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Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Educators in a Landscape of Practice: Alignment, Hybridity, and Professional Recognition

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Abstract

Enterprise and entrepreneurship (EE) education is integral to higher education, yet the professional realities of those delivering it remain underexplored. Existing research focuses on pedagogy and student outcomes, offering limited insight into how EE educators negotiate identity and recognition within increasingly hybrid roles. This article addresses this gap by examining EE educators' work through communities of practice theory and its extension into landscapes of practice, conceptualising their activity as distributed across curricular, learner-facing, and strategic domains. Drawing on two UK-wide surveys (2020, 2023), the study uses Enterprise Educators UK's Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways as ideal-typical regimes of competence to analyse patterns of alignment and prioritisation. Findings reveal growing hybridity, with educators consistently valuing learner motivation, relationship-building, and stakeholder engagement over

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curriculum delivery alone. While pathways remain coherent as professional reference points, practice is increasingly configured across multiple domains, challenging traditional notions of distinct role categories. The article contributes to management education by examining how a professional competence framework structures learning, recognition, and role alignment, demonstrating how recognition infrastructures shape hybrid academic work within practice-based education.

Keywords

enterprise and entrepreneurship education, communities of practice, landscapes of practice, professional identity, higher education

Introduction

Enterprise and entrepreneurship (EE) education has undergone significant transformation within UK higher education over the past two decades, becoming an integral part of universities' strategic agendas and widely promoted as a catalyst for innovation, economic growth, and graduate employability (Jones, 2019; Rae, 2010). Initially 'ghettoised' within business schools (Beresford, 2010), EE education has expanded across disciplines, driven by key policy interventions such as the Dearing Report (1997), the Lambert Review (2003), and Lord Young's *Enterprise for All* report (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2014), all of which emphasised universities' roles in stimulating economic growth through knowledge exchange, graduate start-ups, and spinouts. This shift has pushed EE educators into increasingly complex, hybrid roles configured across disciplinary and institutional contexts, and blended formal and informal structures and networks (Bridge et al., 2010; Gibb, 2010; Jones & Matlay, 2011; Neck et al., 2014; Pittaway et al., 2024; Rae, 2007). However, this evolution has also led to what has been described as 'mission creep'—an expansion of responsibilities beyond their original role, often with limited formal recognition or support (Gibb, 2010; Pittaway et al., 2024).

An emerging yet important area of research (Hoang & Luu, 2025; Sundermeier & Steenblock, 2024), EE education literature to date, has predominantly focused on EE pedagogy and curriculum (Nabi et al., 2017; Pittaway & Cope, 2007) rather than the EE educators' role identity, professional learning, and knowledge-sharing practices. While recent studies have begun to highlight the broader impact and competencies associated with EE educators' work (Sundermeier & Steenblock, 2024; Wasim et al., 2024; Wraae & Walmsley, 2020), there remains limited empirical research that

examines how EE educators collectively learn, align practice, and negotiate professional identity within higher education systems.

To address this gap, this article adopts a practice-based learning perspective, drawing on communities of practice (CoP) theory (Wenger, 1998) and its subsequent development into landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Rather than treating EE educators as members of a single discrete community of practice, the article argues that their work is situated within a landscape of practice comprising multiple, overlapping communities and regimes of competence. Within this landscape, educators align their practice across academic, professional, strategic, and external domains, developing hybrid identities that are negotiated through participation rather than prescribed by formal roles.

Empirically, the article draws on two UK-wide surveys of EE educators conducted in 2020 and 2023 in collaboration with a national enterprise and entrepreneurship membership organisation. This organisation provides professional recognition through three formalised pathways; Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer, each aligned to nationally agreed occupational standards (IOEE, 2016). These pathways are used analytically as ideal-typical configurations of practice (Coser, 1977; Weber, 1949), enabling exploration of how educators prioritise, blend, and shift practices over time.

This article makes three contributions to management education research. First, it conceptualises Enterprise Educators UK not as a community of practice itself but as a professional recognition infrastructure that structures participation across a landscape of practice. Second, it operationalises alignment empirically by analysing how educators distribute practice across the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways, treating them as institutionalised regimes of competence rather than role categories. Third, it demonstrates how professional competence frameworks shape recognition, legitimacy, and value creation in hybrid academic roles. In doing so, the study shifts attention from communities as social groups to infrastructures that organise professional learning and identity within management education.

The Evolving Role of EE Educators

As EE education has evolved, so too have the roles and expectations of EE educators, often resulting in what has been described as ‘mission creep’ (Gibb, 2010; Pittaway et al., 2024). Traditionally, EE educators focused primarily on delivering entrepreneurship curricula within business schools, teaching structured subjects such as business planning, innovation, and venture creation (Kirby, 2004). By the 2010s, however, the role broadened

significantly to include stakeholder engagement, industry collaboration, and contributions to institutional strategy development (Bell & Bell, 2016; Gibb, 2010).

Pittaway et al. (2024) provide a valuable historical perspective, highlighting how EE educators have increasingly been expected to bridge the gap between academia and industry, actively contributing to their institutions' entrepreneurial ecosystems. This perspective aligns with Rae's (2007) argument that EE educators must combine pedagogical expertise with the ability to facilitate experiential and applied learning, equipping students with real-world entrepreneurial skills. The benefits of this outward-facing role, which engages stakeholders beyond the classroom, are well-documented for enhancing social impact, entrepreneurial competencies, and graduate outcomes (Lyons & Buckley, 2021; Mooney & Cockburn, 2024; K. Smith, 2020).

