarised
50 how they perceived entrepreneurship and then specifically the entrepreneurship educator were
51 being legitimised. These summaries were then uploaded to NVivo and served to provide a form of
52 data familiarisation and not to lose sight of the 'bigger picture' (a holistic understanding of the data,
53 Lieblich *et al.*, 1998) and the role of the educator in programme specifications.
54
55

56 <TABLE 2 HERE>
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 The researchers then proceeded via the NVivo word search function to identify all instances where
4 the educator was mentioned assisted by NVivo's keyword search function. No results were found for
5 'educator(s)', one result for 'teacher(s)', 106 results for 'tutor(s)' and 22 results for 'lecturer(s)' and
6 94 results for 'staff' (as these are UK programmes 'faculty' was not used as a search term as this is
7 used in a US/North American context for staff but is not commonly used in this sense in the UK).
8
9

10 If we sum up all of the above instances, we average three mentions of any reference to university
11 staff across each programme specification. However, this is a generous assessment with regard to
12 actual educators, as tutors were often referred to in the context of personal tutors (38 instances),
13 staff is often used generically, i.e. to include senior managers and administrators (13 instances of
14 'academic staff'; 8 instances of 'teaching staff' and 2 instances of 'course staff'). We can see
15 therefore that limited reference is made to teaching staff in the programme specifications, which is
16 telling in itself in relation to their legitimacy and which will be further discussed in the
17 findings/discussion. We then grouped these data into five emergent codes which reflected the
18 context in which the educator was being mentioned (see Table 4 in the findings).
19
20

21 The university strategies were similarly reviewed first and summarised with regard to their focus on
22 entrepreneurship, before summaries were uploaded to NVivo. This served the purposes of data
23 familiarisation and so that the results of the ensuing word search could be placed within the overall
24 context of the spirit of the strategy (typically, the foreword and introduction to the strategies gave a
25 good overview of key strategic priorities and content). Again, NVivo's word search function also
26 assisted in identifying how enterprise and entrepreneurship were being used within these
27 documents (see Table 3., although we also reviewed the use of the innovation in the strategies this
28 has subsequently been removed from the analysis). This ensured no mention of
29 enterprise/entrepreneurship or derivatives were missed. Similar to the process of category (code)
30 creation for the educator, all instances of the mention of enterprise/entrepreneurship were
31 reviewed for context. Here four categories relating to the use of entrepreneurship in the strategies
32 emerged.
33
34
35

36 Finally, job descriptions were reviewed for instances where the educator was adding value as a form
37 of legitimacy (engaging in desirable behaviour, Suchman, 1995) and a coding scheme (7 codes, Table
38 4) was developed inductively. Data on these codes were then aggregated and described. In total,
39 across the three data sources 16 codes were created and 294 sections coded (Table 2).
40
41

42 Findings

43 The analysis is structured as follows. First, we review legitimacy of entrepreneurship in the strategy
44 documents (Research question 1a). This is then followed by a review of the legitimacy of the
45 educator in the programme specifications and then the job descriptions (Research question 1b). We
46 then, in the discussion, pull together the analysis with a view to also addressing our final research
47 questions (1c).
48
49

50 *The Role of Entrepreneurship in University Strategies*

51 The first thing to acknowledge is the variation in scope between strategies, some consisting of just a
52 number of key aims and objectives spread across a handful of pages, others being multi-page
53 documents, breaking down key priorities into sub-priorities and expanding on each in detail.
54
55

56 Similarly, the use and inclusion of enterprise/entrepreneurship in the university strategies varied a
57 great deal (see Table 3). Many institutions barely mentioned entrepreneurship, for others it played a
58 key strategic priority (e.g. University of the West of England, University of Northampton) whereas
59 for others it featured but its place was on a par with many other strategic priorities (e.g. University
60

of Gloucestershire, University of Wales, Trinity St Davids). Despite the growth in EE generally, and in the UK in particular with a focus on enterprising or entrepreneurial universities (see Pittaway *et al.*, 2023) the absence of much or any reference to entrepreneurship in what are, after all, key strategic documents is worthy of note. To further complicate matters, in some strategies, there is an acknowledgement of the importance of entrepreneurship in a preamble, but this does not directly manifest itself in the actual strategy (e.g. Brunel University). If university strategies function in part to convey their legitimacy (strategic legitimacy) this variation in the inclusion and use of enterprise/entrepreneurship is telling in itself (see also discussion). Despite some similarities across strategies, mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) only exists to a degree when it comes to the inclusion of entrepreneurship in strategies. The following aspects of strategic legitimation of entrepreneurship were identified (emergent themes). Excerpts are provided below to convey how entrepreneurship was being used and to support transparency of our analysis:

<TABLE 3 HERE>

1) *Change*

Much of the focus on entrepreneurship in the strategies relates to change, i.e. entrepreneurship's value in tackling change. Many university strategies began by outlining a radically and rapidly changing environment necessitating bold moves (e.g. Falmouth "new economy", Goldsmiths' "transitional times", Northumbria "a university for a changing world").

This need to change was accompanied by universities themselves acting as change agents (seizing opportunities), having a positive impact on society and the environment (Suchman, 1995, would classify this as a form of moral legitimacy). Here universities frequently stressed economic/societal impact alongside research and teaching as a third mission (Compagnucci and Spigarelli, 2020; Etzkowitz, 1998). An example of this is the University of the West of England which claims: "Through our education, research and enterprise, we create jobs and opportunities, positively impact areas of local deprivation, transform local services and empower people from all backgrounds to fulfil their potential." Hult International Business School is another example where enterprise is linked to societal impact: "We strive to be the most relevant business school in the world. Our mission is to have a positive impact on individuals and organizations by transforming their management practices. We do this by using our global reach, being creative, entrepreneurial, and on the cutting-edge. We also contribute to sustainable growth, helping leaders integrate commercial success and societal wellbeing." Entrepreneurship's role in socio-economic development (as opposed to that of enterprise) is highlighted by the University of Wales Trinity St David: "Contribute to the prosperity, security and resilience of Wales through the promotion of creative skills, entrepreneurship and tech hubs, and through supporting our graduates to start their own businesses".

2) *Research and Knowledge Exchange*

The value of enterprise and entrepreneurship was often linked to the outcomes of research/commercialisation of research, frequently in partnership with external organisations. For example, for Bath Spa University, enterprise is not mentioned save on one page but here it is heavily linked to university partnerships. For City University London, enterprise and entrepreneurship barely feature, though enterprise is mentioned in relation to enterprise income which is part of the research and enterprise strategy. Swansea University describes itself as "an exceptionally collaborative and entrepreneurial university" and refers to its history as founded by industry for industry. Sometimes spin-offs or simply new ventures created by graduates are explicitly mentioned (e.g. University of Northampton, University of Portsmouth, University of West London).

3) Graduate entrepreneurship

Here entrepreneurship is seen as offering graduates a career opportunity that is sometimes also linked to the university's impact on society (Third Mission). The University of the West of England writes of a "graduate talent pipeline" that will assist to "power the local economy", and the University of Strathclyde suggests a "focus on graduate Entrepreneurial learning will complement Strathclyde's leading role in research and engagement promoting fair work and inclusive growth." For some universities the focus on enterprise/entrepreneurship in relation to graduate outcomes was the only notable mention of entrepreneurship in the strategy.

Universities also make the link between developing enterprising graduates and employability. The provision of entrepreneurship education has traditionally been associated with the development of graduates and more recently this has broadened to improving employability of entrepreneurship graduates more generally, especially in an unstable career environment (Decker-Lange *et al.*, 2024; Killingberg and Blenker, 2020). Again, the University of the West of England expresses this employability focus very clearly: "Every course will be designed to maximise the employability and enterprise of our students and to prepare them for the far-reaching possibilities and challenges of the future." Middlesex University writes of students developing a "mindset of entrepreneurialism" and University Centre South Essex writes of the link between enterprise skills and students being able to achieve their career potential. The link to a changing nature of careers and work is sometimes mentioned in the need to develop enterprising graduates ('new economy', e.g. Falmouth University). Social enterprise is also occasionally mentioned as a graduate outcome and in relation to universities' third mission (e.g. Leeds City College, University of the West of England, Goldsmiths University).

