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# The value of enterprise for disabled people

Maggie Anderson and Laura Galloway

**Abstract:** *The focus of this paper is on the role of enterprise training among disabled people. The authors first review the literature, in particular comparing work on the theoretical benefits of enterprise training provision for disabled people with empirical studies of enterprise training initiatives for disabled people in various countries. In the analysis, low social capital is implicated as a cause of much disadvantage in economic and social life among disabled people, and this is particularly pertinent in modern knowledge-based economies where responsibility for development in the lifelong learning agenda is devolved from governments to individuals, including disabled individuals. Following this, an investigation of one publicly funded initiative in Fife, Scotland, is conducted and this is used to inform a wider debate about the potential uses and value of enterprise training for disabled people in the current stratified socioeconomic milieu. The paper argues that there is potential for enterprise training to contribute on a wider basis than simply independent entrepreneurship promotion and that the research community therefore has an opportunity to engage with this broader agenda.*

**Keywords:** *disability; minority enterprise; entrepreneurship training; skills; minorities; enterprise education*

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There is much hypothesizing that enterprise can promote economic growth and reduce poverty among socioeconomically deprived groups of people, ranging from ethnic minorities to the indigenous poor. The idea that the dissemination of enterprise skills has the potential to add value to people's skills base, whether or not they are applied to entrepreneurship in its ideal form (business creation and self-employment), pervades the literature. Disabled World (2010) refers to the disabled population as 'the world's largest minority group'. In the absence of much attention in the academic literature in general, and in the entrepreneurship literature in particular, there is a clear logic to defining this population as a silent minority and therefore appropriate to this special

edition. The focus of the paper is on the role of enterprise training amongst disabled people in terms of contributing to both their economic and social capital. The aim is to address the topic of enterprise and entrepreneurship training for disabled people in order to open it up for wider consideration and analysis. The paper achieves this by reviewing the limited amount of research currently available on enterprise and entrepreneurship training for disabled people, and thereafter connecting theory regarding the analysis of challenges facing disabled people with the potential for enterprise and entrepreneurship training. Through this format, the paper suggests theoretical uses of entrepreneurship training amongst disabled people (and by implication,

other disadvantaged groups) that may go beyond the usual business start-up rationale.

The paper starts by giving working definitions for the often opaque terms 'entrepreneurship' and 'enterprise training' and the hard-to-qualify label 'disabled'. Following this, an overview of the literature on the social and economic disadvantages experienced by disabled people throughout the world is provided. The paper moves on to discuss the empirical evidence of disabled people's experiences of entrepreneurship and the effectiveness of programmes aimed at fostering and encouraging it for disabled people. The next section, 'The role of enterprise training', looks at the theoretical case for the myriad uses of entrepreneurship and enterprise training and the potential of these for disadvantaged groups. The paper then uses a UK example of a support programme linking the potential of enterprise and entrepreneurship training to enhancing the disabled person's experience of social and economic life. This example is included to illustrate the multiplicity of potential opportunities for enterprise and entrepreneurship training programmes, including economic and social inclusivity. The paper concludes with an analysis of the implications for researchers, policy makers and disabled people on the potential outcomes of a more holistic output approach to entrepreneurship and enterprise training programmes, particularly amongst disadvantaged groups in the current real-life, stratified socioeconomic milieu.

## **Understanding the terms**

Any discussion about the potential of enterprise and entrepreneurship training to enhance the disabled person's experience of social and economic life is clouded by the recurrent confusion and debate about the use of the terms 'enterprise' and 'entrepreneurship' (for example, Davies, 2002; Breen, 2004). They are often used interchangeably, and indeed, they even have the same etymological derivation. Keats and Abercrombie (1991) refer to the 'enterprise culture' in their work on structural and cultural changes in the economy, while their use of the term 'enterprise economy' refers to an economy based on knowledge, innovation and business venturing, thereby shifting the focus from the corporate and industrial to include also the small firm sectors as agents of economic development. Following Keats and Abercrombie, there has been much scholarly and popular interest in the observable changes to the economic infrastructure, but it continues to be the reality that there is much overlap in both the popular and academic use of the terms 'entrepreneurship' and 'enterprise'. Breen (2004), while acknowledging this overlap, provides a distinction between these terms in

