An Introductory Guide to Demand-Led Learning

me2me

Developing Demand-Led Learning for Micro-Businesses:

An Introductory Guide

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Setting the Scene

> *Owners of micro businesses need to be experts in marketing, accounting, sales and human resources (just to name four skills that they need to possess to be successful). Whilst running the business and performing such a wide variety of roles just to survive, it can be difficult for micro business owners to acquire the skills needed to ensure their enterprise can grow … whilst the skills courses currently offered by the government and others are useful, it is worth exploring the extent to which skill-specific bite-sized courses might be more appropriate for micro business owners* (APPG for Micro-Business, 2011, p. 8)

Why?

Micro-businesses are a key part of the European economy. They represent 93 per cent of the business population and make a significant contribution to job and wealth creation in the member states. They account for nearly 30 per cent of employment and 20 per cent of business turnover in the European Union.

Given this importance, there is a growing evidence base as to the challenges and opportunities faced by the owner-managers of micro-businesses in the management and development of the business. There is a lot written about challenges related to access to finance, access to markets and a conducive business environment. There is less focus on access to skills and learning although recent research by the Enterprise Research Centre in 2019 has highlighted the growing importance of access of skills as a key challenge impacting upon the management and development of micro-businesses.

The Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership in 2002 was one of the first reports to highlight that there was a need for a different approach to supporting learning and skills development in micro-businesses. They suggested that there was a mis-match between the learning and skills needs of owner-managers and the type of provision on offer, in terms of availability, accessibility and appropriateness. They called for education and training professionals to join the owner-manager in their life-world in order to support the development of demand-led learning and skills provision. However, there is still a lack of tailored, or demand-led management and leadership support for micro-businesses particularly in terms of skill-specific bite-sized support which reflects the realities of what it is like to manage a micro-business.

What?

This Introductory Guide seeks to address this gap by presenting an overview to different aspects of developing demand-led enterprise learning and skills programmes which can be used by owner-managers of micro-businesses to support the development of their businesses.

The Introductory Guide complements other learning resources which have been developed for the owners and managers of micro-businesses as part of the ME2ME project. These can be accessed at https://me2meproject.eu/en/resources/

How?

The Introductory Guide will:

- Review what we know about developing demand-led learning for micro-businesses
- Describe a set of learning activities which can be used by micro-businesses to support enterprise learning and skills development in micro-businesses
- Outline examples of demand-led learning programmes which have made a difference to the development of micro-businesses.

Each part has four sections:

- A brief review of what we know
- A set of learning activities
- An example of demand-led learning
- Useful references and resources

Who?

This Introductory Guide is primarily designed for owner-managers of micro-businesses with an interest in enterprise learning and skills development and working with other micro-businesses to support their development (e.g. through coaching, mentoring, training). In particular, it will be of interest to those owner-managers who currently share their experiences with others (e.g. through being a case study on business education and training programmes) and who are interested in learning more about how to develop learning resources for other businesses.

In addition, the Introductory Guide will be of use to vocational education and training (VET) professionals who work with micro-businesses and who are interested in learning more about how to support demand-led learning.

This guide has been developed by SFEDI in partnership with INNEO and the University of Pitesti as part of the ME2ME project. For further information on this Introductory Guide please contact Leigh Sear (leigh.sear@sfedi.co.uk) or visit the ME2ME project website (https://me2meproject.eu/en/about/project+information/).

Part One: What is Learning?

> "*During the last 10-15 years, learning has become a key topic, not only for professionals and students in the areas of psychology, pedagogy and education, but also in political and economic contexts. One reason for this is that the level of education and skills of nations, companies and individuals is considered a crucial parameter of competition in the present globalised market and knowledge society*" (Illeris, 2009, p.1)

Overall Aim and Learning Outcomes

This first part of the Introductory Guide will develop an understanding of what is meant by learning and learning and teaching strategies.

The key learning outcomes for this first part are:

- Define what is meant by learning
- Define what is meant by pedagogy
- Identify the difference between pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy
- Define what is meant by learning styles
- Assess the opportunities and challenges of different learning styles
- Identify different learning theories.

What We Know

It is important we start by reviewing what we mean by learning, learning styles and learning and teaching strategies.

Learning

Learning is a major focus of research across a number of disciplines ranging from psychology and neuroscience to business and management and computer science. As a result, there are a range of definitions and, given this diversity of interest, a general lack of agreement as to what constitutes learning.

The available definitions can be grouped into three categories. These are:

- Learning as the processing of information from an experience – These definitions propose that learning is a process of change that results from the processing of information derived from an experience
- Learning as a change in behaviour – These definitions focus on learning as a change in the behaviour of a person after an experience
- Learning as changes in behavioural mechanisms – These definitions focus on learning as changes in mental models, or cognitive representations of events as a result of an experience.

There are various advantages and disadvantages with these various groups of definitions. For example, in terms of learning as a change in behaviour, the key advantage is that it enables learning to be observed as the focus is on changes in what people do after an experience. However, it does not assist in understanding why learning occurs particularly in terms of making sense of how much of a given behavioural change results from learning in comparison to other factors (such as changes in motivations or physiological changes).

The variety of definitions creates two implications in developing business and enterprise education programmes. First, it is important to reflect what learning means to you. This is important as it will shape aspects of your approach to working with others in supporting enterprise learning and skills development. Second, as we will see below, it provides an opportunity to create a discussion with learners about what learning means to them and when there are changes in the businesses how these changes come about.

Learning Theories

As with definitions of learning, there are a range of competing theories as to how individuals learn. One of the most commonly used theories is the Learning Cycle developed by David Kolb. He proposed that we learn from our experience of life. Within the context of running a micro-business, these could be everyday experiences (e.g. in dealing with customers or suppliers) or more strategic decisions (e.g. creating and testing a new value proposition or developing a new market).

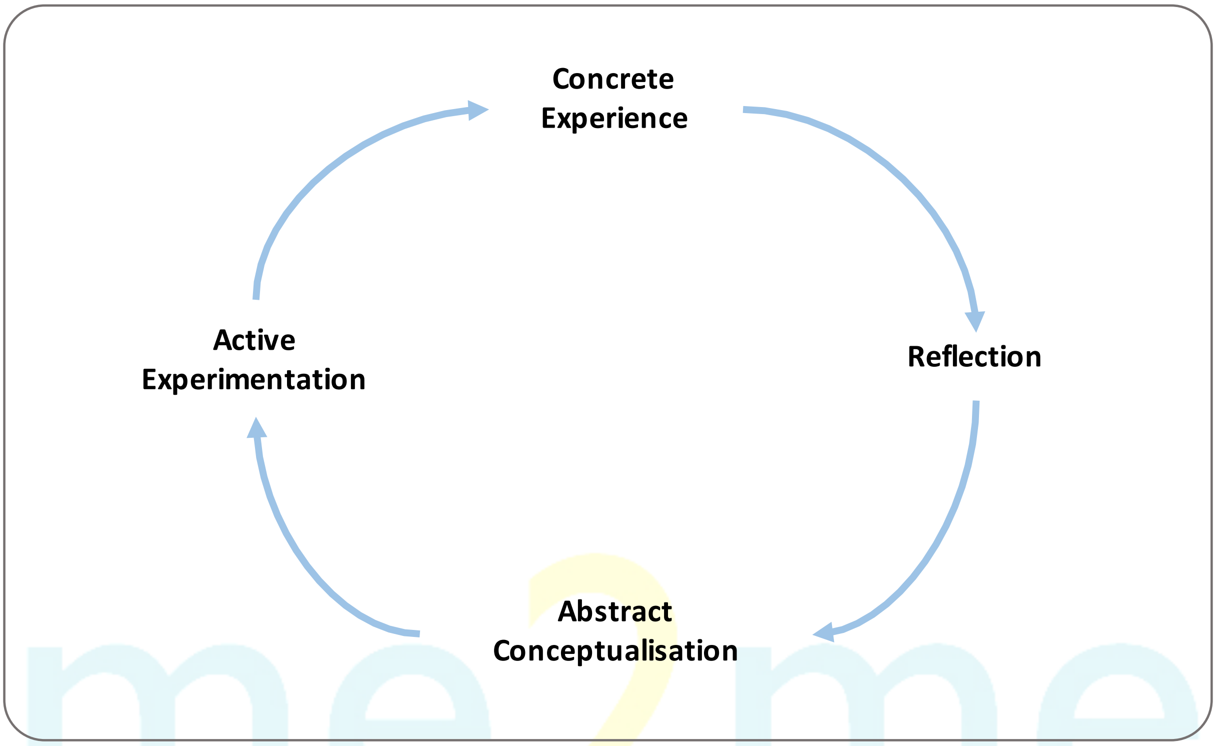
Kolb proposed that learning follows a pattern or cycle consisting of four stages (see Figure 1.1). The first stage involves having an **experience** that is doing something. The second stage involves making observations and judgements about the experience (i.e. **reflection**). This leads to the third stage which involves drawing conclusions, that is, learning from the experience (i.e. **abstract conceptualisation**). Finally, **active experimentation** occurs during which changes and new actions are planned. Kolb proposed that the cycle can be entered at any point but all stages must be followed in sequence for successful learning to occur.

As with any theory, it has its strengths and limitations. In terms of strengths, it is useful in identifying which aspects of learning are:

- Private or internal (Stages 1 and 2) and public or external (Stages 3 and 4)
- Acquired by thinking (Stage 2) or using (Stage 4)
- Acquired through by direct experience or apprehension (Stage 1) and knowing about or comprehension (Stage 3).