4) 'Other' legitimisation associations with Entrepreneurship: Intrapreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystems

Some universities also took an operational focus, suggesting they were enterprising when it came to the way the university was run, for instance, Anglia Ruskin University expresses a want to "build on our existing expertise and reputation for entrepreneurship and innovation, further embedding these qualities into all our educational, research *and* operational activities." Creating an enterprise culture was also mentioned in this context (University of the West of England), or an "entrepreneurial spirit" (University of Lincoln).

A few universities mentioned development of, or contribution to, an entrepreneurial (Teesside University, University of Southampton) or innovation (Anglia Ruskin University) ecosystem. While the University of Northampton didn't mention ecosystem, it did claim it wanted to "Make Northamptonshire the best county in the UK to start, build and run a business."

Overall, the value of enterprise and/or entrepreneurship is highlighted in many strategies (41%), though to different degrees, with many university strategies not focussing on them at all. It is acknowledged that care must be taken in reading too much into how frequently a particular word is used as reflecting how important enterprise or entrepreneurship are to a particular university (Table 3); nonetheless, the analysis does identify a great deal of variation in use of enterprise/entrepreneurship and innovation across university strategies. In sum, enterprise/entrepreneurship serves to legitimise the activities of universities (strategic legitimacy) either as a means of being able to tackle but also drive change, as a means of driving knowledge creation and transfer, and also as a characteristic of students and graduates who will then, equipped with entrepreneurial competencies, be able to contribute to their own careers and society.

Programme Specifications

According to Kingston University's programme specification, it has been designed for "prospective students, current students, academic staff, and potential employers". The University of Portsmouth with reference to its course specification similarly claims that its target audience is potential students, current students and to staff teaching and administering the course. Notwithstanding minor variation in terminology, and the omission of employers in the University of Portsmouth's declaration, it is clear that the programme (or course) specification is both outward and inward-facing document that aims to demonstrate the value of the programme.

Given the importance of the educator in education, it would be reasonable to expect some mention of the role of the educator in programme specifications. Overall, there was limited reference to the educator's role specifically, which could be interpreted as delegitimising, or at least detracting from the importance of their role. Overall, limited reference is made to teaching staff in the programme specifications.

<TABLE 4 HERE>

In programme specifications where they are mentioned, educators are legitimised via three key themes (Table 4), two relating to what they do (providing general and academic guidance as well as contributing to teaching and its development) and one to their credentials (which affects how they do what they do). By credentials we mean any attribute associated with the educator that is desirable because adding value to their role (see also Table 4), e.g. industry experience, research focus, enthusiasm etc.) These themes are emergent as we aggregated data on the educator and then explored in what context educators were being mentioned. This offered insight into their legitimacy. The guidance and teaching themes tend to focus on cognitive legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) as they explain what it is the educator does in fairly neutral terms, where there is a clear focus on students/prospective students in the documentation, e.g. "Students learn cognitive skills through individual and group lecture and seminar exercises and tutor led class discussions, problem solving, workshops, use of technology, as well as feedback on assessments" or "Wherever possible Moodle is used for electronic submission and Turnitin to check the similarity score and tutors give feedback via this interface within 3 working weeks". It is not claimed that these are the best or most fitting methods of teaching (hence why this is not pragmatic legitimacy) but this type of statement tries to convey a sense of what teaching in higher education entails in a way that is understandable for its audience (hence cognitive legitimacy).

Only limited reference was made to any specific pedagogical approach, though where this did occur, there was frequently reference to a 'real world' underpinning (e.g. "I particularly enjoyed Operations Management as our lecturer does not teach from books but from his own experience, which makes the course very interactive and practical"). Notwithstanding the largely cognitive form of strategic legitimacy, there were also some instances of pragmatic legitimacy in describing the role of the educator, which also extended to an occasional focus on research-informed teaching, e.g. "What's more, your learning will be shaped directly by the teaching team's active research into their specialist subjects."

More than in describing what the educator does, the focus on educator credentials is aligned with pragmatic legitimacy; this is a more direct demonstration of value to the target audience of the programme specification. A few examples suffice to illustrate how credentials relating to research, industry experience and teaching prowess are used to legitimate the educator. Sometimes educators are contrasted to, or set alongside, industry experts, potentially delegitimising them as per the following quote: "On this course you'll be taught by our expert academics, from lecturers through to

1
2
3 professors. You may also be taught by industry professionals with years of experience, as well as
4 trained postgraduate researchers, connecting you to some of the brightest minds on campus.” Here,
5 a distinction is made between the educator/academic and the practitioner. This distinction arose in
6 some other programme specifications but not in others where the ‘pracademic’ is promoted as the
7 ideal educator e.g. “Taught by lecturers with industry experience”, or “you’ll have access to
8 experienced teaching staff, many of whom are practitioners in the industry”, or the ability to ‘add
9 colour’ as per the following excerpt: “lecturers with business practitioner experience to add ‘colour’
10 to explaining business concepts”. As Foliard *et al.* (2019) have outlined, with a rare and direct
11 mention of legitimacy in the EE context, the relationship between what is taught and real world (i.e.
12 industry) experience is a key question in relation to entrepreneurship educator legitimacy.
13
14

15
16 Irrespective of whether there was a distinction between the educator and industry speakers, the
17 proximity of the educator and their teaching to real world context was frequently mentioned. A
18 final thing noted is that alongside descriptions of educators as excellent, world-leading, specialists in
19 their field etc. only two instances mentioned the educator’s attitude or approach to their work: “The
20 commitment and enthusiasm of the staff is very evident” and “...enthusiastic, research-active staff”
21 and there was only one instance of support for staff where the University of Bolton mentioned a
22 professional development programme for staff.
23
24

25 In sum, the educator is legitimised via their general but also specific academic support, via their
26 credentials which comprise industry experience (proximity to real world practice) as well as
27 academic prowess. Only limited reference to teaching excellence/experience which led to novel or
28 innovative pedagogical approaches was mentioned. We identified a mix of cognitive and pragmatic
29 legitimacy, especially relating to educator credentials.
30
31

32 *Job Descriptions*

33 Job descriptions should offer a clear insight into how the entrepreneurship educator is legitimised. In
34 outlining the attributes of the educator sought by the institution, job descriptions demonstrate how
35 it is believed the educator will add value, thereby legitimising them (Woodward *et al.*, 1996; Parsons,
36 1960). Thirty-five job descriptions were identified with either enterprise or entrepreneurship in their
37 title and that had a teaching function associated with them. The majority of these were
38 lecturer/tutor posts (29). The remaining six roles were either professorial or Reader appointments
39 which included a teaching component. The descriptions were in the main very similar though there
40 was a distinction between those descriptions that provided some background to the university,
41 sometimes also the department and why the role existed, to others where such contextual
42 information was lacking.
43
44

45 Seven codes were derived inductively from the data as to how value may be added by the educator:
46 innovative teaching (reference is made to how the educator is to provide in innovative/novel
47 teaching practices), contribution to university expansion (the role is associated with the broader goal
48 of the university), contribution to student success (emphasising the role and anticipated student
49 outcomes), income generation (to seek and/or obtain external funding), research (to engaged in
50 research), third mission (to contribute to the university’s wider societal impacts) and contribution to
51 university mission (rather than just growth, this is where alignment of the post with the university’s
52 wider mission is explained). These codes did not derive solely from descriptions of what was to be
53 done once in post, but what value was placed on these activities, thereby adding legitimacy to the
54 activity and by implication to the educator undertaking the activity. Thus, the analysis was not that
55 interested in highlighting that the educator was expected to teach or research (which, is generally
56 understood), but more in the value attributed to these activities.
57
58
59
60

Innovative teaching and student success:

Although innovative, cutting-edge or inspiring teaching was mentioned in a number of job descriptions, limited direct reference was made to this being associated with the essence of being an entrepreneurship educator per se with the University of Arts, London, hinting at this: “you will deploy your specialist expertise to develop pedagogy and the curriculum in innovative and critical directions” (Lecturer in entrepreneurial practice and ecosystems).

It is clear that a job for a teaching position should result in a focus on students but an explicit emphasis on student success or benefit was highlighted in some, but not all, job descriptions, and what counts as success varied. Teaching outcomes were described as resulting in “next-generation graduates” or to “help students achieve their learning goals”, or for Coventry University “career-ready, global enterprising graduates” or “transforming lives” (University of Greenwich). The University of Plymouth takes a more cautious because flexible understanding of what success means: “recognised career which is balanced in terms of work-life perspectives”.