While much of the literature continues to focus on the underpinning pedagogy and the 'how' and 'what' of EE teaching (Kakouris et al., 2016; Nabi et al., 2017; Wraae & Walmsley, 2020), recent studies demonstrate that the impact of EE educators extends far beyond classroom delivery (Mooney & Cockburn, 2024; Sundermeier & Steenblock, 2024; Wasim et al., 2024). Despite this, there remains relatively little focus on the 'who' delivers this teaching, the educators themselves (Neck & Corbett, 2018). While understandable, this fails to consider the centrality of those who deliver the teaching and reinforces the growing call for more research that explores these complexities and the competencies needed to perform the role effectively (Lane & Mountford-Brown, 2025; Wasim et al., 2024; Wraae & Walmsley, 2020).

The diversity of roles and the complexity of competencies required for EE educators are well established in the literature. For instance, Lane (2023) proposed a bipartite profile to help conceptualise this complexity, distinguishing between 'academic' and 'professional' EE educators. In Lane's model, 'professional' EE educators typically work in central services, careers centres, or enterprise units supporting activities outside the curriculum, while 'academic' EE educators deliver EE within formal programmes under academic contracts. This highlights how perceptions of required competencies can differ significantly across institutional functions and professional domains.

In response to this growing diversity of practice, Enterprise Educators UK (EEUK) developed a tripartite professional framework comprising Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways, aligned to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Enterprise Educators developed by the Institute of

Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE, 2016). The framework was designed to acknowledge the breadth of roles that contribute to effective EE provision and to provide a nationally recognised structure through which educators could gain professional recognition for different emphases within their work.

The NOS articulate competence across four key areas:

- (A) planning and delivering enterprise and entrepreneurship curricula;
- (B) building collaborative relationships with learners, educators, and external stakeholders;
- (C) motivating and inspiring learners to develop enterprising behaviours and mindsets; and
- (D) reflecting on and developing professional practice (IOEE, 2016).

While all four areas are relevant to effective EE practice, the three pathways foreground different configurations of these competencies.

The Academic pathway primarily emphasises curriculum design, pedagogical delivery, assessment, and constructive alignment (Key Area A). Educators aligned to this pathway typically operate within formal academic programmes and validated curricula. Reflection on practice (Key Area D) is integral, and academic EE educators are increasingly expected to engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary, and outward-facing activity that supports authentic learning and institutional enterprise agendas (Pittaway et al., 2024; Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2018).

The Practitioner pathway foregrounds motivating and inspiring learners (Key Area C), often through experiential, extracurricular, or applied enterprise activity. Practitioners commonly work within central enterprise units, careers services, or innovation hubs, supporting student start-ups, enterprise challenges, and co-curricular provision. Their work is strongly relational and learner-facing, requiring facilitation, mentoring, and coaching skills, alongside the ability to interpret institutional priorities into accessible opportunities for diverse student populations (Wasim et al., 2024; Wraae & Walmsley, 2020).

The Influencer pathway places greatest emphasis on building collaborative relationships and shaping strategic direction (Key Area B). Influencers typically operate at the interface between education, policy, and external ecosystems, contributing to institutional enterprise strategies, regional partnerships, funding initiatives, and national agendas. Their practice involves coordinating relationships, legitimising enterprise activity within institutional structures, and translating external priorities into educational and organisational value (Gibb, 2010; Pittaway et al., 2024).

Reflection on practice (Key Area D) underpins all three pathways, reinforcing the expectation that EE educators engage in continuous professional learning regardless of role emphasis. Importantly, the pathways were never intended to represent discrete or fixed roles. Instead, they function as ideal-typical configurations of practice, offering a shared language through which educators can articulate and gain recognition for different emphases within a common professional field. To theorise this complexity, the article draws on communities of practice (CoP) theory (Wenger, 1998) and its subsequent development into landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Rather than conceptualising EE educators as members of a single community of practice, a landscapes-of-practice lens recognises that professionals organise their work across multiple, overlapping communities and regimes of competence. Learning and identity formation, in this view, involve aligning expertise and practice across contexts rather than progressing towards a single ‘centre’ of participation.

This perspective is particularly appropriate for EE educators, who typically enter the landscape with substantial prior expertise—often from industry, professional practice, or other academic domains—and must align that expertise across teaching, extracurricular activity, institutional strategy, and external engagement. Within this landscape, the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways can be understood as distinct but overlapping regimes of competence, each articulating what counts as valued contribution in particular contexts. Educators’ practice is distributed across multiple pathways, producing hybrid configurations of work that are both generative and demanding.

By integrating the EEUK pathways within a landscapes-of-practice framework, this article shifts the analytical focus from categorising roles to understanding how EE educators negotiate professional identity, distribute effort, and create value across a complex configuration of practices.

Theoretical Framework: Communities of Practice (CoP)

Communities of practice (CoP) theory conceptualises learning as a socially situated process that emerges through participation in shared practice, rather than as the acquisition of decontextualised knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In its foundational formulation, a community of practice is characterised by three interrelated dimensions: a shared domain of interest that gives meaning to participation; a community of people who engage with one another through sustained interaction; and a practice comprising shared repertoires of tools, stories, routines, and ways of addressing

recurring problems (Wenger, 1998). Learning, from this perspective, is inseparable from identity formation, as individuals come to see themselves—and be recognised by others—as competent practitioners through participation in collective activity.