However, others have critiqued the theory proposed by Kolb due to the lack of empirical evidence used in its development, the language used can be difficult for practitioners to understand and the separation of learning from the social or cultural context in which it takes place.

Figure 1.1: Kolb's Learning Cycle



In response to these limitations, Professor Graham Gibbs proposed a Reflective Cycle of Learning. Gibbs added a stage where the learner needs to consider feelings (see Figure 1.2). This stage was added because:

> *It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost. It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalisations or concepts can be generated and it is generalisations that allow new situations to be tackled effectively* (Gibbs 1988).

The six stages in Gibb's reflective cycle are:

- Description of the experience
- Feelings and thoughts about the experience
- Evaluation of the experience in terms of what worked well and what worked less well
- Analysis to make sense of the situation
- Conclusion about what you learned and what you could have done differently
- Action plan for how you would deal with similar situations in the future, or general changes you might find appropriate.

Figure 1.2: Gibb's Reflective Learning Cycle

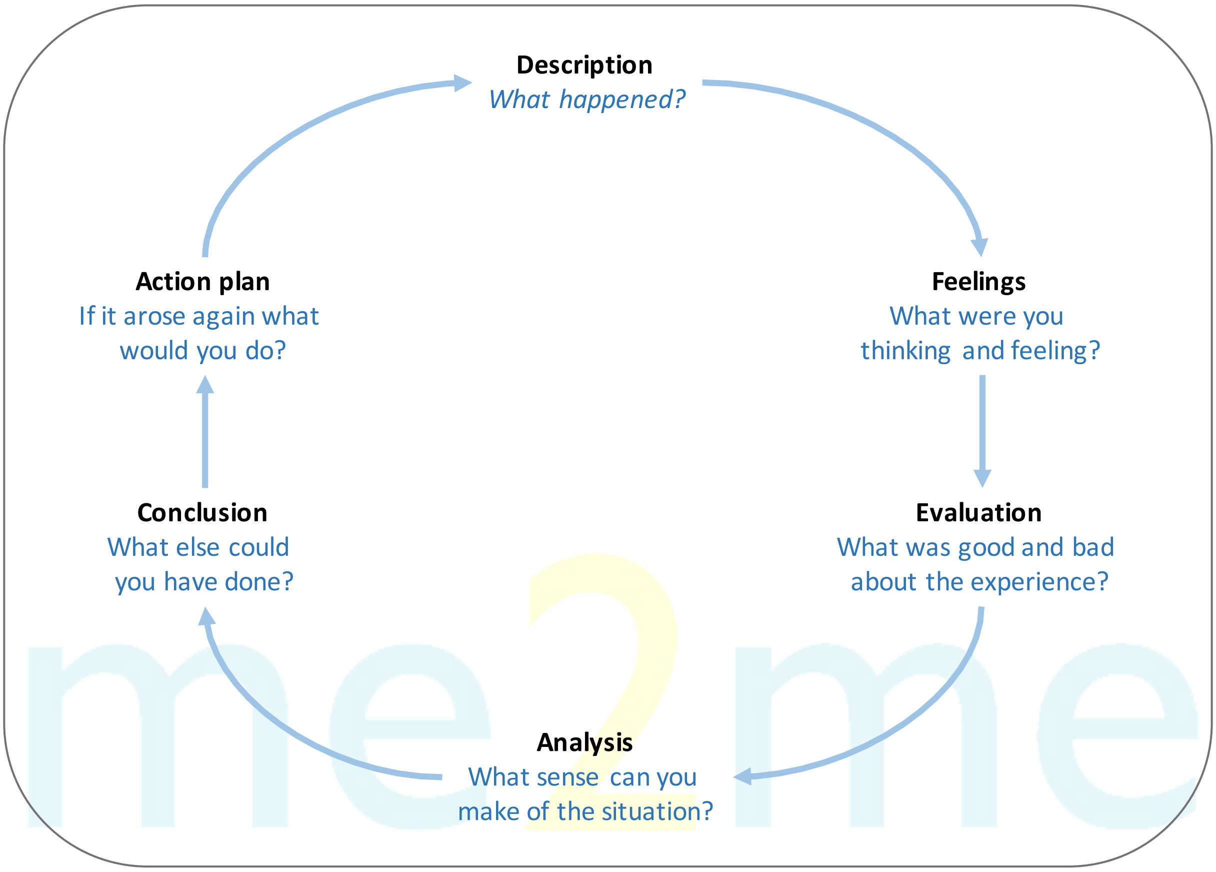


Table 1.1 outlines a series of prompts or questions which can be used to assist in applying Gibb's Reflective Cycle. These prompts highlight that Stages 1 to 3 relate to what happened during the experience whilst Stages 4 to 6 focus on how to improve on the experience and outcome in the future.

Given that it refers to the key processes within the act of reflection itself, Gibb's cycle reflects a key shift from Kolb. For example, at Stage 2 of the model, the introspection may be challenging to some as it requires an open and honest review of yourself. The reflection on the experience may recall feelings that the learner may rather forget. As such Gibb's cycle of learning provides a framework for examining experiences, and given its cyclic nature, it lends itself well to repeated experiences allowing someone to learn and plan from things that went well or less well.

Table 1.1: Gibb's Reflective Cycle: How to Apply the Model

Stage		Questions
1	Description	What, where and when? Who did/said what, what did you do/read/see hear? In what order did things happen? What were the circumstances? What were you responsible for?
2	Feelings	What was your initial gut reaction, and what does this tell you? Did your feelings change? What were you thinking?
3	Evaluation	What pleased, interested or was important to you? What made you unhappy? What difficulties were there? Who/what was unhelpful? Why? What needs improvement?
4	Analysis	Compare theory and practice. What similarities or differences are there between this experience and other experiences? Think about what actually happened. What choices did you make and what effect did they have?
5	Conclusion	What have you learnt for the future? What else could you have done?
6	Action	If a similar situation arose again, what would you do?

Both Kolb's and Gibb's theories can be used by you to assist owner-managers in making sense of situations in their business, both at an operational and strategic level. They can be used to assist the learner in understanding what they did well and wat they could do better in the future. For example, Table 1.1 outlines a set of questions which can be addressed by the learner in working through an experience in the business. This could relate to an operational experience with staff, customers or suppliers or a more strategic experience in launching a new product, introducing a new piece of equipment or machinery or selling into a new market. In addition, they are useful tools for both mentoring and coaching where owner-managers may want to work on what are their 'blind spots' and how these blind spots shape how they learn and behave.

Learning Styles

It is important to understand how people learn when designing learning and skills programmes. This is because Kolb suggests that some people will have a preference, or strength, for certain stages in the learning cycle. Certain individuals are good at critical reflection in terms of understanding their own experiences and what worked well and less well. Other individuals will have preference for learning through experimentation.

Honey and Mumford (1986) identified four different styles or preferences that people use when learning. They proposed that the majority of people tend to follow only one or two styles and that different learning activities may be better suited to particular styles (see below). The four styles are:

- **Activist** – Activists are people who learn by doing. They like to involve themselves in new experiences and they will 'try anything once'. They tend to act first and then work through the consequences of the action at a later stage
- **Reflector** - Reflectors learn by observing and thinking about what happened during or after an experience. They like to consider different perspectives before developing an opinion. They spend time listening and observing and tend to be cautious and considered
- **Theorist** – Theorists prefer to understand the theory behind actions. They prefer to use models, concepts and evidence in order to learn. They like to analyse and synthesise and they will feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements from others
- **Pragmatist** – Pragmatists are different from activists because whilst they like try to things out, action is based upon some consideration of the action required. Therefore, pragmatists prefer informed 'doing'.

Research from educationalists has shown that by becoming more aware of your learning style or preference it can support more effective learning. However, there are others who suggest that there is no one single method of learning and that what works well depends on the task, the social context and the personality of the learner.

Learning Preferences

As we reviewed above, one group of definitions of learning focus on the processing of information. These definitions suggest that people process information and learn in different ways. For example, whilst some people may learn effectively when processing textual information, others prefer information presented in visuals or video blogs or audio recordings.

The VAK learning styles model was developed during the 1920s to classify the most common ways by which people learn. The model suggests that people have a preference in learning in one of three ways: visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. This was updated by Neil Fleming to include reading/writing:

- **Visual** - People who prefer this type of learning would rather see information presented in a visual rather than in written form. Graphic displays such as charts, diagrams, illustrations, handouts, and videos are all helpful learning tools for visual learners
- **Auditory/Aural** – People who prefer this type of learning learn best by hearing information. They tend to get a great deal out of lectures and are good at remembering things they are spoken
- **Reading** - Reading and writing learners prefer to take in information displayed as words Learning materials that are primarily text-based are strongly preferred by these learners
- **Kinesthetic** – A hands-on experience is important to kinesthetic learners. They respond well to being able to interact with others.

As we will explore below in Part 2, whilst there is disagreement as to whether aligning learning and teaching strategies to learning styles make a difference, it is useful to support learners in understanding their own learning preferences. For example, if a learner knows that visual learning appeals to them the most, using visual study strategies with them in conjunction with other learning methods might help them better remember the information from an enterprise learning and skills programme – or at least it will make the learning experience more enjoyable for them.