Research

Perhaps because the requirement to teach was a given, many job descriptions placed more emphasis on research in the contextual information (rather than in the description of tasks) although research was often related to supporting teaching. Other stipulations for research were that it related to existing research themes in the faculty/school, that it was of a particular quality (e.g. internationally recognised/excellent etc.), that it is impactful outside academia (occasionally it was claimed research should tackle global issues), and for some institutions pure research with little or limited external application was frowned upon (e.g. Trinity College Dublin suggests: “While we are seeking to hire a rigorous researcher, we also require that this research expertise is of relevance and can provide value-added to senior executives and entrepreneurs as well as those engaged in public policy”). Some job descriptions included a lot of emphasis on the research reputation of the institution. Certainly, from the analysis to be legitimate the EE needs to engage in some research activity.

Income generation and third mission

Alongside teaching and research, the entrepreneurship educator is required to engage in societal contributions (the ‘third mission’ of universities). This was variously described as “community engagement”, “to make a global impact”, “to engage in collaborative opportunities with the public, private and not-for-profit sectors”, or “to have an impact on the most fundamental challenges facing the world today”. Often the third mission was associated with research, i.e. conducting research with societal impact. Income generation was also proposed as an activity in some of the job descriptions, from sourcing research funding to developing and supporting commercial projects.

Expansion and University Mission

Occasionally very direct reference was made to the educator’s contribution to wider organisational goals, including expansion as part of the success of existing programmes, portfolio diversification or in an attempt to strengthen a department’s research. In some instances, the job descriptions included reference to the university’s broader societal contribution, e.g. “a strong commitment to the public good” or “to lead positive societal change”. Exeter Business School was seeking individuals “whose research and teaching impacts on the most fundamental challenges facing the world today”.

In sum, the job descriptions cover the value associated with the role of the entrepreneurship educator and thereby provide insights into what constitutes a legitimate entrepreneurship educator.

1
2
3 Unsurprisingly, the theme of student success was a key facet of educator legitimacy, but research
4 credentials, income generation and contributing to the university's third mission were also
5 important attributes, alongside more generally supporting a university's goals. In describing these
6 attributes, the university also says something about how it views its own place in society and the
7 value it offers society, how it is aligned with societal agendas, and so this is very much a form of
8 pragmatic legitimacy.
9
10

11 12 13 **Discussion**

14 The starting point of the paper is the recognition of the educator's critical role in the delivery of EE in
15 higher education. It is also recognized that only very limited research looks specifically at the
16 legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator (Foliard *et al.*, 2019; Le Pontois, 2019). Drawing on
17 Suchman's (1995) work, which itself builds on others theorizing in the area of legitimacy and
18 institutional theory (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Dornbusch and Scott, 1975; Dowling and Pfeffer,
19 1975; Shocker and Sethi, 1973; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Parsons, 1960), this study sought to
20 answer the overarching research question of how the entrepreneurship educator is legitimized in
21 higher education? This is an important question because it will determine what is expected of the
22 educator, how they are perceived to add value, how their activities align with university strategies,
23 and how these in turn relate to societal perceptions of entrepreneurship. It thereby helps us
24 understand how EE manifests itself (in the UK). As such, we believe the study makes a substantial
25 contribution to research on the entrepreneurship educator, and by implication also has
26 repercussions for the legitimacy of EE in a UK setting, and by extension to entrepreneurship
27 education.
28
29
30
31
32

33 The starting point of the entrepreneurship educator's legitimacy is the legitimacy of
34 entrepreneurship itself. The legitimacy of entrepreneurship should not be taken for granted as we
35 can learn a lot about the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator from the nature of the
36 legitimation of entrepreneurship. This is why university strategies were included, as universities'
37 strategic legitimacy efforts will reflect institutional legitimacy demands (Suchman, 1995) in relation
38 to enterprise and entrepreneurship.
39
40

41 We recognize that university strategies are only one source of data on societal/institutional
42 legitimacy of entrepreneurship. However, according to legitimacy theory university strategies should
43 offer some insights into what value society places on entrepreneurship, and how in turn universities
44 can add value to society via engaging in enterprising behavior and by promoting entrepreneurship.
45 This, by extension, has implications for the entrepreneurship educator who, one imagines, plays a
46 key role in delivering on many of the strategic claims around entrepreneurship made in these
47 strategies. Thus, where, for example, university strategies make claims about providing enterprising
48 graduates to the labor market, or claims about how they collaborate with industry driving forward
49 innovation and engage in knowledge exchange, how they are bastions of innovation etc. the
50 entrepreneurship educator may be seen to play an important role. While these activities go beyond
51 education, they are activities that entrepreneurship educators are expected to engage in (see job
52 descriptions), and potentially make a stronger case for the legitimacy of the educator because their
53 contributions are spread more widely than 'just' teaching. Arguably, these issues go to the heart of
54 what it means to be an entrepreneurship educator.
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 The verdict from this study is that entrepreneurship is largely regarded positively and plays an
4 important role in helping universities achieve their strategic objectives via universities' three
5 missions: teaching, research and knowledge exchange/societal impact (third mission). However,
6 there is a lot of variation in the use of entrepreneurship across strategies and in many it does not
7 feature at all. One explanation for this is entrepreneurship's value to society is so self-evident, it
8 need not be mentioned by universities explicitly as it is understood universities will embed
9 entrepreneurship in their mission and operations (one could argue this falls under the context of
10 cognitive legitimacy). However, given the variation in use and focus of entrepreneurship across the
11 strategies, we believe this conclusion is unwarranted. Some universities clearly place a lot more
12 emphasis on entrepreneurship than others, in relation to both the centrality of entrepreneurship in
13 the strategies, and in relation to scope, i.e. how entrepreneurship may add value to society through
14 a range of university activities. In these entrepreneurship-focused strategies there is greater explicit
15 legitimacy for the entrepreneurship educator based around their teaching, research and knowledge
16 exchange activities.

17
18 With reference to Suchman's (1995) three-fold classification of strategic legitimacy we note the
19 following: Most legitimation efforts that draw on entrepreneurship are pragmatic in nature, i.e. they
20 try to legitimize the actions of the university in terms of the value these activities offer to society (in
21 the anticipation of certain behaviors from stakeholders, e.g. government funding, student
22 applications, community goodwill etc.). Although cognitive legitimacy plays no discernible role
23 (which could be a sign of cognitive legitimacy itself in that it is so evident that the university will be
24 enterprising that it need not mention this in a strategy, but see also comment in the previous
25 paragraph), an element of moral legitimacy also infuses the pragmatic (engaging in entrepreneurship
26 being the right thing to do, irrespective of anticipated benefits to the university). It is recognized
27 though that the dividing line between moral and pragmatic is blurred where a university argues for
28 activities that have the broader good of society in focus (the problems with the distinction between
29 pragmatic and moral have been outlined previously by Suchman, 1995, and others in relation to CSR
30 behaviour, e.g. Du and Viera, 2012).

31
32 Perhaps one of the most surprising findings is the fact that the legitimation of the educator in
33 programme specifications is limited. This does not mean the educator is unimportant, but it does
34 raise the question as to whether their importance is taken for granted at best, or willfully ignored at
35 worst. Educator credentials are the clearest indicator of pragmatic strategic legitimacy. Educators'
36 industry experience and research prowess are the two areas most clearly highlighted (but again, this
37 was not done frequently). This does align with university strategies relating to developing graduates
38 to make them labor market ready, or, in a more prosocial way, for them to make a positive
39 contribution to society. At the same time, in some strategies, a distinction is made between
40 educators and industry experts. Industry-relevance of programmes is clearly of importance in
41 programme specifications, but it is not uniformly stipulated that this expertise would come from
42 teaching faculty.

43
44 A further 'anomaly' that was noted relates to limited mention of pedagogical expertise of educators.
45 In those university strategies that focused on innovation, frequently this is related to innovative
46 teaching. One might expect innovation in teaching to come from entrepreneurship educators, but
47 this is not highlighted in programme specifications. An explanation for the lack of focus on teaching

1
2
3 innovation is provided by the nature of legitimation of the educator which is largely cognitive (trying
4 to make sense of something), in part targeting an audience unfamiliar with higher education.