which he argues that 'enterprise' refers to the combination of activities in an economy that include entrepreneurship and which are also invoked by the term 'entrepreneurship', such as innovation, creativity, value-adding development. Jack and Anderson (1999, p 110) point out that when discussing enterprise, one might be referring to 'job creation; new industry formation; the incorporation of innovation; or the re-energising, even the renewal, of the commercial base'. Elsewhere, 'entrepreneurship' refers specifically to the creation of new firms: for example, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor defines it as such (Bosma and Levie, 2009). Using these principles as the basis of a working distinction between the two terms, the current paper identifies enterprise training as that which includes the dissemination of knowledge and skills associated with all the features commonly applied to entrepreneurship (such as innovation, initiative, business development), but which can be practised in any organizational context, including but not exclusive to new ventures. Entrepreneurship is defined in this paper as 'independent venture creation or self-employment' and as such the terms 'entrepreneurship training' or 'entrepreneurship education' refer to those relevant enterprise skills applied specifically to a start-up.

Meanwhile, with reference to the term 'disability', the World Health Organization (WHO, 2012) defines 'disability' as a generic term which covers three types: impairment, activity limitation and participation restriction. According to WHO, 'an impairment is a problem in a body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations'. The UK government (2009) is equally generalist, defining disabled people as those with 'a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Since the focus of this paper is not about one's understanding of what it means to be disabled, a detailed discussion around the term 'disability' has not been pursued. Instead, the broad interpretations highlighted above are adopted in order to allow the reader to build his or her understanding of the overall objectives of the paper.

## **Economic activity amongst disabled people**

It is now a commonly held belief that the number and type of disabled people are increasing across the globe. In the UK, according to the Employers Forum of Disability (EFD Research, 2006), approximately 15% of the population is disabled, and according to the Department of Health (2007), the number of disabled people in

the UK will increase by 1% per annum for the next 15 years. These figures are generally representative of other countries: WHO (2011) stated that around one billion people in the world were disabled in some way. Within this sizeable population, inequity is observable. The OECD reported that disabled people comprised 19% of those with low levels of education, compared with 11% of those with higher levels of education. This also transfers to the workplace: for example, in the USA only 35% of working-age disabled people are employed, compared with 78% of able-bodied people (Disabled World, 2010). Despite these statistics, there is a dearth of research and analysis on disabled people and their economic and employment activity (including entrepreneurship). Part of the reason for this silence may well be that there is much confusion about the matter at the paradigm level.

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2008) is critical of what it calls the 'medical approach' to disability, in that its focus is on curing or caring for the disabled as subsidiary members of society. Thus disabled people have traditionally been perceived as non-participants in the economy and, by virtue of this, have been socially (and economically) marginalized. De Vries (2003, p 1) concurred with this view, noting that as a result of their subsidiary status, 'many of the disabled are protected from the world of economics, politics and a social order, which excludes them from the mainstream'. Roni (2009, p 5) goes further by suggesting that this exclusion is the real disability in disabled people's lives: 'people with designated impairments are disabled by society's failure to accommodate their individual and collective needs within the mainstream of economic and cultural life'. In neo-liberal economies characteristic of modern nations, inclusion is advocated, but national governments' policies to promote a knowledge economy have led to a focus on lifelong learning that has in effect transferred the responsibility from the state to the individual in terms of access to and survival within the labour market (Marks and Huzzard, 2010). As Pavey (2006, p 219) pointed out, this gives disabled people a 'deficiency-based model' in which the responsibility for development of their human capital rests with the disabled person. Other theoretical developments within the context of the free-market, knowledge-based economy are also limiting when considering the place of the disabled population within it (for example, Pavey [2006] identified that Human Capital Theory did not take into account disabled people).

From a broader sociological perspective, one can gain some insight into the reasons why marginalized groups, and particularly disabled people, might not fit neatly into market-based theories of economic participation.