Table 1.2: Learning preferences: Prompts for learner engagement

	Learning preference		
	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Prompts	• I see what you mean • I get the picture • What's your view?	• I hear what you are saying • That brings back an experience when … • That sounds good to me	• That feels right • How does that sit with you? • Let us try that
Methods	• Use of diagrams, charts, pictures and videos	• By stressing key words, the use of storytelling and anecdotes, the use of guest speakers	• By providing learners with a practical experience and an opportunity to exchange experiences with others in small groups

Whilst the literature around the use of VAK/VARK learning styles suggest that people have one preference, it is important to consider that people may have a combination of different learning styles and preferences. This means that a combination of different learning strategies and methods may have to be used to engage different types of learner within the group.

Learning Approaches and Strategies

The final part of this section reviews what methods can be used to develop learning in others. As with definitions of learning, this is another area characterised by complex terminology (e.g. there are a lot of 'ologies') and disagreement.

The method and practice of teaching and learning can be defined as pedagogy. This encompasses the teaching style, feedback and assessment and teaching theory (Jones, 2019). When you hear about the pedagogy of teaching, what is being described is the way in which teachers and trainers deliver the content to a group of learners.

There are three commonly identified pedagogies:

- Behaviourism – This is where learning is teacher-centred. Knowledge is delivered in a curriculum where each subject is taught discretely as opposed to topic based learning (e.g. developing a cash flow forecast as opposed to managing finances in a small business). Sessions using this pedagogical approach are led by the teacher/trainer and they will involve a combination of teacher-led lecturing, demonstration and rote learning. The sessions are underpinned by a clear structure and the methods are visible to the learner

- Constructivism – This is where learners learn through experience and reflection. This approach often involves project work and inquiry based learning. This approach is underpinned by an assumption that learners are open and ready to learn and the role of the teacher/trainer is to build activities to facilitate their learning. In comparison to behaviourism, the session will involve less direct input from the teacher/trainer and more individualisation of the learning experience to the learner
- Social constructivism – This is a blend of the above two approaches – teacher/trainer led and learner centred. This approach is underpinned by an assumption that learning only happens in its social context and that learning is a collaborative process between the teacher/trainer and learner. This means that this approach involves smaller group sizes, with teacher/trainer instruction and questioning with individuals or small groups of learners as a way of identifying learning.

Pedagogy is often associated with a younger or more inexperienced learner's style of knowledge engagement. It is underpinned by an assumption that the learner has no or very limited prior understanding and knowledge and that knowledge is gained from both the teacher/trainer and the learning experience (e.g. through questions with the teacher/trainer).

However, with the increasing use of technology and the changing experiences of learners in further and higher education, the effectiveness of these traditional pedagogical approaches have been challenged. As a result, you may notice references to andragogy and heutagogy, particularly within enterprise and entrepreneurship education and executive education.

Andragogy refers to learning and teaching strategies where the learner develops a degree of control over the learning environment and the content. The teacher/trainer allows a level of self-directed learning where the learner has more control over the process of learning. The focus of the learner is upon content – this is because the learner may already have knowledge gained from other experiences but wishes to develop a deeper understanding of the topic. For example, an owner-manager of a micro-business who manages people on a day-to-day basis but wishes to learn more about specific people management processes (e.g. how to motivate people effectively). So, the learner will have basic subject matter knowledge and they are looking for the teacher/trainer to lead understanding of the subject in a new or advanced way of understanding (e.g. through project work).

Heutagogy refers to learning and teaching strategies which focus on self-directed and self-determined learning. As such as they tend to challenge more traditional pedagogical approaches. Heutagogical approaches are based upon learners having knowledge of the subject matter but wishing to explore further specific aspects of the subject that are of interest to them in engaging ways. Therefore, the emphasis is on learner choice and preference and engaging with the subject matter in new and different ways (e.g. learning to start a new business through starting a business as opposed to writing a business plan or starting a business through an online simulation tool).

The learner is in charge of their own self-determined learning processes. This can be facilitated in a couple of ways. First, the learner may be presented with different options from the teacher/trainer and the learner chooses their own option and then is provided space to manage their own journey.

Second, the learner has the option to self-select their own learning journey and develops a learning contract with the teacher/trainer to establish the boundaries of the learning experience. The role of the teacher/trainer within heutagogical approaches is focused upon providing guiding engagement (e.g. when the learner loses passion or motivation for the learning experience) and reflective questioning as way of supporting and guiding the learner's journey.

Within heutagogical approaches, the focus is more on the process than content in the development and delivery of the learning and skills programme. For example, the teacher/trainer may provide learners with materials on critical reflection (e.g. Gibb's learning cycle reviewed above) as opposed to the subject (e.g. starting a business, developing a new product or developing a new market) and they provide a copy of a key reading as opposed to a reading list. This is to support the learner in creative thinking (e.g. use of divergent and convergent thinking techniques) and realise different outcomes and solutions relating to the subject matter.

The key differences between pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy are summarised in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Pedagogy, Andragogy and Heutagogy – Prompts for programme development and delivery

	Pedagogy	**Andragogy**	**Heutagogy**
Learning	Instructor-directed learning	Self-directed learning	Self-determined learning
Focus	Knowledge	Content	Process
Power and control	Teacher/trainer directed	Teacher/trainer-learner coordinated	Learner-directed
Learning	Single-loop learning (i.e. goals and rules)	Double-loop learning (i.e. modification)	Spiral-loop learning (i.e. transformational)
Learning design	Linear/Modular Education 'about'	Cyclical learning Enterprise 'for'	Cyclical learning Enterprise 'through'
Development	Knowledge development	Competency development	Competency development

Summary

This part of the Introduction Guide has laid the foundations for the other two parts by reviewing definitions of learning, introducing the concept of learning styles and preferences and outlining different learning and teaching strategies.

The three key headlines for this part are:

- There is no one single definition of learning
- People learning in different ways in which is influenced not only by previous experiences but also the social context and the learning environment
- There are different learning and teaching strategies which vary in terms of the direction from the teacher/trainer or the learner.

Learning Activities

Activity 1: Learning styles and preferences

	Description
Duration	30 minutes
Outline of activity	• Provide learners with a link to or a copy of a learning styles questionnaire such as Honey and Mumford or a VARK • Outline the instructions for completion of the questionnaire and provide sufficient time for the learners to complete the questionnaire. Provide support to the learners in calculating any scores and plotting of the results • Once the learners have completed the questionnaire, facilitate a discussion around four questions: (i) what did the outcomes from the questionnaire confirm for them? (ii) what was the one surprise? (iii) what is the key area for development in the context of running and managing a micro-business? and (iv) how are they going to address this areas for development? • This discussion can be facilitated on an individual/small group basis by providing the learners with a table containing the questions or a group discussion where you facilitate a discussion with the whole group related to the questions
Resources and tools	• Copies of the questionnaire (a physical copy or link to an online questionnaire) • Flipchart and pens • Access to computing facilities
Teaching materials and useful links	Honey and Mumford Learning Styles – https://www.talentlens.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/learning-styles-questionnaire-40-item-print.pdf VARK Learning Preferences – http://vark-learn.com/ Learning styles in business - https://daveschoenbeck.com/managers-guide-learning-styles-business/ A Compendium of Pedagogies for Teaching Entrepreneurship - https://ncee.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Compendium-of-Pedagogies.pdf

Activity 2: Critical reflection on learning

	Description
Duration	45 to 60 minutes
Outline of activity	• Ask learners to identify a recent experience in their business which was more or less successful than planned • Provide the learners with an outline of Kolb's learning cycle and Gibb's reflective learning cycle and ask the learners to use one of these frameworks to make sense of their professional business issue

	• Once the learners have applied the framework to their professional practice issue, split the group into smaller sub-groups and ask each group to reflect on ways in which they can improve their practice using the framework and how the improved practice adheres to ethical or responsible business practices • Ask each sub-group to feedback the key outcomes from the discussion
Resources and tools	• An overview of the Kolb and Gibb learning models • Flipchart paper and pens • Access to computing facilities
Teaching materials and links	Overview of Kolb's Learning Cycle - https://www.verywellmind.com/experiential-learning-2795154 Overview of Honey and Mumford Learning Styles - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izMEy-UiRKM Reflection in business practice - https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/reflective-practice-guide_tcm18-12524.pdf

Case Studies

Name	**A Compendium of Pedagogies for Teaching Entrepreneurship**
Organisation	National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education (NCEE) (UK)
Date/Duration	2014
Overview	Developed by the NCEE to support delivery of their International Entrepreneurship Educators Programme (IEEP), this compendium provides a practical foundation for those educators and trainers interested in understanding 'how to teach' enterprise and entrepreneurship. Drawing upon teaching approaches and pedagogy from a wide range of disciplines, the compendium outlines over 40 examples for use within enterprise and entrepreneurship education and provides guidance as to how to incorporate these into teaching and training
Relevance	The compendium provides an excellent overview of a range of different learning and teaching strategies and practical advice and guidance on the use of these learning and teaching strategies
Further Information	https://ncee.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Compendium-of-Pedagogies.pdf

Name	**The EEE Teaching Toolkit**
Organisation	MCI Management Centre Innsbruck (AT)
Date/Duration	2016-2018
Overview	The Embedding Entrepreneurship Education (EEE) Teaching Toolkit is a compendium for educators in higher education institutions (HEI) interested in fostering entrepreneurial competences. It consists of 23 practical entrepreneurship education teaching modules which can be used to enrich existing courses through the integration of single modules, or to create full academic courses through the combination of a set of different modules. The EEE Teaching Toolkit is seeking to: embed and facilitate entrepreneurial teaching and learning in HEIs; provide guidance for educators, trainers and curriculum planners; assist educators and trainers with a non-business background in understanding the added-value of entrepreneurship education; and involve stakeholders such as entrepreneurs and owner-managers in practically driven entrepreneurship courses
Relevance	The toolkit outlines a set of different teaching modules which can be used to support the development of enterprising and entrepreneurial skills, as well as reflecting on how entrepreneurs and small businesses can be involved in enterprise and entrepreneurship education
Further Information	https://eee-project.eu/

Useful References and Resources

If you are interested in exploring definitions of learning, learning theories and learning and teaching strategies in more depth, the following references and resource may be of use.