6 Considering our third research sub-question (1c) relating to the relationship between the legitimacy
7 of entrepreneurship as expressed in university strategies and the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship
8 educator, job descriptions were more explicitly aligned with the broader remit of university
9 strategies. The key areas where entrepreneurship is being used to legitimize universities are
10 'responding to change/driving change', 'research and knowledge exchange' and 'graduate
11 entrepreneurship'. These are all themes addressed in the job descriptions, with no particular theme
12 standing out (see also Table 2). Educator credentials which frequently related to research and
13 industry experience are the most direct link between programme specifications and how
14 entrepreneurship is used in university strategies. Foliard *et al.* (2019, p.18) propose where in
15 applying for and enacting their educator role they (entrepreneurship educators) are to show their
16 "level of expertise in education science/teaching and the scientifically proven value of the
17 pedagogical arrangements s/he offers". Pedagogical expertise is only marginally addressed in the
18 programme specifications however, and the same applies to the job descriptions. Being a
19 particularly innovative, inspiring educator is not high on the agenda of legitimating characteristics.
20 For an individual educator, being able to demonstrate expertise in pedagogical innovations, being
21 able to demonstrate the value-added of entrepreneurship education may serve to augment his/her
22 legitimacy. At a broader level, i.e. at the level of the HE sector, it appears EE is not universally
23 appreciated as comprising a distinct pedagogy with distinct outcomes.

30 Of equal, or indeed greater importance than pedagogical approach, is the expectation that the
31 educator is engaged in research. The purpose of the research varies (to inform teaching, to add to
32 the research reputation of the university, to address knowledge exchange), but a research
33 stipulation is clear. We did not identify as strong a pedagogical justification of the educator
34 therefore as Foliard *et al.*, (2019) propose in their work (this could also be down to Foliard *et al.*'s,
35 (2019) study focusing on legitimacy at the level of an individual educator whereas here we look at
36 legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator more broadly understood, i.e. in terms of a category).
37 Along with the research stipulation, though not as pronounced, is an expectation for the educator to
38 engage with industry or external stakeholders as part of a university's third mission, and in
39 accordance with university strategies. The legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator derives
40 therefore not solely from their contribution to student success, and by implication to students'
41 contribution to the economy and society, but to a range of other activities, foremost research and
42 knowledge exchange/income generation. Here the link to university strategies and societal
43 prerogatives is strongest. An overview of key findings is presented in Figure 2.

48
49
50
51 <FIGURE 2 APPROXIMATELY HERE>

52 53 54 **Conclusion and Implications**

55 We conclude the following: The legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator is embedded within a
56 wider societal discourse surrounding the legitimacy of enterprise/entrepreneurship and its value to
57 society (pragmatic and moral). However, the strength of this discourse varies considerably across
58 university strategies and is picked up differently in programme specifications compared to job
59
60

1
2
3 descriptions. The former offers mainly a cognitive form of legitimacy relating to teaching, with
4 elements of pragmatic legitimacy arising from educators' links to industry and research prowess. Job
5 descriptions on the other hand are more focused on the educator's research as a form of adding
6 value, with some but limited reference to the value added by their teaching activity.
7
8

9 By drawing directly on legitimacy theory, this study adds to the very limited literature that considers
10 legitimacy in EE (Radu-Lefebvre and Redien-Collot, 2012), or the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship
11 educator specifically (Foliard *et al.*, 2019; Le Pontois, 2019), including a discussion surrounding what
12 is regarded as legitimate content of EE (Henry, 2020), but also what roles the educator should
13 assume (Lackeus *et al.*, 2020). These issues are arguably fundamental to the provision of
14 entrepreneurship education and the role of the educator within it, because what the educator does
15 shapes what EE is which will impact students' learning directly.
16
17

18 *Limitations*

19 Legitimacy is by definition contextual, and there is inevitably some limitation in that the study
20 focuses on one country specifically. While the legitimizing mechanisms (pragmatic, moral, cognitive)
21 will hold across countries, their precise manifestation will vary, and this offers avenues for further
22 research. This study has in trying to link institutional legitimacy with strategic legitimacy not focused
23 at potential daily struggles the educator faces in seeking legitimacy in what s/he does (see for
24 example Le Pontois', 2019, work on this). Furthermore, as Suchman (1995) recognizes, in practice
25 the boundaries around the different types of strategic legitimacy can be fuzzy. Distinguishing clearly
26 between them can pose problems. However, the pragmatic, moral and cognitive forms of legitimacy
27 are nonetheless all strategic in reflecting a response to societal norms and values (institutional
28 legitimacy) and are helpful tools in considering how the organization (here the university) is seeking
29 to legitimize itself. A further limitation of our study relates to the nature of the sources of data that
30 were selected. Although secondary data sources were selected to align with our theoretical
31 framework (Figure 1), additional primary sources such as interviews with educators themselves, HE
32 managers and not least students would add valuable perspectives on the question of the educator's
33 legitimacy. On this point, we also acknowledge that making inferences about institutional legitimacy
34 of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education via university strategies is only able to offer a
35 partial perspective. The positive view of entrepreneurship education as, for example, recently
36 highlighted by Pittaway *et al.* (2023) is confirmed via the expansion of EE (and which was recognized
37 in the introduction of this paper). And yet, Pittaway *et al.*, (2023) also see their research 'as a
38 starting point' and call for further research 'to test their observations' (Pittaway *et al.*, 2023, p.27).
39 Our data provide a perspective on EE's legitimacy hitherto absent and that thereby adds to our
40 knowledge in this area.
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50

51 *Implications*

52 Our study confirms those studies (e.g. Decker-Lange *et al.*, 2024, Le Pontois, 2019; Wraae and
53 Walmsley, 2020; Wraae *et al.*, 2022) that suggest the educator is bound to a degree by their own
54 university's conventions, and these will reflect to a large degree societal conventions as per the
55 tenets of legitimacy theory. However, even within universities tensions exist, for example between a
56 culture of academia and a culture of enterprise (Le Pontois, 2019). Society is not static and what
57 counts as legitimate will therefore change. Thus, while we agree that a micro-perspective of what
58 happens in EE holds much research promise (Thrane *et al.*, 2016), and this is also Foliard *et al.*'s
59
60

(2019) and Le Pontois', (2019) approach to educator legitimacy, we cannot ignore the wider institutional context within which EE occurs. Indeed, further research that seeks to help understand the contextual (societally bound) nature of EE and the role of the educator in the delivery of EE is welcome (see also Pittway *et al.*, 2023, and Wadhvani and Viebig, 2021). This is especially the case where the educator's values and beliefs may not align with societal convention (i.e. are illegitimate). How does, for example, the educator create space for themselves to deliver what they believe is an authentic form of EE if this conflicts with institutional perspectives? (see also Wraae and Walmsley, 2020).

Further research may try to combine the HE sector focus adopted here with the micro-perspective suggested by others. This could result in a number of interesting research questions: What are the tensions between societal legitimacy and legitimacy understood by an individual university, department/faculty and teaching team? How might the entrepreneurship educator (as an individual) position themselves between varying legitimacy discourses? How is what counts as legitimate behavior changing in EE, and what role can and should the educator play in driving this change? What is the basis of authenticity of the entrepreneurship educator: societal discourses or individual/disciplinary conventions? These issues are also raised by Biesta (2012; 2015) where it is argued that teachers should have the freedom to teach, and, crucially, teach what they feel is appropriate ("be allowed to teach...." Biesta, 2012, p.45). In a broader sense therefore, this study does touch upon notions of what the purpose of education is (Biesta, 2015) with implications for the agency of the educator within it. One could argue that it is the educator's role (certainly in higher education) to challenge and question societal norms and conventions and offer different perspectives on what may count as legitimate; indeed one could even argue entrepreneurship education is ideally placed to do this (Walmsley and Wraae, 2023). To be able to do this, one must however also understand what counts as legitimate in the first place, which is the starting point of this study.

Because the study sought a broader understanding of the legitimization of the enterprise educator in the UK we focused on all universities that offered EE, with positive implications for generalizability across the HE sector. This, however, prevented an in-depth, case study-type analysis of how an individual institution's programme specification(s) mapped against its strategy. As ours is an exploratory study we sought here to set the scene in terms of identifying mechanisms by which the entrepreneurship educator is legitimized at the level of the HE sector, and how they relate to institutional legitimacy (Research questions 1a-1c); this has been achieved. Additionally, as illustrated, many strategies only superficially mentioned entrepreneurship, many did not mention it at all. Consequently, any in-depth case study analysis linking strategy to programme specification would only have been warranted across a small sample of the overall study population. Future studies could however adopt a case study approach to explore in more detail alignment between strategy and other university documents, which may then also involve additional data collection methods (e.g. interviews with educators and HE managers). This may also be particularly interesting from the perspective of how the educator confronts and possibly overcomes barriers to the implementation of EE.