Within higher education, CoP theory has been widely used to examine professional learning, academic identity development, and informal knowledge sharing (Arthur, 2016; Viskovic, 2006; Warhurst, 2008). In management education in particular, CoP perspectives have been applied to pedagogic design (S. Smith et al., 2019), learning strategy (Monaghan, 2011), and academic development communities (Underwood & Kowalczyk-Walędzia, 2021). This body of work demonstrates the value of CoP theory for illuminating how educators learn through peer interaction, shared reflection, and engagement with practice-based problems that are not easily addressed through formal training alone.

However, as CoP theory has been applied to increasingly complex organisational and professional contexts, a number of critiques have emerged. Roberts (2006) and Hodgkinson (2004), for example, caution that CoP accounts can over-emphasise cohesion and shared meaning while underplaying power relations, exclusion, and uneven access to learning opportunities. In contemporary higher education, academics and professional staff rarely participate in a single, stable community of practice; instead, they move across multiple communities with different norms, expectations, and regimes of competence (Arthur, 2016). In such contexts, learning involves not simply participation within a community, but the ongoing negotiation of meaning, legitimacy, and identity across different domains of practice.

These critiques are particularly salient for hybrid professional roles that span teaching, leadership, policy, and external engagement. As Beech et al. (2022) show in their analysis of academics working across policy and scholarly domains, legitimacy is often context-specific, requiring individuals to align their expertise differently depending on audience and setting. Similarly, Vinson et al. (2021), in their study of international sports coaches, illustrate how learning can occur across multiple practice contexts, where practitioners translate and re-contextualise knowledge between distinct professional fields. These studies suggest that professional learning cannot be adequately understood through reference to a single CoP, but instead requires attention to how practitioners navigate multiple, overlapping practice environments.

The concept of landscapes of practice was developed to address these limitations by extending CoP theory beyond individual communities to the broader configuration of practices within which professionals operate (Wenger-Trayner et al. 2014). A landscape of practice comprises multiple

communities, networks, and constellations of practice connected through points of coordination, shared artefacts, and negotiated competence. Within such landscapes, competence is not absolute but relational: what counts as valued or legitimate practice varies across contexts, and practitioners must develop what Wenger-Trayner et al. (2014) describe as knowledgeability—an ability to recognise, align with, and contribute to multiple regimes of competence.

This shift in analytical focus is particularly useful for understanding professional learning in higher education contexts characterised by hybridity, mobility, and institutional complexity. Rather than assuming progression from peripheral to central participation within a single community, a landscapes-of-practice perspective foregrounds how practitioners align their identities and expertise across multiple domains (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Learning, in this view, involves translation, coordination, and alignment across practices, rather than membership acquisition alone.

This perspective is especially apt for understanding the work of enterprise and entrepreneurship (EE) educators. EE educators routinely operate across teaching and assessment, extracurricular provision, institutional strategy, and external engagement, often simultaneously (Gibb, 2010; Pittaway et al., 2024). Many enter higher education with substantial prior expertise from industry, professional practice, or policy environments, complicating linear or apprenticeship-based models of participation. Their professional learning therefore involves aligning and re-contextualising expertise across multiple communities—academic departments, enterprise units, regional ecosystems, and national networks—each with distinct expectations and recognition mechanisms.

Within this landscape, the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways can be understood as distinct but overlapping regimes of competence. Each pathway articulates what counts as valued contribution within particular practice contexts, providing a vocabulary for recognition and professional development (IOEE, 2016). However, as landscapes-of-practice theory would predict, educators' actual practices frequently span multiple regimes. This produces hybrid configurations of work that are both generative—enabling innovation, connection, and value creation—and demanding, as individuals must sustain legitimacy across diverse contexts (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014).

A further strength of the landscapes-of-practice lens lies in its attention to value creation. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) argue that learning in social contexts generates multiple forms of value, including immediate value (useful interactions), potential value (knowledge capital), applied value

(changes in practice), and realised value (broader outcomes). Importantly, not all forms of value are equally visible or recognised within formal organisational systems. For EE educators, value is frequently created through relational, connective work across institutional contexts that benefits students, institutions, and external stakeholders (Mooney & Cockburn, 2024; QAA, 2018). Yet this value may remain weakly recognised within workload models, promotion criteria, and professional development structures, contributing to experiences of role strain and mission creep (Gibb, 2010; Schultz, 2022).

By adopting a landscapes-of-practice perspective, this article reframes EE educators' work as relational, negotiated, and multi-sited. It shifts the analytical focus from whether EE educators constitute a single community of practice to how professional learning, identity, and value are produced and sustained across a complex configuration of practices. This provides a theoretically robust foundation for interpreting the survey findings and for addressing broader questions within management education concerning hybrid academic roles, professional recognition, and the sustainability of practice-based educational work.

Research Questions

This study examines how enterprise and entrepreneurship (EE) educators operate within a complex landscape of practice characterised by multiple, overlapping regimes of competence. Drawing on the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways as ideal-typical configurations of practice, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do enterprise and entrepreneurship educators align their professional practice across multiple regimes of competence within a landscape of practice?