Gibb, A. and Price, A. (2014) *A Compendium of Pedagogies for Teaching Entrepreneurship*, National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education, Coventry.

Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*, Oxford Further Education Unit, Oxford.

Honey, P. (2006) *The Learning Styles Questionnaire*, Peter Honey Publications, Maidenhead.

Illeris, K. (ed.) (2009) *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists ... In Their Own Words,* Routledge, London.

Jones, C. (2019) A Signature Pedagogy for Entrepreneurship Education, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 26, 2, pp. 243-254.

Jones, B. and Iredale, N. (2010) Enterprise Education as Pedagogy, *Education and Training*, 52, 1, pp. 7-19.

Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

The Open University (2019) *Innovating Pedagogy 2019*, The Open University, Milton Keynes (accessible at https://iet.open.ac.uk/file/innovating-pedagogy-2019.pdf)

Part Two: How to Develop Demand-Led Learning and Skills

> *The real challenge is to join entrepreneurs in their world - stimulating demand, helping identify priorities for learning and giving the entrepreneur ownership of their own learning opportunities. Crucially, entrepreneurs must be responsible for making their own choices and decisions - the starting point must be for the entrepreneur to choose a partner they trust to help identify the priorities and challenges* (Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership, 2002, p. 1)

Overall Aim and Learning Outcomes

This second part of the Introductory Guide will develop an understanding of how to plan, create and deliver enterprise learning and skills development with owner-managers of micro-businesses.

Specific learning outcomes for this section are:

- Assess the need for demand-led learning for micro-businesses
- Identify how to develop appropriate demand-led learning strategies
- Assess the importance of co-creation in the development of demand-led learning materials and resources
- Define what is meant by constructive alignment in the development of demand-led learning materials and resources
- Identify approaches to evaluating the learner experience of enterprise learning and skills development.

What We Know

Over the last 10 years, there has been a rapid growth in business and enterprise education at different levels of education across Europe. There are a number of drivers to this growth including:

- Raising awareness of enterprise and entrepreneurship as an option for engaging with the labour market
- Increasing levels of business start-up activity, by supporting people with the journey into self-employment
- Changing notions of what constitutes employability (e.g. the growing recognition of personal enterprising skills as employability skills)
- Calls from employers for school leavers and graduates to possess skills appropriate to the world of work.

In the majority of further education colleges and higher education institutions, there is now a range of offerings to assist learners in realising their business and enterprise potential. These offerings are embedded in the curriculum (e.g. entrepreneurship degrees) and as extra-curricular (e.g. business competitions, hackathons) and executive education (e.g. management and leadership programmes for small business owners) activity.

Amongst this diversity of provision, two distinct approaches can be identified – the study of business and enterprise (**learning 'about'**) and learning how to do or be enterprising and entrepreneurial (**learning 'for'**). The former is focused on enhancing understanding of business and enterprise through reflection on knowledge and theory, whilst the latter is about developing the mindset and capabilities required to be enterprising and entrepreneurial.

Each of these two approaches is associated with different pedagogies, teaching and learning activities and assessment strategies (QAA, 2018). For example, 'about' courses tend to draw upon more traditional pedagogies which focus on enhancing knowledge of business and enterprise as a subject area, using lectures, reviews of readings, seminars and workshops (see Part 1). Learning is assessed via exams, written assignments and presentations. In comparison, 'for' courses draw upon more experiential and facilitative teaching pedagogies which seek to develop the abilities and skills of the learner. They often involve learning in practice, as well as the classroom. Table 2.1 summarises the key aspects of both of these approaches to enterprise education.

Table 2.1: Business and enterprise education – Learning about and Learning for

	Enterprise education 'about'	**Enterprise education 'for'**
Teaching pedagogy	Didactic	Facilitative
Teacher or student-led	Teacher-led	Student-led
Teaching methods	Lectures Set texts Seminars	Workshops Case studies Guest speakers Group projects
Learning and assessment methods	Exams Individual written assignments Student presentations	Group business plans Student presentations Reflective statements Peer assessment
Learning context	Classroom-based	Practice-based

A brief review of business and enterprise education across the EU identifies that the majority of provision relates to 'learning about' rather than 'learning for'. Commentators such as Gibb (2007) and Jones (2019) note that the focus on learning about rather than learning for has resulted in a lack of innovative practice in business and enterprise education, particularly in terms of embedding the experiences of business people in the development of learning resources and providing an enterprising business and enterprise education experience through teaching and assessment.

This has led to calls for demand-led business and enterprise education for micro-businesses. But what does this mean? At its simplest, demand-led education and learning can be defined as '*programmes that respond to demand (i.e. the needs of the business) as opposed to trying to plan supply (i.e. the needs of the provider or funder)*'. A more specific definition is provided by Wong et al. (2007) who suggest that demand-learning involves providing resources to learners which they need, when they need them and through a seamless process from induction to any assessment of learning.

Drawing upon the available definitions, key characteristics of demand-led business and enterprise education for micro-businesses would include:

- It is underpinned by, and respond to insights from the life-world of the micro-business owner-manager
- It is co-created between micro-businesses and VET providers so that there are shared objectives in the delivery and development of the education and learning
- There is constructive alignment between objectives, delivery methods and assessment methods
- It can be consumed flexibly (e.g. the use of mini-learning resources)
- The assessment of learning generates usable insights for both the business and the provider.

These characteristics can be used to evaluate both existing learning and skills programmes that you may wish to use and create a framework for the design and development of new programmes or resources. The remainder of this section will review of these characteristics and outline a set of learning activities which could be used with owner-managers from micro-businesses.

Insights from the Life-world of the Micro-Business

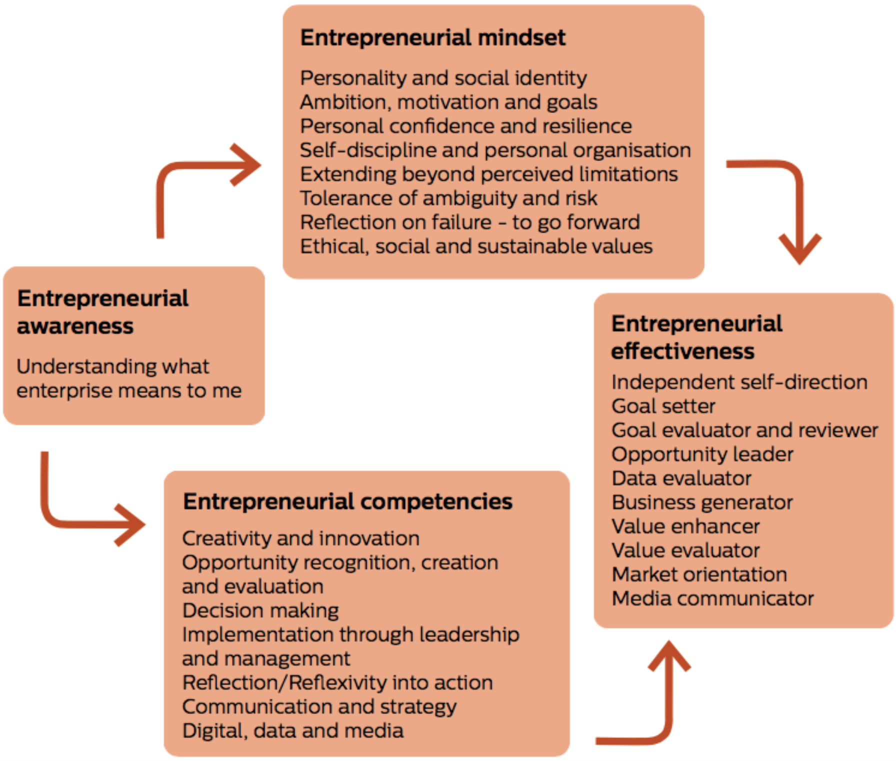
The starting point to the development of demand-led business and enterprise education is understanding the life-world of the micro-business and the associated needs and requirements. There are a number of research reports which have reflected extensively on the challenges and opportunities faced by micro-businesses and the associated learning and skills needs (see, for example, APPG for Micro-Business, 2011).

It is useful to group these needs into a number of groups. A useful framework for this is provided by the Quality Assurance Agency (2018). As shown in Figure 2.1 this framework identifies four stages as part of the entrepreneurial journey:

- Entrepreneurial awareness
- Entrepreneurial mindset
- Entrepreneurial competencies
- Entrepreneurial effectiveness.

In what ways is the use of such a framework useful to businesses as 'educators' and to VET providers in embedding innovative practices in the learning and skills development experience? First, the framework provides a set of 'hooks' upon which to structure content, particularly in terms of making explicit the connections between the different parts of the entrepreneurial journey. Second, the framework identifies ways in which to develop understanding and skills around each element of the journey.