A number of other questions flow from this study. Firstly, comparative studies might compare how the entrepreneurship educator is legitimized with reference to how educators in other disciplines are legitimized, adding complementary insights into the nature of the entrepreneurship educator

1
2
3 role and his/her uniqueness. In fact, taking a cynical stance we could conclude that there is very little
4 in the legitimization of the entrepreneurship educator that suggests they distinguish themselves from
5 any other HE educator. Is this true or is it a case of misperception due to misrepresentation in
6 university documentation? If the former, is the quest for the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship
7 educator from the outset a misguided endeavor? We believe the answer is 'no' for two reasons.
8 Firstly, we believe programme specifications and job descriptions do not do justice to the
9 uniqueness of the entrepreneurship educator (so there is some misrepresentation taking place
10 leading to de-legitimation in terms of underplaying the value added by entrepreneurship educators).
11 Secondly, and more fundamentally, a focus on subject matter, i.e. entrepreneurship in this instance,
12 is important. We cannot take the legitimacy of entrepreneurship itself as a given. The analysis
13 demonstrated that entrepreneurship does feature as an important component of many university
14 strategies which reflects societal values (institutional legitimacy). The development of enterprising
15 graduates, the support for business start-up and knowledge exchange are important contributions to
16 society and recognized as such by universities (Decker-Lange *et al.*, 2024; Killingberg *et al.*, 2020).
17 These societal benefits contribute to the legitimacy of the entrepreneurship educator in a way that
18 may be mirrored by, but is not identical to other subjects/disciplines. Of course, we will be biased
19 here as entrepreneurship educators and researchers, and yet the fact that EE is being rolled out
20 across universities, beyond business and management departments, is testament to its role in
21 creating more entrepreneurial graduates in alignment with universities' strategic ambitions.

22
23
24
25
26
27
28 It also became evident from the data and has been identified elsewhere (Gibb, 2011; Henry, 2020)
29 that educators are increasingly required to assume numerous roles. This was confirmed by our
30 study. Regarding the relative importance of educator roles (e.g. teacher, mentor, researcher,
31 practitioner) other studies could try to undertake longitudinal analysis of, for example, university
32 strategies, or other HE documentation to see how these roles and with them the legitimacy of the
33 educator has evolved over time. Perhaps we should go back to writing of the entrepreneurship
34 academic which better reflects the role of what the typical HE entrepreneurship educator does.
35 Foliard *et al.*, 2019, as well as Le Pontois, 2019 similarly recognize this 'multi-function' perspective of
36 what they term the entrepreneurship teacher. Interpreted differently, if the educator's main job is
37 to teach one could ask why from a value-adding perspective so much emphasis was placed on
38 research in job descriptions (which was at times but not consistently related to teaching practice),
39 and a relative absence of pedagogical focus in programme specifications. If these issues are not
40 argued from a strategic legitimacy perspective in external-facing university documentation,
41 according to legitimacy theory, they may not be regarded as important within society. Further
42 research that seeks to explore educator perceptions of their own legitimacy may be interesting in
43 this regard along the lines of how academics see themselves (Kreber, 2010; Nevgi and Löffström,
44 2015), also in relation to the academia-industry dualism that was evident in some of the programme
45 specifications as well as job descriptions. We also argue that part of the responsibility of providing
46 legitimacy resides with the educators themselves. Making the case for EE both in theory (e.g. to
47 senior managers in HE) and in practice (ensuring they add value and support students in achieving
48 programme outcomes) should not be ignored and Le Pontois' (2019) paper is helpful in
49 understanding some of the local legitimacy challenges and tensions the entrepreneurship educator
50 might face.

51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
With regard to practical implications, there should be some reflection and discussions between
educators and HE managers about the meaning and purpose of entrepreneurship education which

1
2
3 will depend on the nature of entrepreneurship education ecosystem at the individual institution
4 (Brush, 2014). How the individual institution wants to position itself should be considered as
5 otherwise there is a danger that educators become 'a jack of all trades, master of none', i.e. having
6 to be engaged in so many varied activities that they cannot really excel at anything in particular.
7 Should there be a split between teaching focused and research focused entrepreneurship
8 'educators', and how does this sit with research-informed teaching? And yet some educators may
9 prefer being involved in a variety of activities and do not want to pigeon-hole themselves? To what
10 extent does a lack of research, or teaching for that matter, affect one's identity as an educator and
11 offer opportunities for career progression? Tensions about what it means to be an entrepreneurship
12 educator and how the educator may enact their role clearly exist (Le Pontois, 2019). While it would
13 be inappropriate to offer simplistic advice on how these complex tensions may be resolved,
14 recognition of the issue to create the basis for constructive dialogue is surely a step forward in the
15 right direction. Ultimately, it is our contention based on the findings of the paper that if EE is to fulfil
16 its potential, greater recognition should be given to the educator role.

17
18
19
20
21
22 Finally, because this study's remit was the educator, it deliberately ignores a more in-depth
23 investigation of the legitimacy of EE at the programme specific level. Some potentially interesting
24 observations were made such as how limited a focus there was on entrepreneurship in some
25 programmes (despite having enterprise or entrepreneurship in their title), how similar programme
26 specifications were with regard to what they were trying to achieve (with implications for students
27 in terms of what counts as success, what images of entrepreneurship are we providing students, see
28 for example Berglund *et al.*, 2020 and also Thrane *et al.*, 2016 in relation to placing the student at
29 the core of EE) and a relatively weak focus on business start-up. The array of potentially interesting
30 research strands emanating from this study's focus on legitimacy serves to uphold legitimacy's value
31 as a concept to investigate EE. By drawing on legitimacy theory, a concept at home within sociology
32 but also adopted in the management literature, we have shed some light on the institutional-
33 strategic legitimacy nexus, demonstrating its relevance for the notion of what society expects an
34 entrepreneurship educator to be, and by implication what s/he should do. It is for the educators to
35 be aware of their own assumptions and beliefs, and to consider to what extent they are aligned with
36 societal conventions, and if not, what consequences may result. The educators' response will shape
37 the very nature of entrepreneurship education.

38 39 40 41 42 43 **Acknowledgements**

44
45 We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments to previous versions
46 of the paper. All errata are our own. We also kindly acknowledge provision of an internal grant from
47 Plymouth Marjon University that helped us undertake the study.
48
49
50

51 52 **References**

- 53
54 Acs, Z. (2006), "How is entrepreneurship good for economic growth", *Innovations*, Vol. 1 No.1, pp.
55 97-107.
56
57 Aldrich, H.E., and C. and Fiol, C.M. (1994), "Fools rush in? The institutional context of industry
58 creation", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 19 No.4, pp. 645-670.
59
60