RQ2: How do the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways structure the creation and recognition of professional value in enterprise and entrepreneurship education?

Together, these questions enable examination of how EE educators negotiate hybrid roles, distribute effort across multiple domains of practice, and create value within and beyond formal institutional structures. In addressing these questions, the study also considers the implications for professional learning, recognition, and sustainability within management education and higher education more broadly.

Methodology

The methodology was developed in collaboration with an enterprise and entrepreneurship membership organisation that supports EE professionals across higher education institutions primarily in the UK. An exploratory–descriptive survey design was adopted to examine how enterprise and entrepreneurship educators align their professional practice across different regimes of competence, as articulated through the EEUK pathways and National Occupational Standards. The study does not seek to test causal relationships, but to explore patterns of alignment, prioritisation, and recognition across a complex professional landscape. While communities of practice research often draw on ethnographic or interview-based methods to examine participation and meaning-making, the purpose of this study is different. By using survey data aligned to a formal professional framework, the study examines how practice is structured, prioritised, and recognised across a landscape of practice, rather than how learning unfolds through interaction.

The research design consisted of an online survey distributed through institutional networks, national mailing lists, and social media channels in 2020, and then again in 2023. The 2020 and 2023 surveys constitute two cross-sectional datasets. While some respondents may have participated in both surveys, the data were not linked at the individual level and are therefore analysed comparatively rather than longitudinally. The focal population comprises UK higher education professionals engaged in enterprise and entrepreneurship education operating within the EEUK pathways and the National Occupational Standards framework. Respondents were eligible if they (a) self-identified as EE educators and (b) could meaningfully respond to pathway and standards-based items. Membership of EEUK or any other enterprise and entrepreneurship educator organisation was therefore not required by design, as the study investigates alignment to a professional competence framework rather than participation in an association. A purposive sampling strategy aimed to reach a diverse cross-section of EE educators who actively contribute to enterprise and entrepreneurship education through practice and peer engagement.

The survey instrument consisted of closed-ended questions capturing demographic information, self-identification with the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways, prioritisation of different areas of practice aligned to the National Occupational Standards, and the time allocated to each standard. This enabled comparison of how educators positioned and distributed their practice across different domains.

In this study, alignment is operationalised through educators' self-identification with professional pathways, their prioritisation of different areas of practice, and the time allocated to nationally defined standards of

competence. This approach enables analysis of how practice is distributed and recognised across regimes of competence, rather than how educators interact or learn through direct participation.

Quantitative data were analysed descriptively to examine patterns of alignment across pathways and to compare distributions of practice between the 2020 and 2023 datasets.

As with any self-report survey, there is potential for bias, including over-representation of more engaged or networked educators. While the survey achieved good reach across roles and institutions, the findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than statistically generalisable.

Results

A total of 116 EE educators responded to the survey in 2020, with a further 128 in 2023. Respondents represented a range of roles, career stages, and institutional contexts. Respondents included representatives of the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways. Across both datasets, the majority of respondents identified with the Academic pathway, although this proportion decreased from 65% in 2020 to 57% in 2023. The proportion identifying with the Practitioner pathway remained relatively stable across both time points, while the proportion identifying with the Influencer pathway increased in 2023. This shift reflects increased participation from educators with strategic, leadership, or institutional responsibilities and suggests growing visibility of practice aligned with strategic and externally oriented work (see Figure 1).

RQ1: Alignment of Professional Practice Across Pathways

To examine how EE educators align their professional practice across pathways, respondents were asked to identify their primary focus from a set of role descriptors aligned to the National Occupational Standards (NOS). Importantly, these descriptors were not labelled by pathway, allowing analysis of how educators interpret and prioritise practice independently of formal pathway categories.

Across both survey waves, the most frequently selected primary focus was motivating and inspiring learners to develop enterprising behaviours and skills. The proportion of respondents identifying this as their main focus increased from 50% in 2020 to 62% in 2023. Similarly, the proportion selecting building collaborative relationships with learners, educators, and external stakeholders rose from 38% to 53% over the same period. In contrast, planning and delivering enterprise and entrepreneurship curricula declined slightly as a primary focus, from 46% in 2020 to 42% in 2023 (see Figure 2).

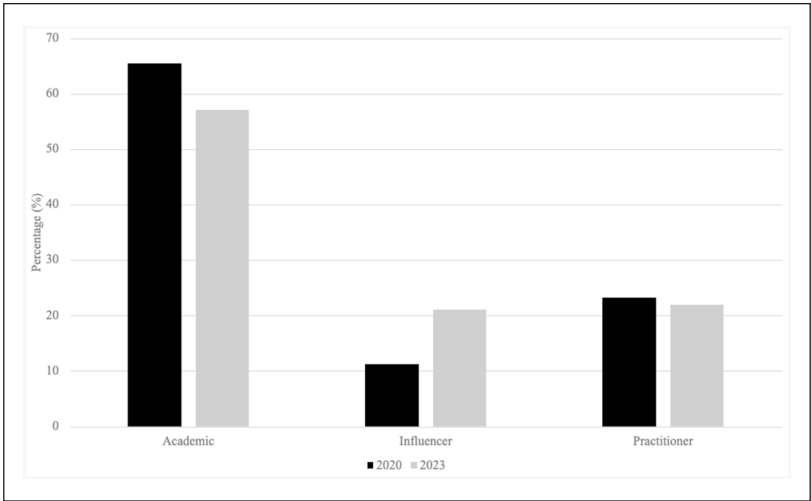


Figure 1. Survey respondents by EEUK pathway – A comparison of 2020 and 2023.
Source. Adapted from EEUK (2024).