Putnam (1993) contends that social capital is that which individuals or groups might possess, and comprises the cumulative access to and inclusion in social networks that add can value – including economic value – to the individual or groups through knowledge, information and extended contact with these. Thus, social capital is that which is afforded by efficient social networks and various degrees of integration in them. Granovetter (1973) hypothesized that, while strong network ties, such as those embodied by family and friendship, are useful in terms of support and relationships, weak ties are most important in terms of extending the reach from an individual to add value. These weak ties are more likely to act as 'bridges' in terms of information and integration from individuals and groups to external information and, through this, opportunity (especially economic opportunity). Empirically, there is evidence to support this. In his own review of the empirical case for his theory, Granovetter (1983) highlights studies that have shown the relatively more positive effect of weak ties as opposed to strong ties on social mobility, employment opportunity and occupational status based on the extended 'access to information and resources beyond those available in [a person's] own social circle' (p 209). However, he also noted that the tendency to form (or availability of) weak 'bridging' ties reduced amongst those who were poorer, had less education or belonged to marginalized groups such as some immigrant groups. Where these circumstances prevail, a lack of weak ties can be supplanted by strong network ties (approximations of kinship in some circumstances) in response to the social exclusion produced by limited weak ties. Thus Granovetter contends that these groups can become 'encapsulated' by a lack of weak ties whereby a strong-ties network is created but is inherently economically disadvantageous to individuals, despite the support they may perceive from it, because it cannot offer members the bridging capabilities to and from the mainstream (or indeed any other, different) network.

For disabled people, there is much evidence to support the idea that social capital and access to extended social networks through weak ties is very limited. For example, the Care Services Improvement Partnership (2006) claims that people with a learning disability socialize most often with people who also have a learning disability. Additionally, there is an observed link between disability and lower levels of education, as noted earlier. Cooney (2008) corroborates this by citing evidence from the UK, USA and Ireland, which shows that disabled people tend to have low rates of educational attainment and low rates of employment – the most common source of weak network ties (also Scottish Government, 2008). Furthermore, a recent survey of people with learning disabilities in Scotland

(Scottish Government, 2007) has shown that one in three respondents said that they had little contact with other people. The impact on individuals is demonstrably negative: 10% said that they never felt confident, certainly comprising a disadvantage in the competitive labour market. While one might argue that the role of agency might be most implicated here, the same survey found that three-quarters of respondents said that they would like to change what they did in the daytime, suggesting that economic participation may well be perceived as a more attractive prospect for many than non-participation. In theory, this would be better facilitated by a 'rights' approach to disability rather than a 'medical' dependency one (ILO, 2008). The rights approach to disability advocates access to opportunity and inclusivity, and is the approach being increasingly adopted in mature modern nations (*ibid*; also Pavey, 2006).

The shift in neo-liberal economies from the 'medical' approach to the 'rights' approach to disability is part of the greater shift of responsibility for social and economic well-being from the state to individuals. The 'rights approach' to disability has as its focus inclusion and integration with mainstream society (British Institute of Learning Disabilities [BILD], 2007). This demands that governments accommodate disabled people in all services, processes, etc that they directly or indirectly deliver (ILO, 2008), and policy has made some significant inroads towards this in many countries (for example, Department for Work and Pensions [DWP], 2002, in the UK). While this could be viewed cynically as governments ridding themselves of responsibility for disabled people, in reality, as populations increase, there appear to be few alternative options. In any nation, economic growth is critical to sustaining and improving a way of life, including the delivery of public services to populations. In neo-liberal capitalist economies, economic growth requires a strong, independently oriented workforce, and as such, for disabled people for whom the alternative would be no employment or underemployment, 'equality of opportunity and participation, and empowerment ... are essential for economic growth' (ILO, 2008, p 6). Indeed, the rationale for inclusiveness in economic and social life is based on the fact that disabled people have a greater tendency to be poor than others (as noted above; see also ILO, 2008; and Russell and Malhotra, 2002). This is true regardless of the economic infrastructure in nations, although it is not demonstrably remedied by advocated inclusion and the free market, as evidenced by studies such as that of Hendey and Pascal (2001), who found that where they were in work, disabled people were overrepresented in low-paid jobs.

It is likely that the disadvantages of poor social capital

and the effects of this on economic life prevail regardless of how societies and governments officially approach disability. The requirement to address the underlying causes of poor social capital, including poverty, lack of education and lack of (specifically weak) network ties is strongly implied. Training and networking opportunities for economic and social life have been advocated by the ILO (2008) as essential in terms of addressing many issues that have a cumulative disadvantageous effect on disabled people. With their inherent (tacit as well as explicit) skills development potential, entrepreneurship education and enterprise skills dissemination may be useful vehicles to this end.

