Innovating Entrepreneurship Education Through a Structured Five-Sprint Model

Connecting Coaching, Action Learning, and Reflection

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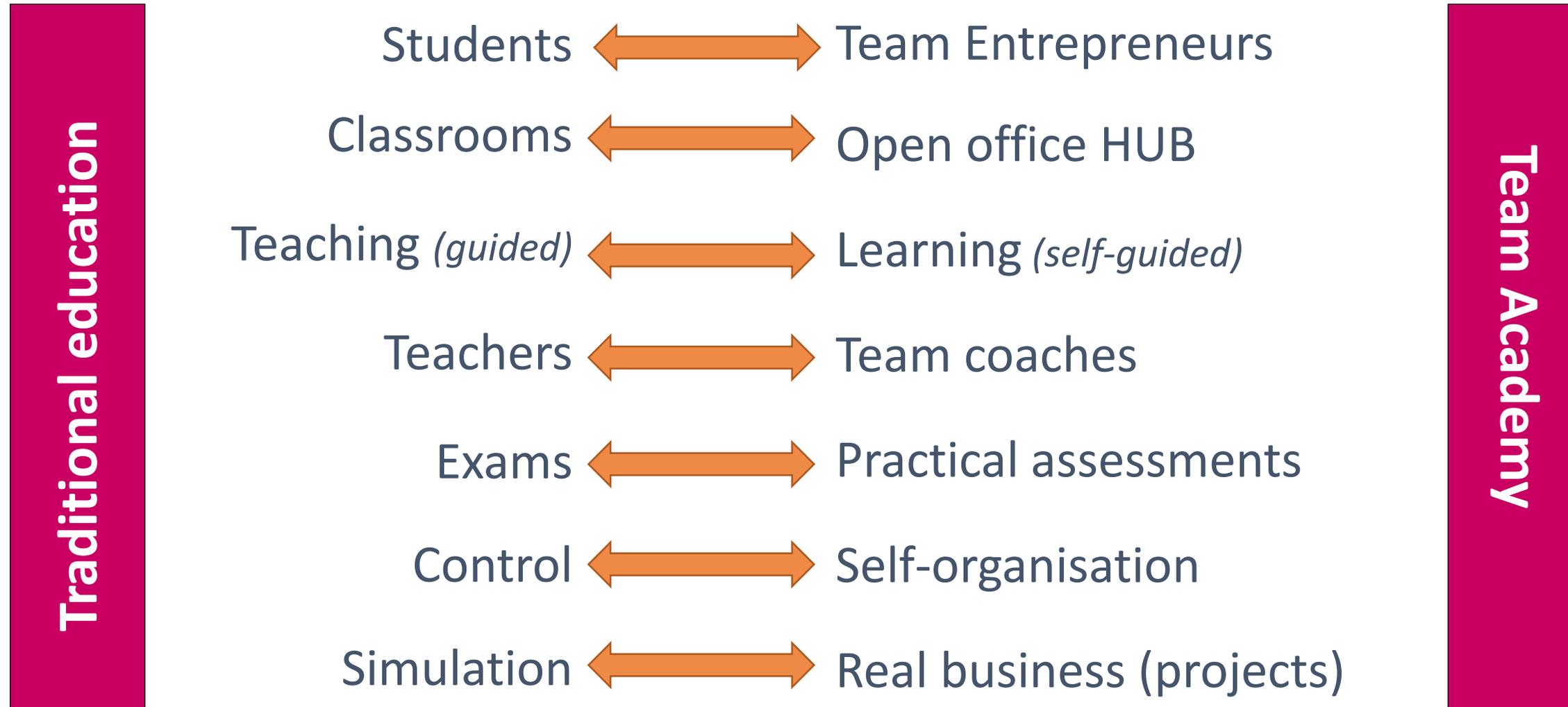NPSE CONFERENCE 2026

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Table of Content

- Short Introduction into the Team Academy Approach

- Background and Theoretical Foundations

- The Challenge and Problem Definition

- Background and Theoretical Foundations

- The Six-Week Sprint Rhythm and its implementation

- Methodology

- Findings

- Discussion and Transferability

- Conclusion

Team Academy in nutshell

Differences between traditional HE and TA based programs

Traditional education

Students	⟷	Team Entrepreneurs
Classrooms	⟷	Open office HUB
Teaching *(guided)*	⟷	Learning *(self-guided)*
Teachers	⟷	Team coaches
Exams	⟷	Practical assessments
Control	⟷	Self-organisation
Simulation	⟷	Real business (projects)

Team Academy

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The Challenge

Self-directed, team-based learning is powerful...

But:

Too open

→ confusion

Too structured

→ loss of autonomy

Highly open-ended environments create challenges in pacing, clarity of expectations, and visibility of learner progression.