- 1
2
3 Bandera, C., Santos, S. C., & Liguori, E. W. (2020), "The Dark Side of Entrepreneurship Education: A
4 Delphi Study on Dangers and Unintended Consequences", *Entrepreneurship Education and*
5 *Pedagogy*, Vol.4 No.4, pp. 609-636.
6
7 Baumol, W. (2002), *The Free-Market Innovation Machine: Analyzing the Growth Miracle of*
8 *Capitalism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
9
10 Belitski, M. and Heron, K. (2017), "Expanding entrepreneurship education ecosystems", *Journal of*
11 *Management Development*, Vol. 36 No.2, pp. 163-177.
12
13 Berglund, K., and Johansson, A. W. (2012), "Dark and Bright effects of entrepreneurship" in
14 Berglund, K., Johannisson, B. and Schwartz, B. (Eds.), *Societal Entrepreneurship. Positioning,*
15 *Penetrating, Promoting*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 163–186.
16
17 Berglund, K., Hytti, U. and Verduijn, K. (2020), "Navigating the Terrain of Entrepreneurship Education
18 in Neoliberal Societies", *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*, Vol. 4 No.4, pp. 702–717.
19
20 Biesta, G. (201, "Giving Teaching Back to Education: Responding to the Disappearance of the
21 Teacher", *Pedagogía y Saberes*, pp. 119-129.
22
23 Biesta, G. (2015) "What is Education For? On Good Education, Teacher Judgement, and Educational
24 Professionalism", *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 50 No. 1, pp. 75-87.
25
26 Brentnall, C., Lackéus, M., & Blenker, P. (2023) "Homogenization processes in entrepreneurship
27 education: the case of Junior Achievement", *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, pp.1-23.
28
29 Brush, C. (2014), "Exploring the Concept of an Entrepreneurship Education Ecosystem", in
30 Hoskinson, S. and Kuratko, D. (Eds), *Innovative pathways for university entrepreneurship in the 21st*
31 *century*, Emerald Group Publishing, pp. 25-39.
32
33 Brush, C. (2021). "Entrepreneurship education ecosystems: the case of Babson College", in Neck, H.
34 and Yipeng, L. (Eds), *Innovation in Global Entrepreneurship Education. Teaching Entrepreneurship in*
35 *Practice*, Edward Elgar, Northampton, MA, pp.2-17.
36
37 Bruton, G., Ahlstrom, D. and Obloj, K. (2008), "Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies: Where Are
38 We Today and Where Should the Research Go in the Future", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*,
39 Vol. 32 No.1, pp.1-14.
40
41 Compagnucci, L. and Spigarelli, F. (2020), "The Third Mission of the university: A systematic literature
42 review on potentials and constraints", *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol. 161,pp.
43 120284.
44
45 Cooper, S., Bottomley, C. and Gordon, J. (2004), "Stepping out of the classroom and up the ladder of
46 learning. An experiential learning approach to entrepreneurship education", *Industry and Higher*
47 *Education*, Vol. 18 No.1, pp.11-22.
48
49 De Sordi, J. O., Paulo, W. L., Gonçalves, M. S., Azevedo, M. C. d., & Coda, R. (2021), "Socially
50 responsible teaching of entrepreneurship: exploring the unfavorable aspects of entrepreneurial
51 action", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol.27 No.8, pp.1958-1982.
52
53 Decker-Lange, C., Lange, K. and Walmsley, A. (2024), "How does entrepreneurship education affect
54 employability? Insights from UK higher education", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior*
55 *and Research*, Vol.30 No.5, pp.1249-1269,
56
57 Delmar, F., and Shane, S. (2004), "Legitimizing first: organizing activities and the survival of new
58 ventures", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 19 No.3, pp. 386-401.
59
60

- 1
2
3 Díez-Martín, Francisco, Alicia Blanco-González, and Emilio Díez-de-Castro. (2021), "Measuring a
4 scientifically multifaceted concept. The jungle of organizational legitimacy", *European Research on*
5 *Management and Business Economics*, Vol. 27 No.1, pp. 100131.
6
7 DiMaggio, P.J., and Powell, W.W. (1983), "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and
8 Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 48 No.2, pp. 147-
9 160.
10
11 Dornbusch, S.M., and W.R. Scott. (1975), *Evaluation and the Exercise of Authority*, Jossey-Bass, San
12 Francisco.
13
14 Dowling, J., and Pfeffer, J. (1975), "Organizational Legitimacy: Social Values and Organizational
15 Behavior", *Pacific Sociological Review*, Vol. 18 No.1, pp. 122-136.
16
17 Du, S., and Viera Jr., E. (2012), "Striving for Legitimacy Through Corporate Social Responsibility:
18 Insights from Oil Companies", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 110 No.4, pp. 413-427.
19
20 Etzkowitz, H. (1998), "The norms of entrepreneurial science: cognitive effects of the new university-
21 industry linkages", *Research Policy*, Vol. 27 No.8, pp. 823-833.
22
23 Foliard, S., Le Pontois, S., Fayolle, A. and Diermann, I. (2019), "The Legitimacy of Teachers in
24 Entrepreneurship Education: What we Can Learn From a Literature Review", in Higgins, D., Jones, P.
25 and McGowan, P. (Eds), *Creating Entrepreneurial Space. Talking through Multi-Voices, Reflections on*
26 *Emerging Debates*, Emerald, Bingley, pp. 7-24.
27
28 Gartner, W. (1990). "What are we talking about when we talk about entrepreneurship?" *Journal of*
29 *Business Venturing*, Vol. 5 No.1, pp. 15-28.
30
31 Gibb, A. (2011), "Concepts into practice: meeting the challenge of development of entrepreneurship
32 educators around an innovative paradigm: The case of the International Entrepreneurship
33 Educators' Programme (IEEP)", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 17
34 No.2, pp.146-165.
35
36 Hägg, G. (2023), "Why so little talk about how to build legitimacy in the domain of entrepreneurial
37 education?", *Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat/Review of Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 22 No.2, pp. 35-39.
38
39 Hägg, G. and Gabrielsson, J. (2020), "A systematic literature review of the evolution of pedagogy in
40 entrepreneurial education research", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*,
41 Vol. 26 No.5, pp.829-861.
42
43 Hägg, G., and Kurczewska, A. (2021), *Entrepreneurship Education: Scholarly Progress and Future*
44 *Challenges*, Routledge, Abingdon.
45
46 Hämmäläinen, M., Joensuu-Salo, S., Peltonen, K. and Raappana, A. (2022), "HEI teacher perceptions of
47 entrepreneurship education: The role of teachers' entrepreneurial backgrounds and HEI managerial
48 support", in Henry, C., Gabriel, B., Sailer, K., Bernado-Mansilla, E. and Lahikainen, K. (Eds), *Strategies*
49 *for the creation and maintenance of entrepreneurial universities*. IGI Global, Hershey, PA, pp.114-
50 141.
51
52 Henry, C. (2020), "Reconceptualizing the role of the future entrepreneurship educator: an
53 exploration of the content challenge", *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, Vol. 32 No.(9-10),
54 pp. 657-676.
55
56 Hytti, U., & Heinonen, J. (2013), "Heroic and humane entrepreneurs: identity work in
57 entrepreneurship education", *Education + Training*, Vol. 55 No. 8/9, pp. 886-898.
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Hytti, U. (2018), "Critical entrepreneurship education: a form of resistance to McEducation?" In K.
4 Berglund, & K. Verduijn (Eds.), *Revitalizing entrepreneurship education: Adopting a critical approach*
5 *in the classroom*, Routledge, London, pp.228-234.
6
7 Johannisson, B. (2016), "Limits to and prospects of entrepreneurship education in the academic
8 context", *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, Vol. 28 No.(5-6), pp. 403-423.
9
10 Jones, C., and Matlay, H. (2011), "Understanding the heterogeneity of entrepreneurship education:
11 Going beyond Gartner", *Education & Training*, Vol. 53 No.(8-9), pp. 692-703.
12
13 Katz, J. (2008), "Fully Mature but Not Fully Legitimate: A Different Perspective on the State of
14 Entrepreneurship Education", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 46 No.4, pp. 550-566.
15
16 Killingberg, N. M., Kubberød, E., & Blenker, P. (2020), "Preparing for a future career through
17 entrepreneurship education: Towards a research agenda", *Industry and Higher Education*, Vol. 35
18 No.6, pp. 713-724.
19
20 Kreber, C. (2010), "Academics' teacher identities, authenticity and pedagogy", *Studies in Higher*
21 *Education*, Vol. 35 No.2, pp. 171-194.
22
23 Kuratko, D. (2005), "The Emergence of Entrepreneurship Education: Development, Trends, and
24 Challenges", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 29 No.5, pp. 577-598.
25
26 Lackeus, M., Lundqvist, M., Williams Middleton, K. and J. Inden. J. (2020), *The entrepreneurial*
27 *employee in the public and private sector-what, why, how*, European Commission, Luxembourg.
28
29 Le Pontois, S. (2019), "Teaching entrepreneurship, supporting students: Question(s) of legitimacy",
30 *Entreprendre & Innover*, Vol. 42-43 No.3, pp.159-172.
31
32 Lee, K., Hebaishi, G. and Hope.J. (2015), "The role of senior management in developing and achieving
33 a successful enterprise education programme?", *Education + Training*, Vol. 57 No.7, pp. 791-811.
34
35 Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998) *Narrative research. Reading, Analysis, and*
36 *Interpretation*, SAGE Publications, London.
37
38 Liguori, E. and Winkler, C. (2019), "Editorial: Special Issue on Entrepreneurship Education", *Journal of*
39 *Small Business Management*, Vol. 57 No.S1, pp. 4-5.
40
41 Loi, M., Fayolle,A., van Gelderen, M., Riot, E., Refai, D., Higgins, D., Haloub, R., Alexandre, M..
42 Salusse, Y., Lamy, E., Verzat, C. and Cavarretta, F. (2021), "Entrepreneurship Education at the
43 Crossroads: Challenging Taken-for-Granted Assumptions and Opening New Perspectives", *Journal of*
44 *Management Inquiry*, Vol. 31 No.2, pp.123-134.
45
46 Matthews, C. H. (2018), "Preface", in Matthews, C.H. and Liguori, E. (Eds), *Annals of*
47 *Entrepreneurship Education & Pedagogy*, Edward Elgar Publishing Cheltenham, UK and Northampton,
48 MA, USA.
49
50 Meyer, J. (1977), "The Effects of Education as an Institution", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 83
51 No.1, pp.55-77.
52
53 Meyer, J. and Rowan, B. (1977), "Institutionalised Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and
54 Ceremony", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 83 No.2, pp. 340-363.
55
56 Neck, H. and Corbett, A. (2018), "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Entrepreneurship",
57 *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*, Vol.1 No.1, pp.8-41.
58
59
60

1
2
3 Nevgi, A. and Löfström, E. (2015), "The development of academics' teacher identity: Enhancing
4 reflection and task perception through a university teacher development programme", *Studies in*
5 *Educational Evaluation*, Vol. 46, pp. 53-60.