## **Disability and entrepreneurship**

Studies of business ownership and self-employment (hereafter entrepreneurship) and disability are very rare. Roni (2009, p 5) suggested that this was primarily because 'most theories assume entrepreneurs are able people'. However, as suggested above, entrepreneurship is often seen as a means by which disadvantaged groups can overcome economic adversity. While it is important to note the criticism that this view of entrepreneurship is commonly regarded as an 'an economic panacea' (Anderson, *et al*, 2009, p 127), there is evidence that self-employment as an economic activity can be wealth-generating amongst disadvantaged groups. Pavey (2006, p 222) summarized the argument thus:

'Entrepreneurship holds the promise of increased employment, economic salvation and increased democratic participation through voters' enlightened self-interest, as they become more closely concerned with government policies that directly affect their economic progress. Entrepreneurship also provides a solution to government worries about demographic trends, with an increasingly ageing population having to be supported by the reducing number of younger workers suggested by a falling birth rate... The promotion of entrepreneurship and self-employment can stimulate the readiness and capacity of people to support and maintain themselves...'

This is an appealing rhetoric and various commentators subscribe to it as applicable to disabled people: 'an entrepreneurial path for a person with a disability can mean the difference between unemployment and severe underemployment and a truly exceptional and prosperous career' (Baldrige and Neubaum, 2008; see also Mathis, 2003).

Certainly, one of the most attractive things about entrepreneurship and its application to disabled people is the apparent democracy that it embodies. Pavey

(2006) pointed out that education was not a prerequisite for entrepreneurship and that, in fact, entrepreneurship could impact on the lives of those lacking education in a unique way. Pavey cited research by Grilo and Irigoyen (2005), which showed that educational attainment was not a factor in business start-up and self-employment, and she therefore suggested that entrepreneurship might be a feasible option for economically empowering people with disabilities. Further, Pavey identified that this inclusive theme ran throughout the literature on entrepreneurship education (for example, Gibb, 1998), which often advocates embedding enterprise skills in curricula as a means of fostering entrepreneurship, again implying that its reach should be throughout the ability range. More pragmatically, Mathis (2003) suggested that entrepreneurship training should be made available for disabled people due to the strong argument that it can be economically empowering. He argued that the cost of training relative to other forms of support for disabled people meant that there was no risk involved, as entrepreneurship training might result in some start-ups, and even for those to whom entrepreneurship did not appeal, they could return to a conventional means of economic sustenance having added to their skills base.

While employment is the mainstay for many disabled people, for many others the conventional means of sustainability is based on public social benefits. The OECD (2009, p 6) identified that 'disability benefit reciprocity rates have increased in a majority of OECD countries'. This is undoubtedly the result of an increasing population and an increasing proportion of disabled people within it, but it has an effect on the feasibility of entrepreneurship as a career for disabled people. In a study on the impact of a start-up programme for disabled people in Sweden two years after the awarding of initial grants, Larsson (2006) found within his generally positive reportage of sustainability and quality of firms started by disabled people, that one of the most common reasons for closing a firm was the threat of social security. Since governments have to balance the obligation to equip disabled people with support due to the requirements of an active and inclusive economy, this issue is always going to be problematic. The OECD (2009) found that the more generous the benefits in a country, the more people will receive them, while the greater the interventions aimed at inclusiveness and integration into the labour market of disabled people, the fewer people will receive them. As a result, the OECD advocated the idea of having both benefits and inclusivity interventions simultaneously as the most (cost-) effective method for national economies.

Other barriers that have been hypothesized for disabled entrepreneurs include resource disadvantage. Undercapitalization is a common theme regarding

entrepreneurship in marginalized groups, and reflects patterns of poverty found in the wider economy. Research has found that women are generally poorer than men and women entrepreneurs' firms tend to be undercapitalized (Carter and Rosa, 1998), while similar outcomes have been found for African and Hispanic Americans and their firms in the USA (Boyd, 2000, and Shinnar and Young, 2008 respectively). Since disabled people are overrepresented amongst the poor, one would expect to find similar results for them to those of other marginalized communities. Other forms of resource disadvantage include confidence, prejudice and physical barriers (depending on disability) (Roni, 2009) and education and training (ILO, 2008), as discussed above. Larsson (2006) summarized that knowledge, experience and social networks tended to be lower in frequency and quality amongst disabled people than for others, and to a large extent this can be expressed as outcomes of low levels of social capital, as identified in the previous section.

