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Articles

Planning for uncertainty: soft skills, hard skills and innovation

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to explore how education for innovation of our young people may help develop an innovative mindset. The article develops the theoretical justification of a skills set which, it is argued, is fundamental for the development of an innovative mindset of young people, and consequently their personal development. We focus here on the qualitative work – focus groups and interviews with teaching staff and students aged 14–19 years – that informed our understanding of the five characteristics of this mindset; leadership, creativity, self-efficacy, energy and risk-propensity. The research attempted to capture the differences in context, constraints and school types and ethos that potentially shaped behavioural expression. Case studies based on types of school revealed detailed differences in context – regional, local and personal – that shaped students' engagement and their innovative behaviour in particular. The paper also reflects on teaching style, extracurricular opportunities for skills' development and

student motivation to acquire an innovation skills set. The paper reflects on practical and policy implications of this work and identifies areas for further research.

Keywords:

behavioural innovation skills

young people

education for innovation

social learning

entrepreneurial behaviour

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Notes

1. Whilst schools of all types are required to deliver the National Curriculum, the difference between schools is the context and structure that may affect the nature of the delivery e.g. city academies are based on public private partnerships, which should present more opportunities for the expression of practical innovative behaviour. Whereas, for example, sixth form colleges focus rather more on the technical aspects of the discipline and as such may present fewer opportunities for the expression of innovative behaviour.
2. To boost the number of 19-year-old students in our sample we used first-year university students.

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