Figure 2.1: The Entrepreneurial Journey



Source: QAA (2018, p. 24)

Entrepreneurial Mindset

This element of the journey focuses on the learner understanding what is associated with being enterprising, and being entrepreneurial, from the perspective what is required to participate in enterprising learning and activities. Learners should be encouraged to develop a critical self-awareness of their own enterprising and entrepreneurial qualities in order to identify strengths and areas for development. However, learners will vary in their ability to critically self-reflect so it is important that there is an environment in which learners can reflect on their enterprising and entrepreneurial attributes, behaviours and skills and discuss the outcomes with others.

These two learning activities will support the delivery of an education/learning experience which is more facilitative and learner-centred and somewhat different from the more commonly used practices such as psychometric and personality tests. In so doing, learners are using a key concept or framework to:

- Review their own experiences in running their own business (e.g. the behaviours of others they work with)
- Reflect on the influences on their own mindset and the implications for their own personal development.
- Unpack the role of cognitive abilities in entrepreneurial action.

Entrepreneurial Competencies

This stage of the journey relates to the development of the range of enterprising, and related practical, social and conceptual skills, which can be used by the learner to develop opportunities and take action. The way in which these competencies are developed through the education experience will be influenced by the learning context.

Whilst this stage of the journey is explored as part of business and enterprise education offerings in the UK, it is often within the context of:

- Starting a business as opposed to working for someone else in an enterprising employee
- The functional competencies required to start a business, such as finance, marketing and HR, as opposed to personal enterprising and entrepreneurial competencies (e.g. adding value, proposing new ways of doing things, networking with others to acquire resources and support, persuading and negotiating with others).

Therefore, there is scope for innovative practices that relate enterprising competencies to working in an organisation and focusing on the development of enterprising rather than business competencies. For example, the business model canvas developed by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) can be used in a number of ways to assist learners in developing the capabilities required to communicate value to others, at both a personal and business level.

The use of such a case study is useful because it highlights the difference between entrepreneurial and more rational decision making models, in terms of the emphasis attached to action. It also provides an opportunity to introduce the work of Sarasvathy around **effectuation**. Sarasvathy (2007) proposes that entrepreneurs and owner-managers make sense of events based upon their motivations, or means, with business goals emerging over time in response to internal cognitive biases and the people they interact with. As such it is a useful concept to assist in unpacking entrepreneurial capabilities in an innovative way. Sarasvathy (2007) notes that potential entrepreneurs are primarily taught a highly structured, functional, linear and rational model of developing and managing a business. However, the entrepreneurial experience is often somewhat different, in terms of:

- Being able to cope with, and enjoy uncertainty
- Being flexible and adaptable to unforeseen circumstances
- Being able to network with others to acquire resources
- Being able to anticipate the future for the business.

It is these aspects of the life-world that underpin the development of demand-led business and enterprise education for micro-businesses.

Co-creation of the learning experience

There is a somewhat limited evidence base around the co-creation of the business and enterprise education experience. Whilst there is agreement over the value of engaging with entrepreneurs and small businesses and the issues that may hinder or facilitate co-creation, there are fewer explicit accounts of the process by which to co-create the education experience and the associated challenges and opportunities for the educator and the entrepreneur and micro business, particularly in terms of professional development.

In terms of the nature and extent of engagement with entrepreneurs and small businesses, data from audits of enterprise and entrepreneurship education, both within the UK and Europe, highlights that external stakeholders such as businesses and entrepreneurs tend to be engaged in a number of limited ways (see for example, Entrepreneurship 360, 2014). These include as:

- Guest speakers, as part of a lecture, where they share their experiences and stories of starting and/or growing their business
- Judges or panelists in business plan competitions, assisting learners to reflect on the viability of their business ideas and the transition from idea to action
- Mentors to students and graduates who have started their own business.

However, a number of reports have identified that there is scope for greater engagement with businesses and entrepreneurs in the development and delivery of business and enterprise education. For example, in 2015, a report by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) outlined a need for businesses to participate more in higher education, specifically the design and delivery of curriculum. Such calls for greater engagement with businesses in the co-creation of the education experience reflect the perceived value not only for the learner but also the educator and the business. Co-creation not only provides the learner with an opportunity to gain insights from different perspectives but also to gain an understanding of the knowledge and skills that will be required in developing and managing a business. For the educator, co-creation presents an opportunity to develop new relationships and access new networks, as well as reflect on their own practices and the ways in which they may be of use to a business. For the entrepreneur or small business owner-manager, co-creation presents an opportunity to engage with VET professionals and understand the value of theories, concepts and frameworks in making sense of their experiences, as well as to engage with learners who may generate ideas for taking the business forward.

However, a European Commission study noted that there are a number of areas of 'need to know' in terms of embedding the experiences of businesses in the development and delivery of business and enterprise education and balancing the notions of expertise between the educator and the entrepreneur and small business owner-manager (The European Commission, 2013).

Amongst these "need to know's" is what is meant by the co-creation and what are the key activities, or steps, involved in co-creating an education experience. With definitions of co-creation, a useful starting point is offered by Gouillart and Hallett (2015) who were exploring co-creation as a tool in developing government policy. They defined co-creation as 'multiple stakeholders coming together to develop new practices that traditionally would have emerged duly from a bureaucratic, top-down process'. Within the context of business and education training co-creation can be defined as an active, creative, pedagogical and entrepreneurial process, based on mutual collaboration between academics and enterprising and entrepreneurial people. The idea of co-creation is to actively involve entrepreneurs in the design and development of pedagogical offerings to allow for the blending of academic theory and entrepreneurial practice and insight.

Key stages in the process of creating business and enterprise education will include:

- **Identifying the need for co-creation** - The need for educators to co-create materials and resources with learners can emerge reactively, or tactically (e.g. in response to feedback from learners), or proactively (e.g. through discussions between the educator and the learners when mapping out the need for a new course)
- **Engagement** - This is where the learner and educator review the outcomes to be achieved, discuss responsibilities and identify any boundaries which may hinder or facilitate the process of co-creating the education experience. This stage is important because it is where the nature of the partnership between the educator and the learner, and the commitment to sharing, is worked through.
- **Creation and delivery of the learning programme and resources** - The specific nature of this stage will be shaped by the need and engagement stages and the specific context
- **Review and reflection** - This stage involves unpacking what worked and what worked less well and what shaped the outcomes for the learner and educator. This may involve a reflection on the specificity of the underpinning need to co-creating the curriculum.

Table 2.2 highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with co-creation of the business and enterprise education. Whilst there is a diversity of challenges and opportunities, they can be grouped into a number of bundles related to the individual, the institutional context and the environment.

Table 2.2: Co-creation of business and enterprise education: Opportunities and Challenges

	Opportunities	**Challenges**
The educator	• Alternative/different perspectives • Networking and relationship development • Better teaching and classroom experience • Motivated and engaged learners	• Perception of the value of the educator • Managing student expectations • Time required to manage relationship – reflection in workload models • Risk and uncertainty over outcomes
The provider	• Engagement with small businesses and entrepreneurial organisations • Case studies to demonstrate impact • Way of enhancing student satisfaction	• Quality 'assurance' – e.g. learning from doing • Processes and practices which support engagement with external stakeholders • Labelling of external stakeholders
External stakeholders (entrepreneurs and business owner-managers)	• Access to frameworks to assist in making sense of own experiences • 'Bringing the future forward' – use to critique theory and concept • Access to other resources within the institution	• Confidence in own abilities and skills to design and develop curricula • Understanding of teaching and assessment strategies • Balancing competing demands

The importance of constructive alignment

When designing and developing business and enterprise education programmes, it is important that there is a relationship, or alignment, between the desired learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment methods.

At a general level, constructive alignment is an outcome-based approach for designing, promoting and assessing deep learning (Hussey and Smith, 2003). It is underpinned by an assumption that learning is socially constructed, in that meaning is constructed by the learner as a result of engaging with learning activities and discussing and sharing learning with others. The role of the educator or trainer in this process is to create a learning environment that supports learning and any assessment activities used are appropriate to achieving the stated learning outcomes.

Over the last five years or so, the notion of learning outcomes has become central to the development of learning content in further and higher education. Whilst Brown (2007) suggests that the emphasis on learning outcomes can lead to the management of, rather than mastery of knowledge and a degree of conformity in learning content, it can support clarity in course design and coherence between teaching and assessment strategies.

Indeed, Shuell (1986, p. 429) notes that '*If students are to learn desired outcomes in reasonably effective manner, then the teacher's fundamental task is to get students to engage in learning activities that are likely to result in their achieving those outcomes*'. On the one hand, very few teachers and facilitators would disagree with such a statement as there is a large degree of common sense to it. On the other hand, there are certain challenges to achieving constructive alignment, particularly in disciplines such as enterprise and entrepreneurship where it is difficult to untangle the development of understanding and knowledge (i.e. teaching about enterprise) from the development of abilities and skills (i.e. teaching for enterprise).

Assessment of learning

There is a growing literature related to assessment strategies in business and enterprise education so, as with other sections of this Introductory Guide, a separate document could be written on assessment of learning.

Within business and enterprise education, it is important to highlight that assessment of learning can be **informal** (e.g. the educator or trainer sitting with learning and asking them to identify the learning gains from reviewing a learning resource such as those developed though the ME2ME project) or **formal** (e.g. the learner completing an assessment which has been set by the educator or trainer or the peer group). Regardless of the degree of formality, it is important that assessment is undertaken. As will be reviewed in Part 3, this is an important step in the learner being able to diffuse learning to others. Within the context of developing demand-led learning for micro-businesses, the assessment will enable the owner-manager to reflect on how they may use the learning in management and development of the business.