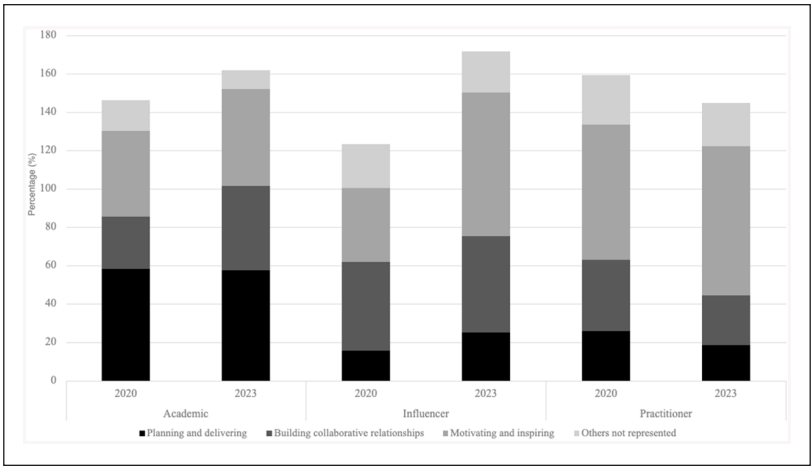


Figure 2. Primary focus by EEUK pathway – A comparison of 2020 and 2023.
Source. Adapted from EEUK (2024).

This pattern indicates a change in reported prioritisation across the landscape, with increasing emphasis on relational, motivational, and connective forms of work relative to curriculum delivery alone.

When disaggregated by pathway identification, distinctive but overlapping patterns of alignment emerge. Academics continued to align most strongly with curriculum-related practice; however, there was a notable increase in the proportion of Academics prioritising learner motivation and collaborative relationship-building in 2023. Practitioners remained strongly aligned with learner motivation across both survey waves, with little change over time. Influencers showed the greatest diversification of alignment, shifting from an emphasis on collaborative relationships in 2020 towards learner motivation in 2023.

Taken together, these patterns indicate that while the pathways retain coherence as regimes of competence, educators' practice increasingly spans multiple domains. Alignment is therefore best understood as configurational rather than categorical, supporting the interpretation of pathways as ideal-typical reference points within a broader landscape of practice.

RQ2: Regimes of Competence and the Distribution of Practice

To further explore how practice is distributed and recognised across regimes of competence, respondents were asked to indicate which NOS standards featured in their role and how much time they allocated to each standard.

Across both 2020 and 2023, standards associated with motivating and inspiring learners and engaging with stakeholders were consistently ranked among the most prominent, regardless of pathway identification. In contrast, standards associated with assessment, constructive alignment, and curriculum design were ranked lower overall, even though Academics constituted the largest proportion of respondents in both surveys (see Table 1).

This pattern suggests that forms of practice linked to relational engagement and learner motivation are highly salient across the landscape, cutting across formal role distinctions. It also indicates that curriculum-focused standards, while still present, are not the dominant mode through which EE educators experience or prioritise their work.

Analysis of time allocation provides further insight into how regimes of competence operate in practice (see Table 2). In 2020, Academics allocated the majority of their time to standards closely aligned with the Academic pathway. By 2023, however, this allocation had shifted, with increased time devoted to standards associated with Practitioner and Influencer practice, including learner motivation and stakeholder engagement. Practitioners showed a similar, though less pronounced, broadening of time allocation

Table 1. Three Competencies Perceived to be Most Critical in Executing the Role of An Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Educator to A High Standard – A Comparison of 2020 and 2023.

Competency (2020)	Frequency (%)	Competency (2023)	Frequency (%)
Top 5			
Inspire learners in enterprise and entrepreneurship through own enthusiasm and knowledge (C1)	51.8	Inspire learners in enterprise and entrepreneurship through own enthusiasm and knowledge (C1)	47.7
Deliver an effective enterprise and entrepreneurship education experience (A5)	49.4	Identify what works well in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A1)	27.9
Identify what works well in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A1)	40.0	Contribute to the institutional development of enterprise and entrepreneurship education (B6)	26.7
Develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A2)	32.9	Identify opportunities to work with others in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (B1)	26.7
Encourage positive learner behaviours in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (C2)	28.2	Deliver an effective enterprise and entrepreneurship education experience (A5)	24.4
Bottom 5			
Apply appropriate methods of assessment in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A6)	9.4	Encourage stakeholders to add value to enterprise and entrepreneurship education (B4)	7.0
Encourage stakeholders to add value to enterprise and entrepreneurship education (B4)	8.2	Make sense of the value in your own networks and relationships as an educator (B2)	5.8
Make sense of the value in your own networks and relationships as an educator (B2)	7.1	Demonstrate constructive alignment in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A3)	5.8
Provide constructive and timely feedback in assessing learning of enterprise and entrepreneurship (A7)	7.1	Apply appropriate methods of assessment in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A6)	3.5
Demonstrate constructive alignment in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A3)	5.9	Provide constructive and timely feedback in assessing learning of enterprise and entrepreneurship (A7)	3.5

Table 2. Competencies that Feature in the Role of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Educators – A Ranking by EEUK Pathway in 2020 and 2023.