Notwithstanding these barriers, there is much hypothesizing that disabled people have plenty to gain from entrepreneurship. Noakes (2006) identifies entrepreneurship as a good source of income for disabled people, and Mathis (2003) suggests that disabled people may be well suited to it for a variety of reasons, such as their experience of creative problem solving, flexibility, grace under fire, persistence, sense of humour, willingness to ask for help, and resourcefulness. Cooney (2008) cites research studies from the UK and the USA, which show that disabled people are self-employed in significantly greater proportions than able-bodied people. He suggests that this is likely to be due to a combination of factors such as convenience for the individual in terms of access, disadvantage in employment because of lower educational attainment and opportunities, and discriminatory practices in the labour market. However, he notes that these studies also show that disabled people's firms are more likely than others to be home-based and micro. Elsewhere, several studies of national and regional initiatives have reported generally positive results: Mathis (2003) cites a study by the University of Montana in the USA in which 56% of disabled respondents claimed that their businesses were successful; and De Vries (2003, p 7) reports that amongst a South African sample, 'disabled entrepreneurs...can compete in size, diversity and in service quality with any other small business in the country'. Larsson's Swedish study (2006) is one of the very few empirical research studies to provide details of longitudinal activity. He found that two years after the initial start-up grant, 60% of businesses owned by disabled recipients were still active, despite having been started with low rates of capitalization (as was the case in the University of Montana

study). The firms in Larsson's sample were found to be more likely to provide part-time (self-) employment for the owners (two-thirds of the sample) and owners tended to be older (that is, in their 40s) than non-disabled business starters. The reasons for the closure of firms included low turnover – but this was at a rate lower than that for firms owned by non-disabled people – and poor health or sickness (which was also given as the reason why many of them were part-time). Generally, Larsson's results are very positive and he concludes that 'our study shows that starting a business is a viable option for people with disabilities... entrepreneurs with disabilities succeed to roughly the same extent as other entrepreneurs' (p 167).

### **The role of enterprise training**

It is a truism to suggest that enterprise education and training comes in many shapes and sizes. For the development of applied skills (such as many of those required for entrepreneurship), the theories of Modern Constructivism (Rozycki and Goldfarb, 2000) propose that learning is achieved through active participation (Marton and Saljo, 1976; Glasser, 1990) and embedded in individuals via dialogue and application (Laurillard, 1993; Mayes, 1995). Equally, the value of experiential learning with regard to entrepreneurial development is a well established principle (for example, Kirby, 1992; Gibb, 1996). Despite the case for business start-up and self-employment as ideal outcomes of entrepreneurship education, there are alternative outcomes that also have much appeal. In modern economies, employability skills are advocated as the key to fostering value in individuals and making them more marketable for employment generally. While hard to quantify (Bridges, 1994), employability skills are commonly cited as those that 'cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officer' (Sherer and Eadie, 1987, p 16), including collecting, analysing and organizing information, communicating ideas and information, planning and organizing activities, working with others in teams, using mathematical ideas and techniques, solving problems and using technology. When the term 'enterprise' is applied, the same skills are invoked, but also include specific business skills such as financial planning, market analysis, business or project planning, and strategy (Kirby, 1992; Gorman *et al*, 1997; Bechard and Toulouse, 1998). Galloway *et al* (2005, p 9) detail these skill-sets further as: 'negotiation, salesmanship, leadership, creative thinking...new product marketing...confidence; skills in competitive strategy, identifying market opportunities...financial acumen, organization skills and problem-solving abilities'. The

development of such skills can contribute to engendering further transferable abilities and traits including dependability, responsibility and positive attitudes towards work, and relatively recent research has identified these as also being highly valued by employers across occupational groups and work contexts (Galloway *et al*, 2012).