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Problem Definition

Across multiple cohorts and year groups, student feedback and coaching observations observations revealed three recurrent challenges:

1 **Pacing Variability**

Without clear temporal markers, teams progressed at inconsistent speeds, struggling to maintain momentum across longer projects.

2 **Unclear Progression**

Development was difficult to articulate without structured checkpoints, complicating complicating competence-based assessment and feedback.

3 **Ambiguity for Novices**

Students entering or transitioning between stages expressed uncertainty around expectations, success indicators, and the rhythm of learning.

Background and Theoretical Foundations

Heutagogy

Learners as primary agents determining what and how they learn – emphasising capability, metacognition, and adaptability. Autonomy without wayfinding can overwhelm; judicious scaffolding is required. *(Hase & Kenyon, 2000)*

→ learner autonomy

Team Academy & Action Learning

Learning through enterprise creation, dialogue, and coaching rather than transmission. Action learning orients inquiry toward real challenges via Revans' "programmed knowledge + questioning insight." *(Vettraino, 2021; Revans, 1982)*

→ real challenges

Team Coaching

The developmental glue – supporting collective goal-setting, contracting, and reflective practices that surface learning at individual and team levels. *(Hawkins, 2011)*
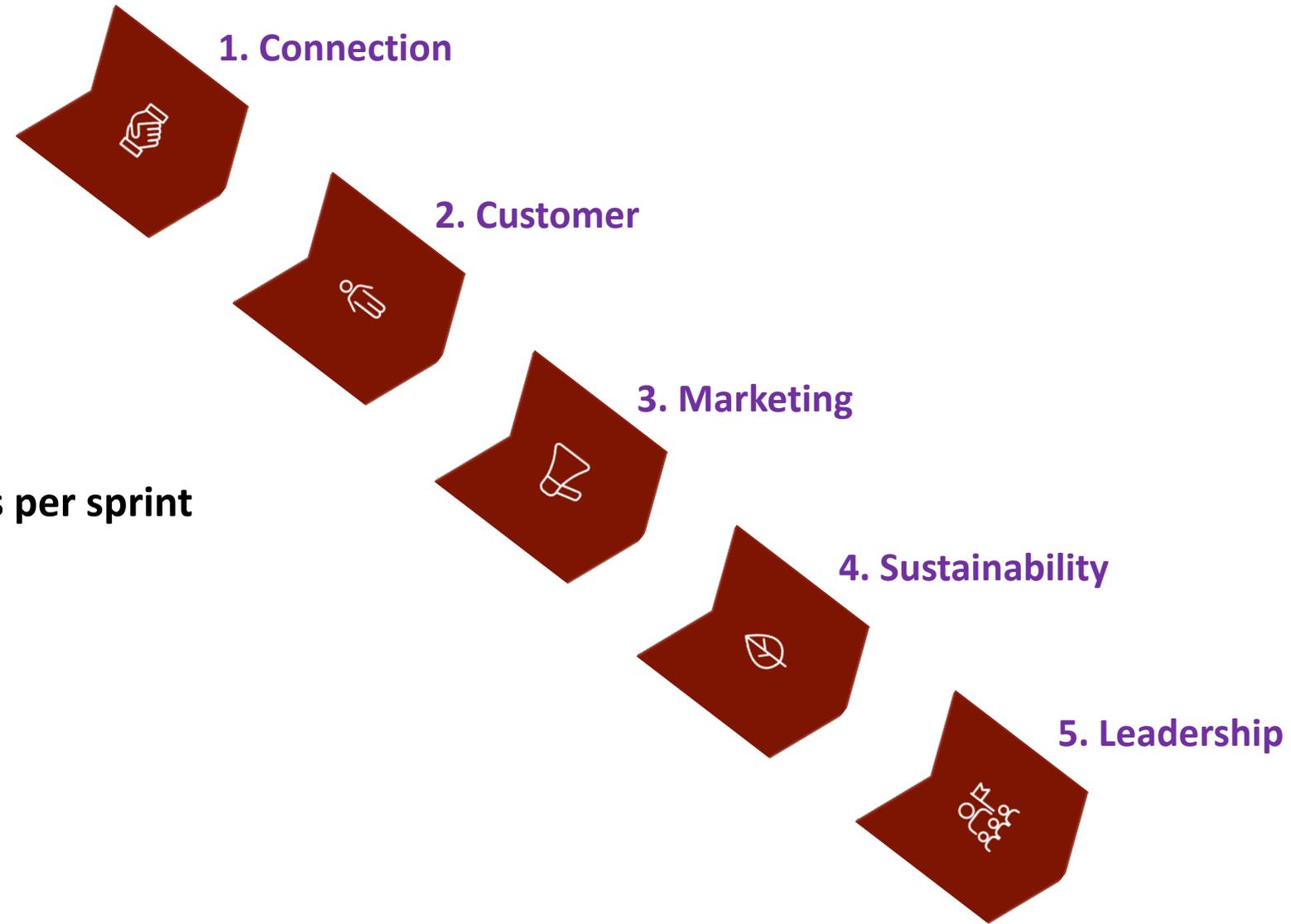
→ reflection & development