Competency	Educator		Influencer		Practitioner	
	2020	2023	2020	2023	2020	2023
Inspire learners in enterprise and entrepreneurship through own enthusiasm and knowledge (C1)	(1) P	(1) P	(1) P	(1) P	(1) P	(1) P
Identify what works well in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A1)	(4) A	(3) A	(5) A	(3) A	(7) A	(2) A
Identify opportunities to work with others in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (B1)		(4) I	(2) I	(2) I	(6) I	(6) I
Encourage positive learner behaviours in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (C2)	(6) P	(5) P	(3) P	(4) P	(2) P	(7) P
Develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A2)	(2) A	(2) A			(4) A	(3) A
Make sense of the value in your own networks and relationships as an enterprise and entrepreneurship educator (B2)				(5) I		
Demonstrate constructive alignment in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A3)						
Engage with stakeholders to support enterprise and entrepreneurship education (B3)			(4) I	(6) I		(8) I
Enable learners to share responsibility for their own learning in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (C3)			(6) P		(8) P	
Encourage stakeholders to add value to enterprise and entrepreneurship education (B4)			(7) I			

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Competency	Educator		Influencer		Practitioner	
	2020	2023	2020	2023	2020	2023
Develop and prepare resources for learning and development (A4)	(5) A		(7) A		(5) A	(5) A
Promote diversity and inclusion in the delivery and development of enterprise and entrepreneurship education (C4)						
Deliver an effective enterprise and entrepreneurship education experience (A5)	(3) A				(3) A	(4) A
Update your own knowledge as an enterprise and entrepreneurship educator through collaboration with others (B5)						
Contribute to the institutional development of enterprise and entrepreneurship education (B6)						
Apply appropriate methods of assessment in enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A6)						
Provide constructive and timely feedback in assessing learning of enterprise and entrepreneurship (A7)						
Evaluate the learner experience of enterprise and entrepreneurship education (A8)						

Note. The labelled boxes highlight the significant competencies associated with the pathway, based on a ranking of time allocated to each competency (A = academic competencies; I = influencer competencies; P = practitioner competencies).

across standards. Influencers displayed the widest distribution of time across all three pathways in both survey waves.

These findings indicate that while the Academic pathway tends to emphasise depth within a defined set of competencies, the Practitioner and Influencer pathways are characterised by breadth, requiring engagement across multiple regimes of competence. This supports an interpretation of EE educators' work as increasingly hybrid, with alignment shaped by institutional priorities and strategic demands rather than by formal role definitions alone.

RQ2 Continued: Professional Learning and Recognition Within the Landscape

Only the 2023 survey explored professional development practices in detail. Respondents were asked to identify the primary sources through which they supported their professional learning. Approximately 20% of respondents reported engaging in seminars and conferences, discussions with peer networks, and discussions with colleagues within their institution. In contrast, fewer respondents reported undertaking formal training courses (10%) or conducting their own research (7%) as sources of professional development (see Figure 3).

When analysed by pathway identification, Practitioners were more likely to rely on discussions with colleagues within their institution, while Academics were more likely to engage with external peer networks and conferences. Influencers were the only group with notable engagement in formal training courses, reflecting the strategic and leadership-oriented nature of their roles.

These findings highlight the importance of informal and relational learning mechanisms across the landscape of practice, while also revealing uneven access to formalised professional development. This has implications for how professional value is recognised and supported, particularly for educators whose work spans multiple regimes of competence but does not align neatly with traditional academic development structures.

Summary of Results

Overall, the results demonstrate that EE educators' practice is characterised by increasing hybridity and diversification. While the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways retain coherence as regimes of competence, educators' alignment with these pathways is fluid, with practice distributed across curriculum, learner-facing, and strategic domains. Relational and motivational forms of work are consistently prioritised across the landscape, often more strongly than curriculum delivery alone.

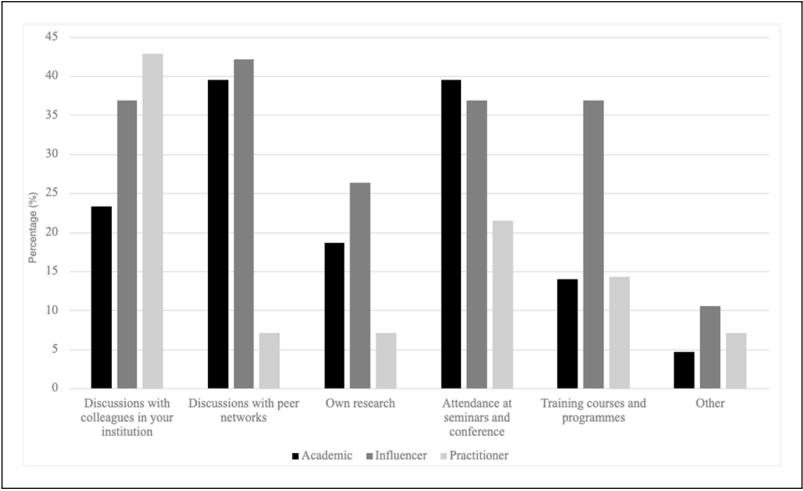


Figure 3. Methods to support professional development by EEUK pathway.
Source. Adapted from EEUK (2024).