Key considerations in developing assessment approaches or strategies include:

- There is a difference between formative and summative assessment. The former is **assessment for** learning whilst the latter is **assessment of** learning. **Formative** assessment is an ongoing activity provides an opportunity for the educator or trainer to provide feedback on learning gains and any gaps which may exist in the knowledge and skills of the learner. The feedback can be written or verbal and it can be provided on an individual or peer to peer basis. In comparison, **summative** assessment sums up what a learner has achieved at the end of a period of time, relative to the learning aims and/or the relevant standards being used. The assessment will: (i) show what has been achieved identifying attainment against the assessment criteria (e.g. a mark or a pass/fail) and (ii) provide feedback to support the level of attainment.
- It is important that there is alignment between the learning outcomes, learning strategies and resources and the assessment methods (see the section above on constructive alignment). For example, learning ‘about’ business and entrepreneurship is normally assessed through analytical texts such as essays and knowledge retention exercises (e.g. exams). Learning ‘for’ business and entrepreneurship requires practical activities where learners demonstrate their development (e.g. a presentation or video). Learning ‘through’ business and entrepreneurship is primarily a reflective process, where a learner engages in entrepreneurial activities and maps their own learning and (supported) progression
- Assessment that measures against known outcomes differs from assessment that develops new perceptions and new opportunities, particularly when these are situated in ever changing contexts and environments. This requires process-driven assessment that maps against demonstrated stages of learning
- Failure can inform progress and increase resilience. When a learner can realise that events did not go according to plan through reflection can inform positive assessment
- Teamwork is an essential component of business education and training and peer review can be used to inform assessment (e.g. through contribution audits that clarify and support individual team members’ contributions)
- External stakeholders and alumni are useful sources of inspiration for assessment particularly in terms of identifying ways in which different forms of learning can be used in the development and management of a business.

Summary

This part of the Introductory Guide has reviewed what we mean by demand-led learning and reflected on a number of issues related to the development of demand-led business and enterprise education for micro-businesses.

The three key headlines for this part are:

- Demand-led learning is about providing learning resources to learners which they need and when they need them
- There are opportunities to introduce innovation in the development and delivery of business and enterprise education for micro-businesses
- It is important that businesses are actively in the development and delivery of learning resources and materials.

Learning Activities

Activity 1: The Entrepreneurial Mindset - Traffic Light Assessment

	Description
Duration	30 minutes
Outline of activity	• Provider learners with a copy of the enterprising skills framework developed by Professor Allan Gibb • Ask learners to assess themselves against the list of attributes, behaviours and skills using a traffic light related form of assessment • Two aspects can be assessed: (i) level of 'confidence' and (ii) relevance. In terms of the level of 'confidence', this involves the learner identifying strengths (i.e. green), areas for development (i.e. amber) and weaknesses (i.e. reds). In terms of relevance, this involves learners assessing the relevance of the attributes, behaviours and skills to different organisational contexts (e.g. their current work environment), learners can identify whether it is relevant, not relevant at the moment but may be in the future, or not relevant. • Attributes, behaviours and skills which have been identified as amber or red and as relevant to a context can then be mind mapped either on an individual or group basis, to assist in identifying practical strategies for addressing areas for development and weaknesses • Facilitate a discussion around activities which could be undertaken
Resources and tools	• Gibb's enterprising skills framework • Post-it Notes • Coloured pens
Teaching materials and links	Gibb's enterprising skills framework – see http://www.enorssi.fi/hankkeet/yrittajyyskasvatus/pdf/Gibb.pdf (pages 3 and 4) Gibb, A. (1993) Enterprise Culture and Education: Understanding Enterprise Education and Its Links with Small Business, Entrepreneurship and Wider Educational Goals, *International Small Business Journal*, 11, 3, 11-34 or EntreComp Framework - http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC101581/lfna27939enn.pdf

Activity 2: Mindset Montages

	Description
Duration	60 to 90 minutes
Outline of activity	• This involves learners developing a montage of images, from newspapers, magazines and other printed media which represent the different attributes, behaviours and skills outlined in Professor Allan Gibb's enterprising framework • The key to this activity is to provide space for the learners to be as creative as possible. As such, it is important to provide less rather than more instruction when outlining the task. For example, the learners could be asked to collect as many magazines, newspapers, printed material as they can one week before the task stating that they are needed to develop a montage • In class, the learners are then asked to identify images and develop a montage that represents the different attributes, behaviours and skills outlined in Gibb's enterprising framework

	• Each learner should have an opportunity to present their completed montage to others in the group and explain what the images mean
Resources and tools	• Gibb's enterprising skills framework • Flipchart paper • Coloured pens • Magazines, newspaper articles, other printed materials (e.g. brochures) • Glue, scissors, Post-It Notes
Teaching materials and links	Gibb's enterprising skills framework – see http://www.enorssi.fi/hankkeet/yrittajyyskasvatus/pdf/Gibb.pdf (pages 3 and 4) Gibb, A. (1993) Enterprise Culture and Education: Understanding Enterprise Education and Its Links with Small Business, Entrepreneurship and Wider Educational Goals, *International Small Business Journal*, 11, 3, 11-34 or EntreComp Framework - http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC101581/lfna27939enn.pdf

Activity 3: Communicating Value to Others

	Description
Duration	45 to 60 minutes
Outline of activity	• This involves learners exploring how value can be communicated to others. This is a key capability in terms of being able to summarise a business proposition in a concise and coherent fashion and/or communicate personal strengths and values to others • Provide learners with the outline of a complex business idea (e.g. something relating to the use of nanotechnology or life sciences/biological sciences) and then provide them with space to undertake focused research around the underpinning science/technology. The purpose of doing the research is to enable the learners to summarise and present the business idea in a sentence which does not use any jargon • The key to this exercise is the ability of the learner to match the sentence to the needs of potential customers, particularly in terms of a problem or challenge faced by the potential customer. In so doing, they are reflecting on the value added of the business idea. This is labelled as the value proposition in the business model canvas • Once this value proposition has been developed, the learners then work through how this sentence can be communicated to potential customer groupings, particularly the key networks and relationships which could be used
Resources and tools	• Computing facilities • Magic whiteboard paper • Coloured pens • Copies of the value proposition canvas
Teaching materials and links	Business Model Canvas - https://www.strategyzer.com/canvas/business-model-canvas Value Proposition Canvas -

	https://www.strategyzer.com/canvas/value-proposition-canvas Strong value propositions - https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2016/04/27/value-proposition-examples The art of communication in business - https://www.educba.com/10-effective-business-communication-techniques/ and http://thebarefootspirit.com/the-hierarchy-of-communication-methods/?

Activity 4: Managing “Knowns” and “Unknowns”

	Description
Duration	30 to 45 minutes
Outline of activity	• Provide learners with a simulated or real case study around the development of a new product or service by a micro or small business, where there are a number of “knowns” (e.g. relating to trends in the market, number and size of customer segments) and “unknowns” around key aspects of the development process • The case study should outline a problem or opportunity to be addressed in the development of the new product or service • Split the group in sub-groups and provide them with time to agree what they would do in terms of next steps in the development process given that they have incomplete information • Ask each group to present a summary of what they would do and why they choose that activity path
Resources and tools	Copies of a simulated or real case study A proforma which can be used to summarise knowns and unknowns
Teaching materials and links	Managing knowns and unknowns - Atherton, A. (2003) The Uncertainty of Knowing: An Analysis of the Nature of Knowledge in a Small Business, Human Relations, 56, 11, pp. 1379-1398 Knowns and Unknowns - https://marketbusinessnews.com/financial-glossary/financial-glossary-u/unknown-unknowns/

Case Studies

Name	Skillnets Training Networks Programme (STNP)
Organisation	Skillnet Ireland (IE)
Date/Duration	1999 to date
Overview	The enterprise-led Skillnets Training Networks Programme (STNP) in Ireland is designed to mobilise and support groups of small businesses strategically to address their joint training requirements. The scheme: (i) mobilises enterprises through networking techniques; (ii) provides funding to networks; and (iii) promotes an enterprise-led outlook with respect to how to develop, recognise and certify learning and qualifications. Within the networks, businesses decision-making power and can customise training to their specific needs. Skillnets does not specify the type or scope of training - its role is to support the networks with resources and expertise. The Skillnets approach has been found particularly appropriate for smaller businesses, which frequently lack the time, expertise and money to develop training customised to their specific needs and directly relevant to their size and industry sector. There are currently over 60 training networks in a range of sector and/or regions around Ireland
Relevance	The STNP programme is a good example of how government funded can be used to facilitate the development of demand-led learning and skills provision
Further Information	https://www.skillnetireland.ie/our-networks/ http://ibecsfa.newsweaver.ie/ibecsfa/1cttspp56ui

Name	Break in the Desk
Organisation	Materahub (IT)
Date/Duration	2016-2018
Overview	Funded through Erasmus Plus, the 'Break-in the Desk' project aims to help artists, creatives and cultural practitioners develop their entrepreneurial skills. Artists learn how to plan and carry out a 'break-in action' or 'artistic intervention' in small and medium-sized enterprises or public administrations (PAs) with the aim of bringing innovation to these organisations. Partners have used EntreComp to map artists' competences and assess improvements in their skills gained through the project's non-formal learning activities. The EntreComp framework has also been used as a self-assessment tool for the artists to identify if they have the skills that they will need for the break-in action or if they need to be developed. At the end of every break-in action, the artists are asked to self-assess themselves again to see if they have built entrepreneurial competences as a result of their work developing break-in actions. The project has been developed by a partnership of 10 organisations across 8 member states.
Relevance	The way in which a European wide competency framework can be used by micro businesses to identify their own learning and

	skills development needs and inform the development of learning and skills programmes
Further Information	http://breakinthedesk.eu/

Useful References and Resources

If you are interested in exploring further how to develop demand-led learning for managers in micro-businesses, the following references and resources will be of use.