Simply expressed, enterprise or entrepreneurship education and training has the potential to disseminate both tacit skills (such as creativity, teamwork and confidence) and explicit business skills (including market appreciation and presentation). When based in experiential contexts (whether simulation or real-life entrepreneurship, or team projects associated with business venturing management or maintenance), there is much potential to contribute to an individual's experiences by including work and enterprise and the various networks one must engage with in order to pursue these possibilities. Thus, it can be argued that an individual's social capital is developed through entrepreneurship education, whether or not this fosters entrepreneurship as a career, or indeed whether or not this fosters any type of economic activity in the real world. For disabled people, one could argue that, in line with the inclusiveness agenda, the social benefits associated with developing many of the skills associated with enterprise can be as important as the economic benefits.

### **A Scottish example**

An interesting example of the direct provision of enterprise training to improve a disabled person's social and employability skills is provided by the Fife Arts and Crafts Enterprise Training (FACET) in Scotland. For this paper, information about the initiative was obtained from interviews with the Senior Manager of FACET and the Development Co-ordinator of Fife Employability Network. Secondary data from Fife Council and FACET during early 2010 were also sourced and referenced. Individuals with disabilities and special needs who live in Fife have the opportunity to access training activities via a range of projects. One key project is FACET, set up in 1999 (with European Social Fund support) by Fife Council and Fife Employability Network. FACET is committed to providing a broad range of training and work experiences to people affected by disability or illness, providing vocational and core skills experiences and development. All skills development activities involve real-time applied learning with the potential for tangible and measurable outcomes. The training workshops are broad in range, including woodwork, pottery, computers, horticulture and social enterprise development. In 2009, 139 people attended FACET; these

consisted primarily of individuals with learning disabilities, but also included those with a physical or mental health disability. The central aims of the programme include the ambition 'to create social enterprise/self-employment opportunities for people affected by disability and mental health problems' (FACET, 2010). The 'enterprise' element means that the organization also offers support and guidance to anyone coming to FACET who has aspirations for self-employment (entrepreneurship) or involvement in business development (enterprise). The social enterprise route has proved popular with those who possess these types of aspirations, as it allows people to participate in the setting-up and running of real businesses, but without the complete independence of self-employment or mainstream employment (and not necessarily in order to pursue personal financial gain). The skills dissemination element of the programme includes explicit core skills such as numeracy, IT and business systems, and tacit core skills such as confidence and motivation (as well as the vocational skills noted above). As training is applied and experiential, the holistic development of the individual is afforded through the experience of objective-setting, working to deadlines, plus business development activities such as creativity. As objectives, these focuses are prioritized equally to provide a wide range of development experiences. The nature of the activities necessarily affords network development within the FACET organization itself, but also, as they are set within a real-life context, they involve engagement with external bodies and individuals, as would be the case with any enterprise or venture development. FACET therefore affords participants opportunities to extend their skills and to develop relationships that will build social capital, especially by fostering weak network links, access to which may previously have been limited for many participants.

The outcomes of the FACET programme are encouraging thus far. Since its inception, several new firms have been created, and 'alumni' of FACET have moved on to start firms of their own. Additionally, other types of enterprise creation include several social enterprises with ongoing links to, and support from, FACET. Two such examples include Claywood Crafts and Bikeworks. Both of these are social enterprises in that they trade unsupported financially on a not-for-profit basis and employ former FACET students, as well as continuing to train current ones. They receive ongoing non-financial support from FACET, but they were born out of creativity, planning and execution on the part of participants. Claywood Crafts was set up by a group of individuals with mental health problems, including learning disability. It took on public art commissions within Fife that had been offered to Fife Council. This enterprise rented

a small workshop unit from FACET and generated income in order to buy further materials and equipment. The aim was not paid employment, but to enable the participants to take part in a community project with a commercial bias. The benefits to those participating in this activity were identified by the FACET Manager as being increased confidence and improved communication skills, particularly as the group interacted with a variety of agencies in their business. The creative nature of the work was also considered to have what he described as a 'centring and calming' effect on the individuals concerned, helping their working towards social inclusion. On a larger scale, Bikeworks (probably now the most successful and viable social enterprise in Fife) was also set up under the auspices of FACET. It provides employment and training opportunities by running a viable business in bike repair, servicing and retailing. Since 2000 the business has grown significantly, moving to much larger premises and winning the 2008 Social Enterprise Award in the Fife Business Diversity Competition.