These findings provide empirical support for understanding EE educators as operating within a landscape of practice rather than a single community of practice. They also foreground tensions around recognition and sustainability, as forms of practice that are widely prioritised and time-intensive are not always those most formally embedded within institutional workload and progression frameworks.

Discussion

This study set out to examine how enterprise and entrepreneurship (EE) educators align their professional practice across multiple regimes of competence and how professional value is structured and recognised within a complex landscape of practice. By analysing survey data from two national datasets (2020 and 2023) through the lens of the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways, the findings provide empirical insight into the configuration, prioritisation, and recognition of EE educators’ work within UK higher education.

EE Educators Within a Landscape of Practice

The findings support the interpretation that EE educators do not operate within a single community of practice, but rather within a landscape of

practice comprising multiple, overlapping regimes of competence. Drawing on Wenger's (1998) foundational work and its subsequent extension by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020), the results illustrate how competence and legitimacy are negotiated across different domains rather than accrued through progression within a single community.

Across both survey waves, educators increasingly prioritised learner motivation and relationship-building over curriculum delivery alone. This pattern indicates a shift in how value is enacted across the landscape, with relational and externally oriented practices becoming central forms of recognised work. Such findings align with critiques by Roberts (2006) and Hodgkinson (2004), who caution against treating professional learning as contained within discrete communities. Instead, EE educators' practice reflects ongoing alignment across multiple contexts, audiences, and expectations.

Pathways as Regimes of Competence Rather than Role Categories

The Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways function empirically as regimes of competence rather than fixed role categories. While respondents continued to identify primarily with one pathway, the distribution of practice across NOS standards demonstrates increasing hybridity over time. This is particularly evident among Academics, whose allocation of time shifted towards Practitioner- and Influencer-aligned standards between 2020 and 2023.

This pattern supports the interpretation of the pathways as ideal-typical configurations of practice, rather than discrete professional identities. In Weberian terms (Weber, 1949), the pathways provide conceptual yardsticks against which practice can be understood, without implying that individuals fully inhabit any one type. Such an interpretation resonates with Arthur's (2016) observation that academic careers are sustained through participation in multiple, overlapping communities, each with distinct norms and expectations.

The greater breadth of practice observed among Practitioners and Influencers further reinforces this interpretation. These pathways require engagement across multiple domains—learner-facing activity, institutional coordination, and external partnership-building—resulting in wider distributions of time and effort across standards. This supports earlier arguments by Gibb (2010) and Pittaway et al. (2024) that enterprise educators increasingly work in externally oriented roles within entrepreneurial ecosystems, rather than solely as curriculum specialists.

Alignment, Hybridity, and the Risks of Mission Creep

The increasing hybridity evident in the results helps to explain persistent concerns around ‘mission creep’ within EE education. Rather than representing simple workload expansion, mission creep can be understood as a structural feature of operating within a landscape of practice where value is created across multiple regimes but not equally recognised.

Relational, motivational, and stakeholder-facing activities were consistently prioritised across pathways, yet these forms of practice often sit outside traditional academic workload models and progression criteria. This misalignment between value creation and institutional recognition echoes concerns raised by Quality Assurance Agency (2018) and by Schultz (2022), who note that enterprise-related activity is frequently positioned as strategically important but operationally marginal.

From a landscapes-of-practice perspective, this tension arises because regimes of competence are unevenly legitimised within higher education. Curriculum delivery and assessment remain formally recognised, while externally oriented and relational practices, despite their centrality to institutional enterprise agendas, are often rendered invisible. The findings therefore extend existing critiques of mission creep by situating them within a broader analysis of how professional value is structured and recognised across practice landscapes.

Professional Learning and Recognition Within the Landscape

The findings relating to professional development further reinforce the importance of informal and relational learning mechanisms within the EE educator landscape. Consistent with CoP research in management education (e.g. Arthur, 2016; Monaghan, 2011), respondents reported relying primarily on peer discussion, networks, and conferences rather than formal training or research activity.

However, the uneven distribution of professional development opportunities across pathways highlights potential risks. Practitioners relied more heavily on internal collegial support, while Academics engaged more with external networks, and Influencers accessed formal training more frequently. This uneven access reflects broader concerns raised by Vinson et al. (2021) and Beech et al. (2022), who show that learning across different practice contexts can be generative but also unevenly supported, particularly where legitimacy varies across settings.

Within the EE educator landscape, such unevenness risks reinforcing hidden hierarchies of recognition, where some forms of expertise are more readily validated than others. Without intentional structures to support professional

learning across pathways, valuable knowledge and practice risk remaining localised or under-recognised, undermining the sustainability of EE provision.

Although the study is situated within a UK professional framework, empirical generalisation beyond the UK context cannot be assumed, although the conceptual implications extend to comparable professional recognition frameworks. Many higher education systems employ competence-based structures that organise professional learning and recognition, including the EntreComp competence framework in Europe (Bacigalupo et al., 2016) and Advance HE (2023) professional recognition in the UK and internationally. These frameworks similarly provide shared languages of capability and legitimacy rather than prescribing practice directly. The present findings therefore suggest that professional competence frameworks function as organising infrastructures for hybrid academic work more broadly, shaping how educators align activity, demonstrate value, and achieve recognition across institutional contexts. The study should therefore be read not only as an analysis of enterprise education in the UK, but as an example of how professional learning infrastructures structure practice within management education internationally.

