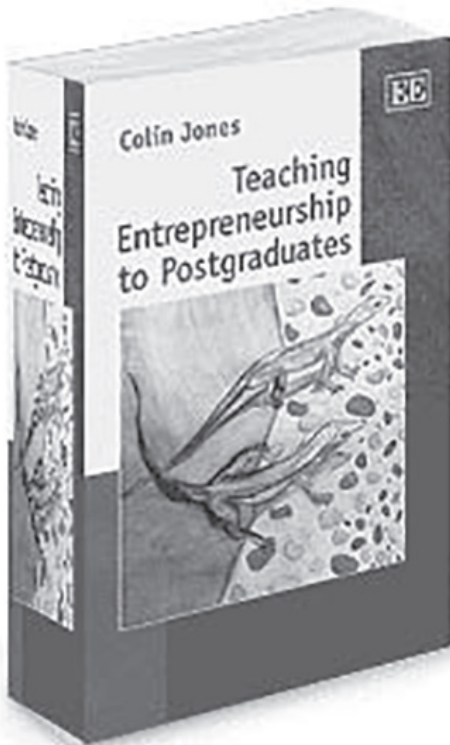

Book review

Colin Jones

Teaching Entrepreneurship to Postgraduates

Reviewed by Kate McGrath



Teaching, Entrepreneurship and Postgraduate, separately and collectively embrace very broad areas, so based only on the title of Colin Jones' latest book, exactly what you are going to get with this monograph is anyone's guess. Jones' focus is on the one hand very narrow and specific (mature postgraduate students studying a business school entrepreneurship programme) while simultaneously he espouses his generic teaching philosophy for guiding students in 'World 2.0'.*

From an entrepreneurship perspective the crux of the book is contained in twenty-five pages in the chapter entitled 'Seeing the world differently'. That chapter is precluded with Jones' observations, survey outcomes from his previous students and various pedagogical, social and science literature that he draws on to essentially describe the diversity of thought, action, expertise, experience and demands and/or expectations that (mature) students arrive with at the learning platform. For someone new to teaching and guiding students, these first seven chapters provide some concepts and references that will prove useful. However, I caution people to believe that mature postgraduate students do actually represent a unique diversity grouping from both the perspective of what they arrive with and what they are looking to leave with. In my experience, every year I teach and every age from 18 to 50+ represents an enormously diverse grouping – each is triggered to be inspired and engaged by vastly different things; they learn and explore in different ways and carry perspectives that bring the teaching and learning environments to life. People are diverse, hence students are diverse, and that needs to be both respected and embraced in all teaching and learning situations.

Engendering critical self-reflection, challenging existing assumptions of self and students, and the need for operating in a team environment are touched upon. There are also some descriptors of the types of learners you will experience, and Jones seeks to have you identify what your ideal graduate is in order to facilitate your development of appropriate learning environments for your students. As part of this, he states: 'I truly believe the entrepreneurship education has been held back from getting closer to its potential contribution to society through its close relationship to the business school'. This is an interesting and provocative statement since traditionally, and still in the majority of cases, entrepreneurship is seen as being (a) in the realm of the business school only, thereby generating business entrepreneurs, and (b) actually not able to be taught. A small but growing movement is that of broader entrepreneurship and more fully the teaching of innovation across disciplines and for purposes beyond purely business development.

In the chapter on 'Seeing the world differently', Jones lays out his approach to getting his students to actively question and explore not only their ideas but the context and environment in which their ideas are seated. His 'sense-making framework' is designed to provide students with tools and approaches to more actively and fully advance their ideas, and allow for evolution and continual transformation of themselves and their ideas. Couched in an eleven-stage process, the framework goes beyond the business context and explores concepts such as the legitimacy of the idea more broadly from where positive influence and additivity can be gained (which may in fact be from competitors), and looking at both bottom-up and top-down interventions to aid development and progression. The framework allows the following: 'Can our students connect the dots that join the presence or otherwise of legitimacy for their idea? Can they see the importance of one's resource profile in being able to exploit the actual ecological environment related to their idea? Is the student able to discern between selection for various forms or organisation or practice and actual factors that would specifically work for or against their actual idea?' It aims to move the students beyond unexplored assumptions on to actual critical thinking about how selection is and might be present.

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* A term coined to describe a future physical world that is programmable and interactive, just as virtual worlds are today. Smart lights and doors are simple examples of what some believe will soon be pervasive change based on accelerating technological development. (Editor)