6
7 Nikou, S., Brush, C. and Wraae, B. (2023), "Entrepreneurship educators: a configurational analysis
8 of factors influencing pedagogical choices", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior &*
9 *Research*, Vol. 29 No.11, pp. 81-108.

10
11 North, D. (1990), "*Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*", Cambridge
12 University Press, Cambridge.

13
14 O'Toole, J., and Ciuchta, M.P. (2020), "The liability of newer than newness: aspiring entrepreneurs
15 and legitimacy," *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, Vol. 26 No.3, pp.
16 539-558.

17
18 Parsons, T. (1960), *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, Free Press, New York.

19
20 Peltonen, K. (2015), "How can teachers' entrepreneurial competences be developed? A collaborative
21 learning perspective", *Education + Training*, Vol. 57 No.5, pp. 492-511.

22
23 Pittaway, L., Henry, C., Kirby, D., & Thompson, J. (2023). "The History of Entrepreneurship Education
24 in the United Kingdom, 1860-2020", SSRN, DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4318025>

25
26 Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987) *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*,
27 Sage Publications, London.

28
29 Powell, W. W., & DiMaggio, P. J. (Eds.) (1991), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*.
30 Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Radu-Lefebvre, M., and Redien-Collot, R. (2012), "Achieving
31 legitimacy in entrepreneurship education: a case study", *Journal of Enterprising Culture*, Vol. 20
32 No.4, pp. 481-500.

33
34 Scott, R.W. (2001), *Institutions and Organizations. Foundations for Organizational Science*, Sage,
35 Thousand Oaks, CA.

36
37 Shepherd, D. A. (2019), "Researching the dark side, downside, and destructive side of
38 entrepreneurship: it is the compassionate thing to do", *Academy of Management Discoveries*, Vol. 5
39 No.3. pp. 217-220.

40
41 Shocker, A.D., and Sethi, S.P. (1973), "An Approach to Incorporating Societal Preferences in
42 Developing Corporate Action Strategies", *California Management Review*, Vol. 15 No.4, pp.97-105.

43
44 Stinchcombe, A.L. (1965), "Social structure and organizations", in March, J.G. (Ed), *Handbook of*
45 *organizations*, Rand McNally, Chicago, IL., pp. 142-193.

46
47 Suchman, M.C. (1995), "Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches", *Academy of*
48 *Management Journal*, Vol. 20 No.3, pp. 571-610.

49
50 Talmage, C., & Gassert, T. A. (2020), "Unsettling Entrepreneurship by Teaching Dark Side Theories",
51 *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*, Vol.3 No.3, pp.316-345.

52
53 Thrane, C., Blenker, P., Korsgaard, S., & Neergaard, H. (2016). "The promise of entrepreneurship
54 education: Reconceptualizing the individual–opportunity nexus as a conceptual framework for
55 entrepreneurship education", *International Small Business Journal*, Vol. 34 No.7, pp. 905-924.

56
57 Wadhvani, R. D., & Viebig, C. (2021), "Social imaginaries of entrepreneurship education: The United
58 States and Germany, 1800–2020", *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, Vol. 20, pp. 342-
59 260.

1
2
3 Walmsley, A., & Wraae, B. (2022), "Entrepreneurship Education but not as we know it: Reflections
4 on the relationship between Critical Pedagogy and Entrepreneurship Education", *International*
5 *Journal of Management Education*, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 1-11.

6
7 Weber, M. (1924[1978]), *Economy and Society (Vols 1 and 2)*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus
8 Wittich. University of California, Berkeley.

9
10 Woodward, D., Edwards, P. and Birkin, F. (1996), "Organizational Legitimacy and Stakeholder
11 Information Provision", *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 7 No.4, pp. 329-347.

12
13 Wraae, B., and Walmsley, A. (2020), "Behind the scenes: spotlight on the entrepreneurship
14 educator", *Education & Training*, Vol. 62 No.3, pp. 255-270.

15
16 Wraae, B., Brush, C., & Nikou, S. (2022), "The Entrepreneurship Educator: Understanding Role
17 Identity", *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagog*", Vol. 5 No.1, pp. 3–35.

18
19 Yousafzai, S.Y., Saeed, S. and Muffatto, M., (2015), "Institutional Theory and Contextual
20 Embeddedness of Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership: Evidence from 92 Countries", *Journal of*
21 *Small Business Management*, Vol. 53 No.3, pp. 587-604.

22
23 Zimmerman, M.A., and Zeitz, G.J. (2002), "Beyond survival: Achieving new venture growth by
24 building legitimacy", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 27 No.3, pp. 414-431.

