

The Enterprise and Business Committee is undertaking an inquiry into Youth Entrepreneurship.

- How effective is the Welsh Government's approach to promoting youth entrepreneurship?

It appears from the evidence available that attitudes in Wales generally are changing (start-ups trebled from 02 to 11 GEM 2012) and graduate start-ups have also increased. Although this fact cannot be directly attributed to Welsh Government's promotion of Youth Entrepreneurship, it undoubtedly supports the premiss that more people in Wales are willing to consider starting a business as an option.

At a college level it can be seen that students are increasingly being exposed to the concept of entrepreneurship prior to coming to college and during their period as students. Ten years ago when I first became involved in working with students my perception was that most of the students who had some level of understanding of what it meant to run a business, or thought it might be an option for them came from families where business was the norm. This link appears to be less pronounced today. Students who show an interest in finding out more about their options with regard to starting a business appear to come from a broader range of backgrounds. Student competitions have been an invaluable tool to involve students in enterprise activity outside the classroom environment. The Global Enterprise Challenge run by the Youth Entrepreneurship team within Welsh Government is an attractive option for young people. Within each institution lecturers also see it as an opportunity to showcase the entrepreneurial abilities of their students. On a national level this competition brings teams from all FE colleges to compete together on a truly national stage. Winning an award raises the level of entrepreneurship throughout the institution and now across the hub. Those fortunate enough to win at the national level also have the opportunity to compete on a world stage, and at that competition are able to truly punch above their weight. Wales does well in this competition and this should be celebrated more widely in Wales. In

2012 Coleg Menai came third in the global competition, but struggled to even have this recognised as an achievement in the press. The main newspaper in North Wales the Daily Post gave it one inch of space after several press releases, and the only national press coverage came through Radio Cymru who interviewed the students by telephone from Japan.

These achievements by Welsh students can help to encourage others to seek out help within colleges, and increase the number of students supported to travel that long entrepreneurial journey.

- What is the scale of Welsh Government resource and funding targeted at the promotion of youth entrepreneurship? Is it sufficient?

Resources and funding are never enough, and the YES strategy looks to take young people through a journey of engagement, empowerment and equipping. There is always the danger that with limited funding difficult decisions have to be made, which means that many potential entrepreneurs are never engaged and therefore never have an opportunity to start that journey. Good steps have been taken through setting up the hubs to make better use of the limited resources by encouraging joint working and sharing of resources amongst institutions. Setting up the CPD hub may also prove to be an invaluable resource to the hubs and will hopefully prove to be a cost effective way of providing vital staff training.

- What progress has been made in implementing the Welsh Government's Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy and Action Plan?

Setting up the regional hubs has been a very positive step in enabling the strategy to be implemented across Wales in a cost effective way. Developing a three year programme for the YS Hubs has enabled the universities and colleges to plan delivery more effectively. Previously with annual funding rounds we were unsure of what funding would be available, or at times what the priorities would be for utilising that funding. There is a lot to achieve and it will take the three years available to establish effective and efficient hubs that are able to work seamlessly across different institutions. The worry is that the momentum will not be maintained, and that at the end a new idea will emerge meaning that it starts all over again.

- How does the Welsh Government's approach to promoting youth entrepreneurship incorporate issues such as equality, social enterprise and

regional variations in skills and training opportunities?

Equality

To a certain extent this is devolved to the Hubs and we are in the process of developing activities that ensure equality. This is primarily done by working with departments within the colleges that specifically provide training to underrepresented groups. Showing the general student population that enterprise is something that individuals from any background can engage in and with the right aptitude be successful at is something we will develop during our three year period.

Social Enterprise

This by its definition is a ground up activity, and cannot be thrust upon students. The hub is working to identify opportunities to promote social enterprise as a vehicle for students to engage in activity that is important to them and for a social or community purpose. i.e. creative enterprise to enable students in the creative industries to deliver services to the industry, or students art collection for business service. The mechanisms to enable these enterprises are being developed by the hub.

Regional variations

Steering of hub activity with priorities based upon regional variations is the responsibility of the Hub Steering groups. These groups have been set up to involve representatives from local business and the public sector. Although their involvement is welcomed we are yet to see how their influence in the planning of activity for the next two years will be seen as acceptable within the context of the national YE project.

- What opportunities are presented by increasing youth entrepreneurship as a means of tackling youth unemployment and inactivity?

Youth Entrepreneurship is a long term mission. The numbers of students going on to start a business following engagement with entrepreneurship education at college or university is small in relation to the numbers of students we engage with. The main purpose is to increase the number of students with either the aspiration to start a business, or who see being entrepreneurial as a positive attitude they can bring to both their working and private lives. Deciding when to do something about it is very much down to their own "right time" in life. What we can hope for is that the cumulative effect upon the Welsh economy of this change in attitude

coupled with the support mechanisms put in place by Welsh Government enables our young people to make Wales an increasingly more entrepreneurial country. This in turn will provide the jobs and opportunities needed to reduce unemployment and inactivity.

- To what extent is entrepreneurship embedded within secondary education, further education and higher education institutions in Wales?

Entrepreneurship is far more embedded within further and higher education institutions than was the case ten years ago. In addition further education institutions are becoming more entrepreneurial and innovative in their operations. Examples of this being Coleg Menai's Food Technology and Innovation Centres and the support provided by Welsh Government to implementing the Knowledge Transfer Partnership programme within FE colleges. Therefore a more entrepreneurial atmosphere is created with staff being exposed to examples enterprise activity, and students learning from real life and local examples of this activity.

- What is the evidence base for the Welsh Government's approach to supporting and encouraging youth entrepreneurship?
- How does the Welsh Government monitor and evaluate its youth entrepreneurship activities? What impact has it had on the number of people starting a business?
- What examples of good practice in youth entrepreneurship policy can be identified within Wales, more widely within the UK and internationally?

Invitation to contribute to the inquiry

The Committee welcomes responses from both individuals and organisations.

Generally, we ask for submissions to be made in writing because it is normal practice for us to publish evidence on our internet site so that it becomes part of the public record. However, we are also able to accept evidence in audio or video format.

The Committee welcomes contributions in English or Welsh and will consider responses to the inquiry and hold oral evidence sessions during the summer term.

If you wish to submit evidence, please send an electronic copy of your submission to enterprise.committee@wales.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can write to:

Committee Clerk
Enterprise and Business Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay, CF99 1NA.

Submissions should arrive by 1 May 2013 and should be no more than five pages of A4. It may not be possible to take into account responses received after this date.