As in most other parts of the world, disabled people in Fife are often excluded from participating in mainstream work and training activities. There is a lack of economic choice, and confidence and self-esteem are frequently low. Projects such as those provided by FACET demonstrate that enterprise training can be used effectively to offer a realistic means of building self-esteem and confidence, as well as a means towards economic independence in a supported environment. However, the value of skills development does not lie entirely in the successful launch and ongoing success of a limited number of enterprises. Other positive outcomes include the development of employability amongst participants. FACET enjoys good rates of employment post-FACET training, both within the FACET environment and outside it. An additional success factor attributed to FACET is its students' less tangibly measurable increase in social skills and engagement. As one participant noted in a communication to the Development Co-ordinator:

'it allowed me to build my confidence and self-esteem and I felt part of the community. It made me feel worthwhile. It was a good support network, having new people in my life.'

This building of self-esteem and social capital can be applied to an individual's economic life, although its value cannot be measured by this alone. For an individual, whether it is economically applied immediately or in the future (or not at all), this type of development can be invaluable.

FACET is just one example of where a central agenda of engaging disabled people through enterprise training



has been successful. There are many others throughout the UK and beyond. FACET is used in this paper as an exemplar as it measures its success not only in terms of (supported or otherwise) venture creation, but also in terms of employability and social skills development, however applied. Enterprise training is merely the vehicle through which these aims are facilitated. In this way, FACET exemplifies Mathis's (2003) argument that, as a mechanism, enterprise training can be a useful and efficient means of addressing the current circumstances for disabled people. As modern nations increasingly transfer responsibility for economic and social life to individuals, rather than being stranded in the lifelong learning agenda and the inherent disadvantage many disabled people will personify within that, enterprise training can be used to engage people and enfranchise them in terms of offering opportunities for personal development. In this more holistic sense, enterprise and entrepreneurship training has a lot to offer.

## Conclusion

If the ILO's aspiration 'to bring about parity of esteem and equality of participation' (ILO, 2008, p 48) for disabled people is to become a reality, an alternative means of developing skills for many will have to be addressed. This paper has argued that enterprise education and training is in a unique position to make a contribution. While it would be counterintuitive to argue that enterprise training could be used to foster independent entrepreneurship amongst all disabled people, there are many for whom there are no *a priori* reasons why they cannot set up, manage and maintain a firm or become self-employed, and results in Cooney (2008), Mathis (2003), Larsson (2006) and De Vries (2003) bear this out. From the employability perspective, enterprise training can contribute to both tacit and explicit skills for trades, vocations and business. Enterprise training can provide opportunities to pursue goals born of ideas generated, often collaboratively, in a supported environment. It can help disabled people to interact with the agents and stakeholders throughout the supply and distribution chains, and actively to contribute to a tangible, real-life organization or project as a worthwhile use of time and energy. Enterprise training thus has the potential to contribute, if not at the greater economic level, at least to the life experience and quality of life of the individual, and these in turn have the potential to contribute to an individual's employability.

But other outcomes of enterprise training and experience can also be argued to be worthwhile goals in themselves. These might include the development of self-esteem, social skills and other tacit qualities associated with the development of weak network ties that can

improve the life experiences of many. For recipients, this may be highly valuable, even if no impact on their financial status or on their economic contribution is made. The contribution that enterprise training may or may not make to entrepreneurship and to employability amongst disabled people can be argued to be of secondary importance in an inclusive socioeconomic context, as the priority to reduce gaps in esteem, skills and experience is in itself ethically compelling. Therefore, the dissemination of enterprise or employability skills through enterprise does not have to be in all cases prompted by the ideal entrepreneurship imperative. While independent entrepreneurship as an model outcome may be unlikely for many disabled people (though engagement in economic activity, including employment, via enterprise training and other incentives does also address the economic agenda), there are contributions that these skills can bring to the lives of disabled people, which are less quantifiable but perhaps just as valuable.

It is arguable that few researchers and specialists in entrepreneurship (particularly in enterprise training and education) perceive that there is currently an opportunity to look beyond the existing methods of independent entrepreneurship. The focus of most enterprise education and training research is on economic outcomes, but this paper has shown that there are social benefits that have the potential to have positive knock-on effects for the economy. While independent entrepreneurship is an ideal outcome in programmes such as FACET, potentially there is much more that enterprise education can give to the lives of disabled people, and the contribution of social enhancement must be seen as offering as much value as the potential of these programmes in terms of business creation.

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