Figure 2: Societal Legitimation of the Entrepreneurship Educator

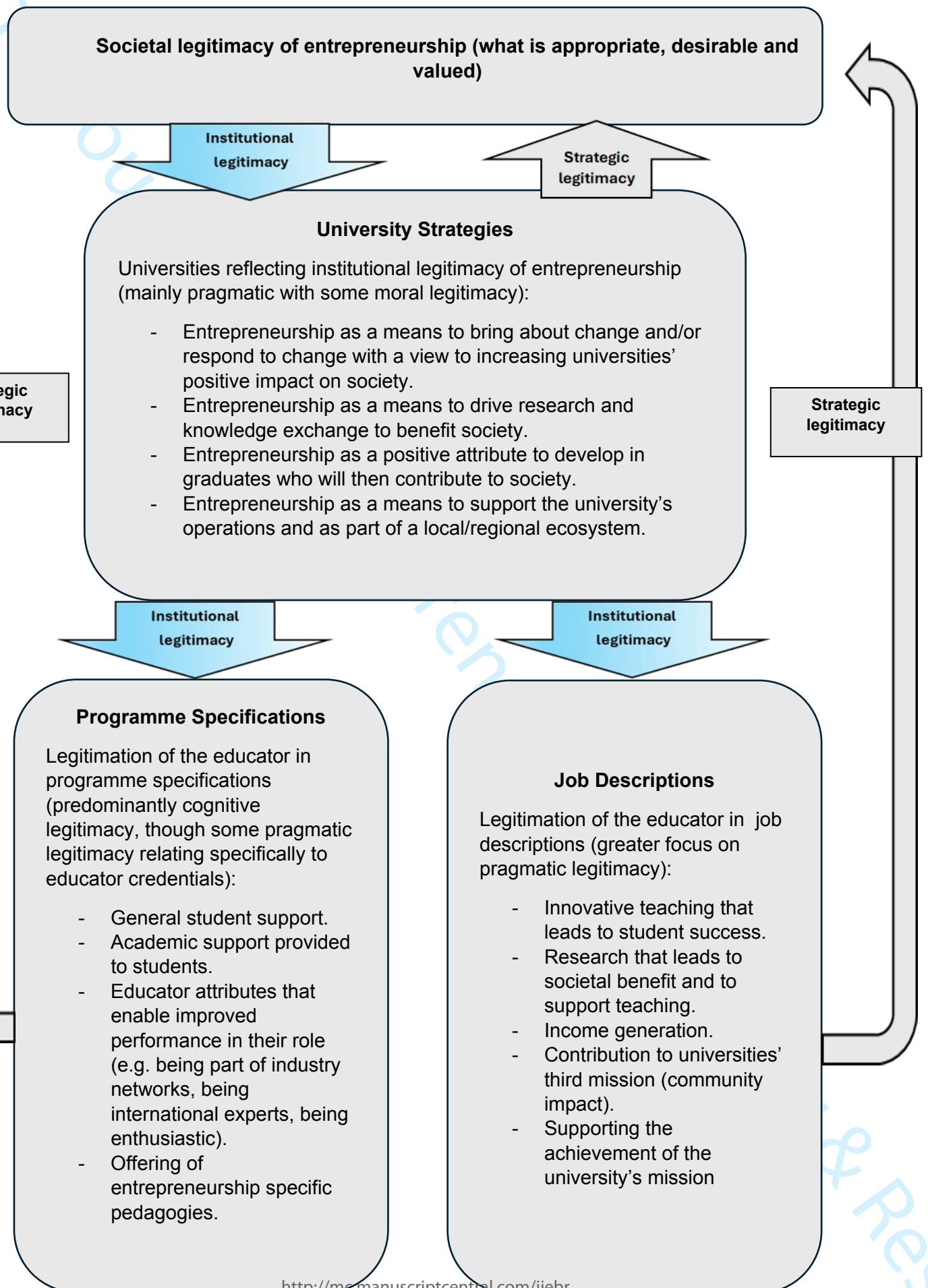


Figure 1: Institutional and Strategic Legitimacy of Entrepreneurship Education

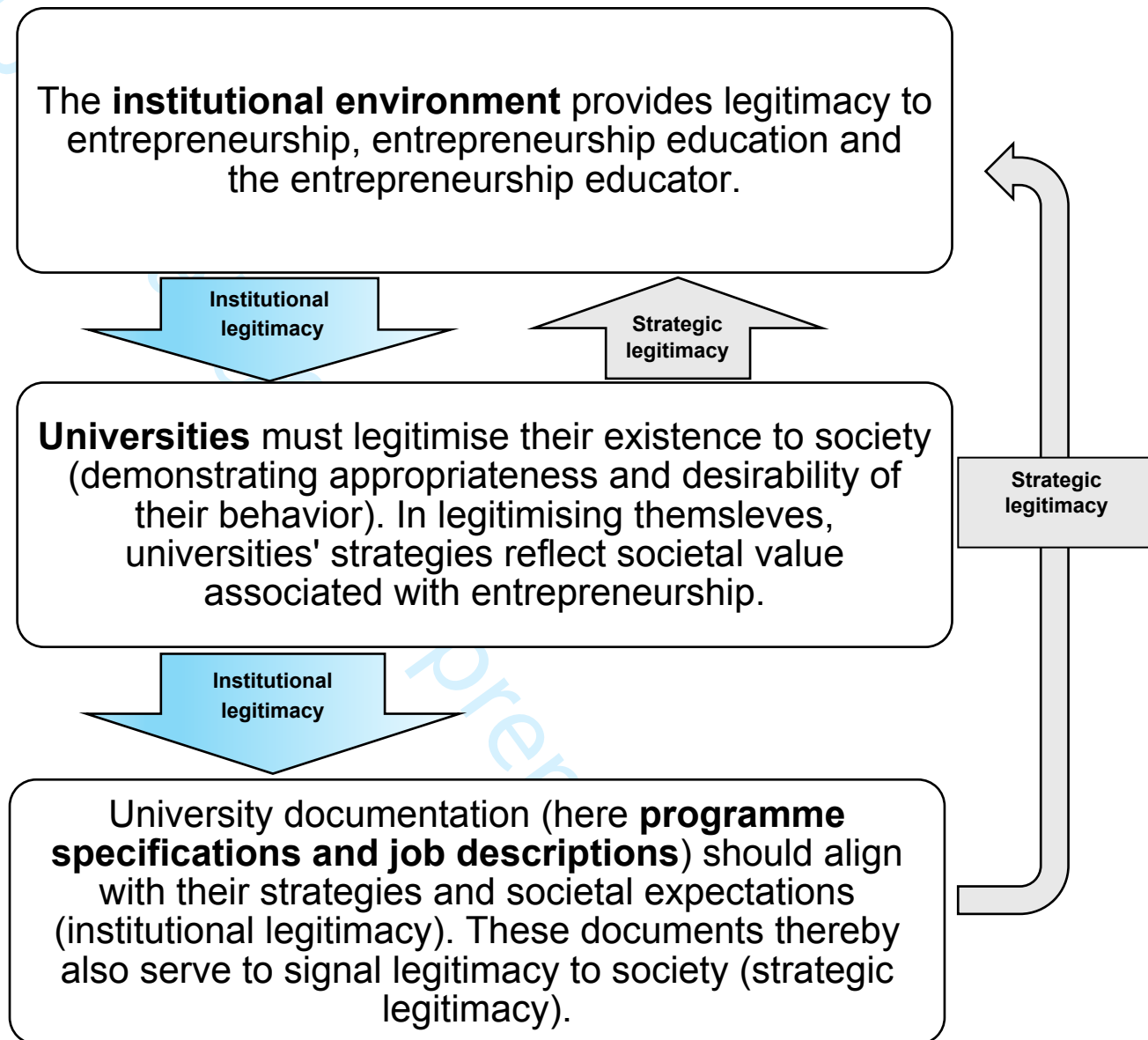


Table 1: Study Data Sources

Data source	Description	Quantity
Programme Specifications	All undergraduate programmes with enterprise and/or entrepreneurship in their title for 2022/23 delivery as advertised via UCAS in June 2022; excluding top-up or accelerated degrees.	73 Documents 162k words
University Strategies	University strategies associated with those universities that delivered undergraduate entrepreneurship programmes as outlined in the previous row.	61* Documents 133k words
Job Advertisements	All job adverts advertised on the website 'jobs.ac.uk' with enterprise and/or entrepreneurship in their title, but excluding those that did not have a teaching function associated with them. Data were collected on four occasions: 19 th June 2022, 16 th December 2022, 23 rd January 2023 and 23 rd March 2023 (duplicates removed).	35 Documents 37k words
Total		169 Documents 332k words

*Fewer than programmes because some universities had more than one programme

Table 2 Coding Overview

	Code	Coding Frequency
University Strategies	Change (includes two subcodes)	40
	Research and Knowledge Exchange	25
	Graduate Entrepreneurship	35
	'Other'*	12
Programme Specifications	Educator Credentials	28
	Educator Teaching Methods	35
	Educator Development/Support	1
	General Support/Guidance	6
	Tailored Academic Support	4
Job Specifications	Innovative Teaching	14
	Expansion	12
	Income Generation	2
	Research	23
	Third mission	24
	Students	21
	Mission	12
Totals	No. Codes = 16	Total coded sections = 294

*Creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem (4), enterprising approach at teaching (7), Character trait of the university (1).

Table 3: Relative Frequency of the use of Enterprise/Entrepreneurship in University Strategies (n = 59; two universities did not have a downloadable strategy removing the possibility of analysis using Nvivo)

Term	Min/Max Frequency (per 100 words)	Average Frequency (per 100 words)	Median	St.Dev.
Enterprise	0 ¹ /1.43	0.21	0.09	0.32
Entrepreneurship	0 ² /1.92	0.06	0	0.26
All mentions of: Enterprise, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial, Entrepreneurialism, Entrepreneurs, Enterprising	0 ³ / 3.84	0.66	0.24	0.67

¹23 institutions did not mention enterprise at all; ²29 institutions did not mention entrepreneurship at all; ³10 institutions did not mention any of the above;

Table 4: References to Educator functions in Programme Specifications

Context of Reference	Tutor(s)*	Lecturer(s)	Staff**	Total
General support and guidance (This relates to a supporting function of the educator but excludes academic-specific support, e.g. support with programme administration).	4	-	2	6
Tailored academic support (Focuses on specific learning-related support, where academic credentials are required).	12	-	2	24
Highlighting educator credentials (Describes characteristics of the educator that add value to their role, e.g. 'expert academics', 'brightest minds on campus', staff being involved in networks or having industry experience).	-	9	19	28
Educator development or support (the programme specification mentions professional development for the educator).	-	-	1	1
Educator's approach to teaching (Describes how a specific teaching/pedagogical approach adds value, e.g. "Tutor-supported tutorials and practical activities to reinforce and apply understanding" or "We encourage critical interaction and debate between lecturers and students").	16	10	9	35

¹Will not add up to total mentions as not all instances relevant, e.g. 'senior staff in external organisations' not related to university staff.

*excludes references to personal tutor

**excludes reference where focus does not include academic / teaching staff