Sprint Structures & Scaffolding

Time-boxed cycles concentrate attention, accelerate feedback, and and create visible progress increments. Scaffolding provides calibrated calibrated support that fades as capability grows. *(Knapp et al., 2016; al., 2016; Wood et al., 1976)*
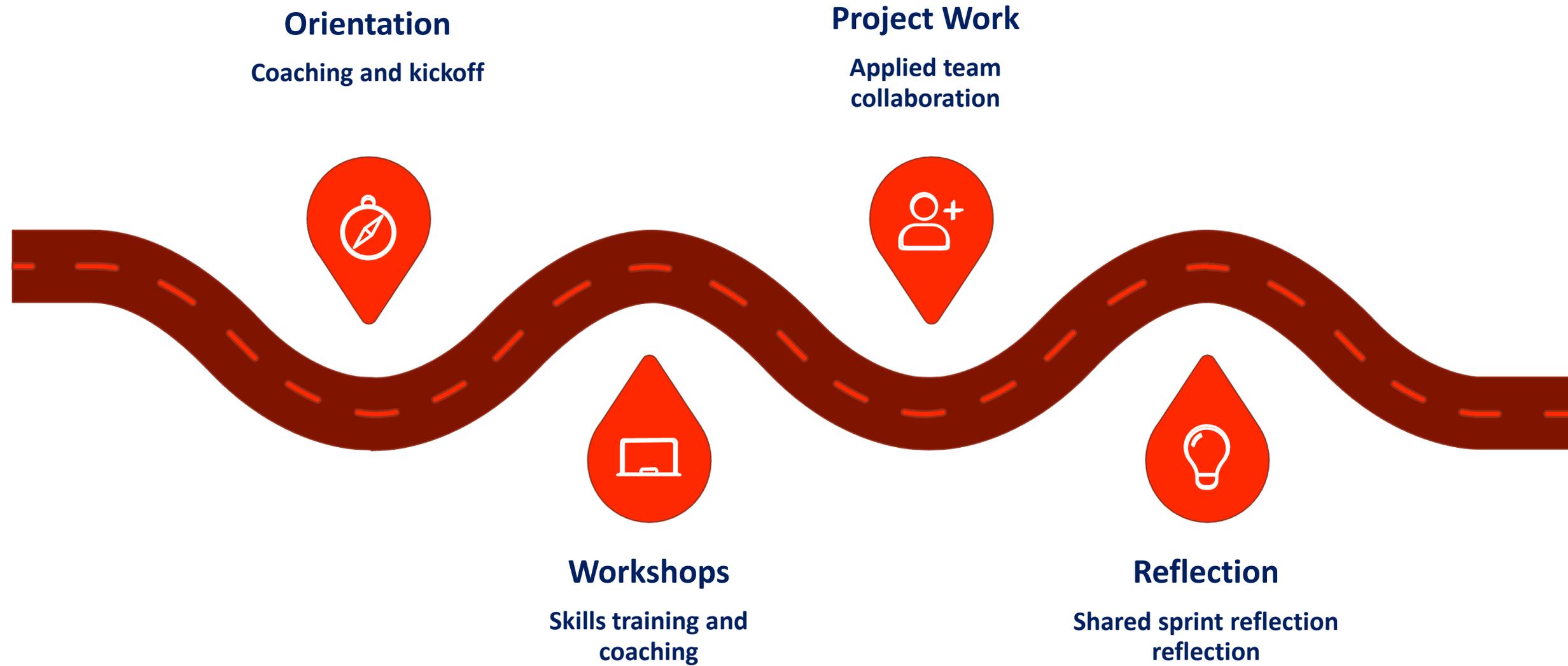
→ structure & rhythm

The paper's research strategy follows design-based research, linking principled design with iterative refinement in authentic settings. *(Wang & Hannafin, 2005)*

Five-Sprint Framework

1. Connection

2. Customer

3. Marketing

👉 **One competence focus per sprint**

4. Sustainability

5. Leadership

The Six-Week Sprint Rhythm - overview

Orientation

Coaching and kickoff

Project Work

Applied team collaboration

Workshops

Skills training and coaching

Reflection

Shared sprint reflection reflection

The Six-Week Sprint Rhythm

01

Orientation & coaching

02

Skill development

03

Project work

04

Action Week

05

Reflection

06

Community sharing

Each sprint follows the same predictable architecture, reducing ambiguity while preserving team-driven project selection and inquiry. selection and inquiry. Competence expectations, artefacts, and assessment criteria scale by year group.
This predictable rhythm reduces cognitive load while preserving learner agency in project selection, inquiry direction, and artefact and artefact creation – making time itself a pedagogical tool.

