

<https://www.enterprise.ac.uk/future-women-entrepreneurs/>

Educating future women entrepreneurs?

Written by Dr Inge Hill

•



Dr Inge Hill, Royal Agricultural University

When I graduated with my PhD, I was invited to take part in an assessment centre for future entrepreneurs and received a psychological profile with all my results showcasing an entrepreneurial personality – at least according to the construct underlying this test. I remember well the emotions I felt when I dragged myself to the letter box in London to post some paper work – the voice in my head telling me that I do not have what it takes, and that I would embarrass myself. At this time, my postdoc research grant had come to an end and I needed to find ways to earn a living to remain in the UK.

I am sharing these thoughts and emotions as they are not untypical for what some women feel when they consider engaging in starting a business. And remember, at that time I had the test result of fully meeting all aspects of an entrepreneurial personality with particular strengths in determination and resilience.

As an educator, even when not directly teaching entrepreneurship, I engage in building female students' confidence and resilience. And so many things I do today are based on the learning from many programmes and initiatives that existed then but not today.

I was working with a team at the then Department of Trade and Industry to organise the first researcher roundtable on women's entrepreneurship in 2001 in Downing Street and was one of its speakers. And I trained to be a women's business adviser and still have the toolkit produced by the then women's business development agency in Coventry.

Where would I go today and what information and training would I engage with?

I tried my luck, and was surprised how little actionable information I could find with a quick google search. Inspiring I found EEUK member King's College offering a network King's College women entrepreneurship network for staff and students. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/entrepreneurship/develop-your-idea/women-entrepreneurs-network>.

Here are my tips on what educators and enterprise advisers in HE could do every day:

Share the data we have to alert male and female students and colleagues. Most recently, the [Gender Index](#) was published with regional insights. Also alert them about the ongoing [gender paygap](#)

We need more women role models from diverse backgrounds showcasing the challenges they faced and how they overcame them. The Gender Index only offers 'more-than' middle-aged white women as cases. Where are the young ones and those of ethnic minority origin?

Create a space for reflection and a rational way to analyse the potential in business situations and how the future female entrepreneur can seize this potential.

Counteract women's lack of confidence and self-efficacy when you find it. Have conversations with women and seek to identify the root causes of limiting beliefs and share tools to address them. [This case study](#) I found inspiring as it showcases how one woman entrepreneur overcame hers and how to create a reflective space.

Let's keep the conversation going – get in touch to discuss what tools we can develop and what we can do next. irh2018@yahoo.com