Brown, S. (2007) A Critique of Generic Learning Outcomes, *Journal of Learning Design*, 2, 2, pp. 22-30.

Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership (2002) *Joining Entrepreneurs in Their World: Improving Entrepreneurship, Management, and Leadership in UK SMEs*, Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership, London.

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Hussey, P. and Smith, P. (2003) The Uses of Learning Outcomes, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 8, 3, pp. 217 – 228.

Osterwalder, A. and Pigneur, Y. (2010) *Business Model Generation: A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers and Challengers*, John Wiley and Sons, London.

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (2018) *Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education: Guidance for UK Enterprise Education Providers*, QAA, Cheltenham.

Sarasvathy, S.D. (2007) *What Makes Entrepreneurs Entrepreneurial?* The Darden Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Virginia, VA.

Shuell, T.J. (1986) Cognitive Conceptions of Learning, *Review of Educational Research*, 56, pp. 411-436.

Wong, D., Clarke, S., Lodge, N. and Shephard, K. (2007) Demand-led e-learning and the Elusive Total Solution, *British Journal of Technology*, 38, 1, pp. 116-132.

Part Three: How to Facilitate Peer to Peer Learning

Some 30 creatives came together in a room donated by a local managed workspace to provide peer to peer support on a range of topics related to marketing, branding, writing and social media. Lots of expertise in the room, lots of desire to explore and learn. No-one labelled as an adviser – no-one labelled as a client. Just lots of people willing to share what they knew and ask for help with what they didn't. No public funding at all. Just people donating whatever they thought it was worth. Donations were used to help pay for cupcakes and cocktails and an afternoon of fun. Business development as it should be (http://localenterprise.wordpress.com)

Overall Aim and Learning Outcomes

The overall aim of this final part of the Introductory Guide is to develop an understanding of how to effectively facilitate peer to peer learning and experience exchange between owner-managers of micro-enterprises.

Specific learning outcomes for this section are:

- Identify what is meant by peer to peer learning
- Review different types of peer to peer learning
- Define action learning
- Assess how to effectively support experience exchange between micro-enterprises

What We Know

What is Peer to Peer Learning?

The term peer to peer learning covers a range of different learning and teaching strategies which can be used in education to help learners. Increasingly peer to peer learning is being used to complement and/or as an alternative to more traditional teaching pedagogies such as lectures or instructor-led training session (see Part 1).

According to Scott et al. (2016), peer to peer learning is learning from and with the learner's peers. The usefulness of this definition is that it implies a learning relationship between people with a shared interest or relationship (e.g. people running their own business) and a different form learning. As reviewed in Part 1, traditional pedagogies comprise an unequal relationship between the teacher/trainer and the learner – one has the knowledge which is passed onto someone with no or limited knowledge.

Therefore, within the context of micro-businesses, we can define **peer to peer learning** as a two-way reciprocal learning activity between two (or more) peers which involves the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience between the participants. For this Introductory Guide, **a peer** can be defined as an owner-manager or manager within a micro-business.

The common element to the definitions of peer to peer learning is that knowledge is shared not by the educator or trainer but by the learner with other learners. This is because peer to peer learning involves peers learning by explaining their ideas to others, working collaboratively with others, giving and receiving feedback and evaluating their own learning. In peer to peer learning, the participants learn from other participants at the same time, and contribute to other participants' learning by sharing knowledge, ideas and experiences.

Such learning is based on common experiences that allow for 'equal' contributions. It is important that the participants are equal and have a similar reference system such as the experience in running their own business. As there is no teacher or trainer with 'superior' knowledge' learning is both formal and informal at the same time. It is important the learning environment enables the development of trust between participants.

Key Principles

In order to realise the benefits associated with peer to peer learning it is important that a number of principles are followed. These include:

- Peer to peer learning is most effective when learning objectives are clear and there is a degree of structure to the engagements between peers in order to maximise these objectives
- It is important that peers are matched appropriately whether it is two people in a mentoring relationship or five or six in an action learning set. The personalities of the peers are as important in matching as their previous experiences and knowledge. It is important that peers can demonstrate empathy with each other
- The learning environment needs to provide the peers with authority and empowerment. For example, whilst a trainer may be present it is important that they only intervene when there is evidence of a breakdown in the relationship between the peers. So the role of the trainer is a facilitator of the process as opposed to a provider of knowledge
- Learning is best facilitated when peers do things together and reflect regularly on what they are learning
- Peers need engage with each other in an honest and committed manner, they engage with each other over an appropriate time period (e.g. part of action learning sets for 3 to 6 months) and they engage in multiple ways (e.g. a mentor investing in site visits as well as the mentoring meetings)
- It is important that the learning of individual peers is communicated to the educator or trainer as a way of ensuring continued support for the learning process. It is also important that peers share their learning with appropriate others in their business and that there is some sort of structure or strategy to facilitate this communication
- The educator or trainer needs to ensure that the process of peer engagement is straightforward (e.g. there is not excessive amounts of paperwork, requests for signatures etc.)
- There is some sort of informal or formal process to evaluate the outcomes from the peer learning. It is important that the evaluation generates insights for the peers as well as the trainer or educator and their organisation.

The Process

In terms of management of the process, different types of peer to peer learning will involve different activities. However, the available literature does identify a number of key stages in the peer to peer learning process. These stages are:

- Pre-engagement – This involves a set of activities related to scoping of demand for the peer to peer engagement, engagement and matching of the peers, agreement of outcomes and, where appropriate training of facilitators
- Initial event – In certain cases, it will be necessary to hold an initial event which enables the educator or trainer to outline the programme, facilitate introductions between the peers and set expectations around the extent and nature of the peer to peer learning. This stage may involve some form training as a way of creating shared expectations between the peers
- Learning between peers – This stage is when the peer to peer learning takes place. The specific nature of this stage will be shaped by the type of peer to peer learning to be undertaken (e.g. mentoring in comparison to action learning sets). It is important here that the facilitator maintains contact with the peers to ensure that there are learning gains for the peers and to address any emergent problems in the relationships
- Sensemaking and sensegiving – This stage involves the peers reflecting on learning gains with each other (sensemaking) as well as communicating learning to others, particularly in their business (sensegiving). The extent of formality to this activity will be shaped not only by the aims and objectives of the programme but also the types of peers and the outcomes agreed during the pre-engagement state
- Diffusion of learning – It is important that peers communicate learning to others within their business, as a way of diffusing and using learning gained from their peer to peer learning experiences. There are two key aspects to the diffusion of learning. First, it is important for the educator or trainer to support the peers in sharing forward (e.g. through developing critical reflection skills). Second, it is important the business of the peer is open to learning. As with sensemaking and sensegiving, the level of formality to this activity will vary. Some programme will provide peers with structures to assist the diffusion of learning (e.g. through work-based learning assignments) whilst in other programmes this will be achieved more informally (e.g. through site visits).

Forms of Peer to Peer Learning

The available literature on peer to peer learning highlights that it can take many different forms. Within the context of micro-businesses learning from other micro-businesses, this includes:

- Mentoring
- Action learning sets
- Learning management systems (e.g. experience exchange and idea banks)
- Self-help groups (e.g. Chief Executive or manager networks)
- Study groups.

There has been a growth in these different forms of peer to peer learning within business and enterprise education over the last 10 to 15 years (IoD, 2018). This growth reflects a number of factors including:

- The benefits of peer to peer learning in spreading good management practices and knowledge and experiences in accessing appropriate learning opportunities
- The role of peer to peer learning in supporting the development of management and leadership skills in a business setting
- The opportunity for other businesses to 'give back' by being involved in peer to peer learning programmes
- An opportunity for governments to continue to support the development of business and education training by encouraging businesses to support each other, when other publicly-funded programmes are being withdrawn.

Action Learning

One innovative method of peer to peer learning which is increasingly being used to support learning between managers of micro and small businesses is **action learning**. Action learning is not a new learning method – it has been used to support management education in larger businesses since the late 1970s. However, it is only over the last five years or so that it has been increasingly used to support experience exchange and learning between managers in small businesses.

At its simplest, action learning can be defined as the '*development of self by the mutual support of equals*' (Revans, 1983). Within the context of supporting peer to peer learning between managers of micro-businesses, action learning can be defined as a process where participants are learning about the issue being addressed, they are learning about themselves and they are learning about the process of learning with others.

Three key principles underpin action learning:

- Participants are adult learners in that they are: self-directed; come with experience (e.g. working through problems faced in running a business); ready to learn when they need to perform more effectively (e.g. in managing some aspect of their business); and committed to developing themselves and others in the business (e.g. in order to perform a task, solve a problem or take the business forward)
- Learning is a social process in that participants learn with and from each other and learning is more effective when it takes place with others from the peer group (e.g. micro-businesses owners working with other micro-businesses owners)
- Participants are curious to know how other participants work and they learn when they are motivated to achieve something.