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Implementation Context

Programme Scope

- **Full programme rollout (BSc + MSc) MSc)**
- **~60 students**
- **Across all year groups**

Includes

- **Coaching sessions**
- **Action Weeks**
- **"Houston's Calling" reviews**

Implementation Across the Academic Year

In 2025-26, the framework was implemented across all year groups on the BED programme. Key implementation elements included:

→ **Induction Activities**

Introduced sprint logic and how competence areas map onto applied entrepreneurial work at each level.

→ **Cadence-Alignment Sessions**

Coaching teams ensured synchronous milestones across cohorts while allowing discipline-specific variation.

→ **Co-Designed Skill Workshops**

Developed with practitioners to ensure currency and real-world relevance.

→ **"Houston's Calling" Reviews**

Structured developmental checkpoints using reflective narratives, qualitative indicators, and artefact progression evidence.

Methods and Data Sources

Study Design

Practice-based case study within a design-based research (DBR) framework, enabling iterative refinement in an authentic higher education setting.

Data collection began October 2025 and remains ongoing.

Design-Based Research

Practice-based case study

Participants

BED BSc programme at Aston University:

- Year 1: n=20
- Year 2: n=19
- Year 3: n=15
- MSc Design, Entrepreneurship & Innovation: n=6

Total: 60 participants across undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Data sources included coaching observations, student reflective journals, engagement indicators (workshop attendance, Action Week participation), and participation), and qualitative feedback from "Houston's Calling" reviews. Analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase reflexive thematic analysis, with coding analysis, with coding focused on learner clarity, cognitive load, team cohesion, developmental visibility, and competence articulation.

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Finding 1 – Clarity & Reduced Overload

Clear weekly focus

Students always knew what to work on and when.

Better prioritisation

Teams could direct energy toward what mattered most each sprint.

💬 *"having a clear weekly focus reduced anxiety about what counted as progress."*

Finding 2 – Deeper Learning

Focus on one theme

Each sprint concentrated attention on a single competence area, preventing cognitive overload.

Stronger knowledge integration

Sustained focus within a sprint led to more intentional application of concepts in real project contexts.

👉 **More intentional application**

Finding 3 – Visible Development

1

Clear progress markers

Students and coaches could track advancement across sprints.

2

Better reflection

Structured rhythm created natural moments for looking back and forward.

3

Easier assessment

Competence-focused sprints made evaluation more transparent and meaningful.

👉 **Learning becomes visible**

Key Insight

Structure does not reduce autonomy

👉 **It enables it**

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Discussion

Time as a pedagogical tool

Structures attention

Defined sprint periods direct where students focus their energy.

Accelerates feedback

Shorter cycles mean faster loops between action and reflection.

Makes progress visible

Rhythm creates checkpoints that surface surface learning that might otherwise go otherwise go unnoticed.

👉 "Autonomy needs architecture"

Transferability Beyond Entrepreneurship Education

The model's architecture is transferable beyond entrepreneurship education. Agile-inspired cycles are pedagogically repurposed – reframing sprint logic not as productivity acceleration, but as developmental pacing.

Laboratory Science

Six-week competence-focused cycles align with hypothesis testing, iteration, and reflective evaluation central to scientific inquiry.

Engineering Design

Project-based STEM contexts and clinical simulations can adopt similar structured milestone reviews and time-boxed experimentation.

Professional Education

Fieldwork blocks and clinical placements placements benefit from repeated structured reflection and visible competence increments.

The emergence of varied but structured temporal cycles (two-week and six-week models) across contexts suggests time-bound iteration may iteration may constitute a transferable design principle within self-determined learning environments.

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Conclusion

The Five-Sprint Framework provides a structured yet flexible model for supporting heutagogical learning across all year groups in entrepreneurship education. Early findings show promising effects on clarity, cohesion, and developmental visibility. Ongoing analysis will examine longitudinal capability development and outcomes across cohorts.

Scalable

Applicable across all year groups and programme levels simultaneously.

Transnationally Adaptable

Convergent evidence from Finland and the UK supports international applicability.

Cross-Disciplinary

Potential applications in science, engineering, and professional education contexts. contexts.

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Thank you for your attention!

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