Implications for Management Education

For management education, these findings offer important insights into how hybrid educator roles are sustained and valued. EE educators exemplify a growing category of professionals whose work spans teaching, strategy, and external engagement, challenging traditional assumptions about academic roles and professional development. By empirically demonstrating how practice is aligned and distributed across regimes of competence, this study contributes to management education scholarship that seeks to understand learning, identity, and recognition in complex professional environments. More broadly, the findings suggest that professional frameworks such as the EEUK pathways and NOS can function as coordinating infrastructures within landscapes of practice, offering shared languages of competence and recognition. However, their effectiveness depends on alignment with institutional systems of workload, progression, and professional development. Without such alignment, the risks of mission creep, role strain, and professional marginalisation are likely to persist.

Limitations

This study provides a national, comparative view of how enterprise and entrepreneurship (EE) educators align their professional practice across

multiple regimes of competence. However, several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the study draws on self-reported survey data, capturing educators' perceptions of role alignment, prioritisation, and time allocation rather than direct observation of practice. While appropriate for examining how professional frameworks structure and recognise practice across a landscape of practice, this approach cannot illuminate the interactional dynamics, meaning-making processes, or power relations through which learning is structured within and between communities of practice (Arthur, 2016; Hodkinson, 2004).

Second, although the study includes two survey waves (2020 and 2023), the datasets are cross-sectional rather than longitudinal at the individual level. The findings therefore indicate shifts in aggregate patterns of alignment over time but cannot trace individual career trajectories or transitions across pathways.

Third, the empirical focus on a UK-based professional framework shapes the scope of the analysis. While the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways provide a robust lens for examining practice within UK higher education, transferability beyond this institutional context cannot be assumed.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a structured, empirically grounded account of EE educators' work as hybrid and distributed across multiple regimes of competence.

Future Research Directions

The findings generate several researchable directions for management education scholarship. Future studies could examine whether misalignment between value-creating activities and institutional recognition predicts professional satisfaction, workload strain, or career progression outcomes among enterprise educators. Comparative research may test whether relational and externally oriented practices are associated with perceived legitimacy across different institutional contexts. Longitudinal designs could explore whether breadth of alignment across multiple regimes of competence predicts identity hybridity over time. Qualitative research may investigate how educators negotiate legitimacy when strategically important activities fall outside formal workload models. Finally, cross-national studies could examine whether competence frameworks in different higher education systems beyond the UK structure professional learning and recognition in similar ways.

Conclusion

This article set out to examine how enterprise and entrepreneurship (EE) educators align their professional practice across multiple regimes of

competence and how professional value is structured and recognised within UK higher education. Responding to calls for greater attention to the professional realities of educators themselves, the study moved beyond pedagogical concerns to foreground the configuration, prioritisation, and recognition of EE educators' work within an increasingly complex institutional environment.

By applying a landscapes-of-practice perspective, the article makes three core contributions. First, it advances communities of practice scholarship within management education by demonstrating the analytical value of shifting from individual communities to landscapes of practice when examining hybrid educational roles. The findings show that EE educators do not operate within a single, cohesive community of practice, but across multiple, overlapping regimes of competence that require continual alignment of expertise, identity, and effort. This reframing helps to resolve longstanding tensions in the literature between the relational nature of EE work and the difficulty of capturing it through traditional role or disciplinary categories.

Second, the article contributes empirically by showing how the Academic, Practitioner, and Influencer pathways function not as fixed role types but as ideal-typical regimes of competence through which practice is structured and recognised. While the pathways retain coherence, educators' practice increasingly spans curricular, learner-facing, and strategic domains. Relational and motivational forms of work are consistently prioritised across the landscape, often more strongly than curriculum delivery alone. These patterns illuminate how hybridity has become a defining feature of EE educators' professional lives rather than an exception.

Third, the study contributes to debates on professional recognition and sustainability in management education. The findings highlight a persistent misalignment between the value created through EE educators' connective, and strategic work across institutional contexts and the mechanisms through which that work is formally recognised within institutional workload, progression, and development frameworks. Reframing 'mission creep' as a structural feature of operating within a landscape of practice, rather than as individual role overload, provides a more nuanced explanation for ongoing tensions around capacity, wellbeing, and legitimacy.

Taken together, these contributions have important implications for management education and higher education leadership. They suggest that professional frameworks such as the EEUK pathways can function as coordinating infrastructures that support shared understanding and recognition across diverse forms of practice, but only where they are aligned with institutional systems of reward and development. More broadly, the article underscores the need for management education to better theorise and

support hybrid educator roles that sit at the intersection of teaching, strategy, and external engagement.

In concluding, this study positions enterprise and entrepreneurship educators as a critical case for understanding how professional learning, identity, and value are negotiated in contemporary higher education. By mapping patterns of alignment and recognition at scale, it provides a foundation for future research that can further explore the lived, interactional, and longitudinal dimensions of working within landscapes of practice, while offering practical insights for sustaining those who deliver enterprise education in increasingly complex institutional contexts.

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