There are different forms of action learning. One of the most commonly used is **action learning sets**. In working with owner-managers from micro-businesses, action learning sets will involve:

- Small groups of 6 to 8 owner-managers working together
- The meetings are facilitated by one of the group or a trainer. The role of the facilitator is to encourage learning through action, support critical reflection and summarise the solutions at the end of the meeting. The role of the facilitator is not to provide knowledge or content
- Each group meeting works on a specific problem or set of connected problems
- The meeting is underpinned by a learning process of action, learning and reflection (see Part 1). This involves one of the members talking about a problem they are facing, other members reflecting on their perceptions about the problem in order to break down the problem into its constituent parts, making it possible for participants to find a solution. As part of this process, members reflect on how processes and practices work elsewhere as a way of promoting potential ideas and actions. As a result, through social interaction, group members take advantage of alternative views on their problem and learning occurs through a process of challenge and through the experience within the group
- Members then take action between meetings of the action learning set. At the next meeting, members then reflect on the outcomes from the actions and reflect on any new insights related to the problem.

In designing action learning sets, key issues to consider are:

- The size of the group – It is important that the group is not too large so that all members have an opportunity to contribute and share perceptions and experiences
- The environment – In order to be effective, members of action learning set need to feel comfortable sharing different types of experience and information with others. This could include sensitive business information, personal challenges (e.g. confidence in their own abilities to run the business) or business challenges. This requires a high level of trust in the other members of the group. Therefore it is important that both the physical and social environment provide a 'safe' environment for action, learning and reflection. In terms of the former, this could involve holding the meetings at the premises of the business. In terms of the latter, it may be useful to issue members with some form of code of conduct or facilitate the group in developing their own rules of engagement
- The experiences of the facilitator – Action learning sets will work because they are facilitated well so the facilitator may need support in the development of facilitation skills
- Action learning sets can be both time and resource intensive – It is important that members are aware of the time and resource implications of being part of the group and commit to the process.

In summary, in supporting learning and skills development amongst micro-businesses, the key benefits of action learning include:

- Participants are sharing experiences with others who they have perceive to have 'credibility'
- The 'curriculum' emerges from the participants own issues
- Problems and opportunities can be addressed as and when they emerge so there is flexibility in the approach to learning.

Summary

This final part of the Introductory Guide has reviewed what we mean by peer to peer learning and what are the different forms of peer to peer learning which can be facilitated to support owner-managers of micro-businesses in learning from each other.

The three key headlines for this part are:

- Peer to peer learning involves two or more owner-managers exchanging experiences, ideas and information to address challenges, problems and opportunities faced in developing and managing the business
- Peer to peer learning can take several forms ranging from action learning sets to mentoring. Therefore, it can involve two or more owner-managers as peers
- The role for the educator or trainer is to facilitate the process as opposed to deliver content.

Learning Activities

Learning Activity 1: Action Learning Sets

	Description
Duration	45 to 60 minutes

Outline of activity	• Introduce the concept of action learning and how it can be used to help address current and future issues within a business
	• Ask the group if there is any individual that has a particular problem they are struggling with that relates to a specific business process (e.g. managing people) or a theme such as:
	    • An idea they have about doing something different in the workplace that is being met with resistance
	    • A worker they are managing or a colleague, that they feel is resistant to change
	    • Socio cultural change that is making them feel unsure and uncomfortable about how to behave in the business
	• Once the group has identified a particular problem that they would like to work with, the next step is to apply an action learning technique
	• It is important right from the start that the trainer sets the tone of the environment so that the individual who is bringing the issue does not feel uncomfortable with the questions. The environment needs to be friendly and exploratory. The group will then ask the individual a series of questions which start with How? or Why? which the individual will respond to.
	• At the end of the session, the individual will be able to reflect on what they have learned during the process and the group can also share their thoughts.
	• The trainer will also share their observations on the process and summarise the learning gains

Resources and tools	Training room with space for learning to sit in a circle
Teaching materials and links	An overview to action learning – e.g. https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Action-Learning-Sets-An-INTRAC-guide-1.pdf

Activity 2: The Experience Exchange Bank

	Description
Duration	60 minutes
Outline of activity	Provide learners with an experience exchange checklist. The checklist should cover the key experiences associated with developing and managing a micro-business, grouped into categories (these could be business processes or key themes) Provide space for the learners to complete the checklist

	identifying where they have experiences and where they have a 'need to know'. Learners should summarise the key areas of experience and "need to know's" on Post-It Notes. These then need to be placed somewhere they can be read by the group Match learners so peers with need to know's are matched with those with experiences which can address the need to know Provide time for the pairs of peers to exchange experiences and develop learning gains Facilitate a group discussion about the learning gains and ask learners to summarise actions on action cards
Resources and tools	Experience exchange checklist Training room with space for break-out groups Post-It Notes Action cards
Teaching materials and links	Mindset of growth report - https://www.humbergrowthhub.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/mindset_of_high_growth_report.pdf SFEDI Business and Enterprise National Occupational Standards - http://ioee.uk/national-enterprise-standards/

Case Studies

Name	**The Captured Programme**
Organisation	Newcastle University Business School (UK)
Date/Duration	2016 to date
Overview	In 2015, Newcastle University Business School were successful in gaining funding from the UK Futures Programme managed by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) to explore the ways in which anchor institutions, such as universities, business schools and large firms, can support the development of small businesses. The funding was used to develop and deliver the Captured Programme which is open to businesses based in the North East of England with fewer than 20 employees. Captured works on the principle that experienced business people who have had management and leadership training in other organisations can be a valuable resource to small businesses and that the Business School can use its 'anchor' role to recruit large regional employers who can potentially fulfil an anchor role by supporting small firms given a suitable mechanism. For the small businesses, the learning experience involves: facilitated workshops on business development strategies; opportunities for peer to peer learning with the other small business participants; and mentoring with a manager from a large business. To date, there have been four Captured Programmes and it has worked with over 120 micro and small businesses and a range of large organisations across the North East region including Siemens, Sage, GSK and Lloyds Bank.
Relevance	It is an innovative example of supporting management and leadership development in micro businesses through peer to peer

	learning. The programme highlights how different forms of peer to peer learning can add value, both for the small businesses and large firm managers
Further Information	https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/captured/ https://netimesmagazine.co.uk/news/newcastle-university-programme-offers-huge-boost-to-local-small-businesses/

Name	**The Leaders of Change**
Organisation	The AdMERITUM Foundation (PL)
Date/Duration	2016-2018
Overview	Funded through Erasmus Plus, this project supported the development of mentoring skills amongst 40 individuals (the leaders of change) to work with local communities on the development of entrepreneurship in the area of SMEs. The target group were adults who were looking for new job opportunities, who were changing jobs, or who had lost their jobs, as well as micro and small entrepreneurs, who were looking to develop their businesses. Between 7 and 10 people were recruited from this target group in each partner country (Poland, Slovenia, Portugal and the UK). These people wanted to become 'the leaders of change' (i.e. the leaders of entrepreneurship in their local communities of entrepreneurs and/or future entrepreneurs). In each country, each partner organization chose a group of mentors from amongst its educators' staff (small business and entrepreneurship educators and trainers) who provided the meetings for the leaders in the form of workshops. The leaders of change, with the assistance of the mentors from partner organisations, formed Small Business Mentors' Club in their local communities. The outcomes from the project were summarised in a book 'Leaders of Change - The mentoring program for the leaders of entrepreneurship in local communities'
Relevance	A good example to reflect on how peer to peer learning can be supported through mentoring
Further Information	https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/blog/leaders-change-mentoring-program-leaders-entrepreneurship-local-communities

Name	**The Swedish Study Circle**
Organisation	Various (SE)
Date/Duration	N/A
Overview	The Swedish study circle is a small group action learning experience, usually with between 6 and 12 people. The key underpinning principle of a study circle is that every participant has the ability to be wise and share experiences which can assist others. In study circles the participants are expected to take part in discussions with an open mind, being prepared to listen and to learn from others and to change themselves. In addition, each participant is expected to contribute their knowledge, experiences and ideas. For the facilitator or leader of the study

	circle, learning and knowledge building is process-based, through ongoing questioning, a testing of thoughts and ideas in a social and cultural context.
Relevance	Over the last five years, the Swedish Study Circles model has been increasingly used in different parts of the European Union to support managers in businesses to exchange experiences and learn from each other
Further Information	https://webb.folkbildning.net/~tore.persson/tore-english-adult1 https://participedia.net/method/188

Name	**Jelly**
Organisation	Jelly (United States)
Date/Duration	2006 to date
Overview	Jelly was established in 2006 when two New York freelancers were talking about a major drawback of working alone, i.e. the lack of company. As a result, they decided to invite a group of freelancers to bring their laptops and work together in their apartment for the day and called it Jelly as they were eating Jelly beans at the time. Since its establishment in 2006 Jelly has expanded to a number of other countries. Although each Jelly network is run slightly different, there are two key principles. First, there is no structure, no hierarchy and no rules. This ensures that micro business owners can work alongside each other, discuss issues with their business and support each other to develop solutions to problems and opportunities. Second, it is not a place to sell to products or services to other businesses in the network
Relevance	Jelly demonstrates how action learning can be embedded within a co-working environment so that learning is part of the day-to-day experience of managing and developing a business
Further Information	https://www.uk-jelly.org.uk/what-is-jelly/ https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2013/may/25/jelly-working-home-meetup-group

Useful References and Resources

If you are interested in exploring further different forms of peer to peer learning and its value to learning and skills development in micro and small businesses, the following references and resources will be of use.

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