Fostering Innovative Entrepreneurial Design students: Exploring the relationship between innovation characteristics and attitudes towards entrepreneurship in South African Design students.

Marina Meyer, Denver Hendricks

University of Johannesburg

I would like to present in person with a written paper

Innovation and entrepreneurship have been increasingly recognised as drivers of socio-economic development. The term innovative entrepreneur is a relatively new one and could be necessary for economic growth during a challenging and changing global environment. Previous studies in the USA and the UK have found that limited job opportunities for architectural graduates has meant that many have changed from a career in architecture to pursue employment elsewhere. Lower employment rates have
forced graduates to innovate and find more robust ways to survive within the profession. Therefore, architects must transform and innovate to survive and so should our curriculum.

Being an entrepreneur does not necessarily mean you are innovative. An innovative entrepreneur provides a novel business (product or method) that is new to the marketplace. “Put simply, innovative entrepreneurs act different to think different and in the end, they make a difference.” (Dyer & Gregersen, 2012). What is clear is that innovative entrepreneur needs innovation to transform entrepreneurship.

Learning how to train these innovative entrepreneurs effectively is key. Innovation can be taught and result in improved entrepreneurial skills that develop better entrepreneurial competence. Attitudes and behaviours are open to change and opportunities exist for educators and practitioners to affect innovative entrepreneurship by identifying and influencing the relevant courses. The challenge is for educators, researchers and policy makers to create curricula that will impact design students to foster innovative entrepreneurial graduates and lead to eventual growth in the economy. The skills required to face the challenges of the next century will require interdisciplinary thinking to successfully grapple with the many challenges facing architects.

This paper is the result of a study that explored and measured the characteristics and dynamics of an innovative entrepreneur in design students. The sample consisted of South African students from the Architecture, Interior, Graphics and Multimedia disciplines. The study is the first step in understanding what behaviours and attitudes are present in African innovative entrepreneurs. The findings suggests that there is a relationship between entrepreneurial attitudes and innovation characteristics and behaviors. These can be nurtured through a dynamic design curriculum and increase a design student’s propensity to become better designers within a thriving economy.
• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

**Marina’s biography**

Marina has attained experience across a wide range of architectural projects. With unique experience in urban design and regeneration principles that further development, uplift people and integrate transport systems in South Africa. She also has attained extensive experience in the commercial, industrial, community, residential and health care sectors. Marina also has 10 years of tertiary education teaching experience in the architectural and interior design fields at both public and private institutions.

Marina believes that Architects and Designers should be dynamic, with a range of skills and experiences that can be drawn upon to inspire place and cultivate the user’s abilities to flourish in the space. Her passion is about the expression of Architecture and Psychology - specifically how the two integrate and translate through space. Over the last couple of years she have been furthering her interests in environmental psychology, with a focus on the psychological aspects of both positive and negative spaces and how designers use these subtle psychological practices to control and affect people’s psychological wellbeing.

**Denver’s biography**

Denver is committed to creating inclusive architectural and urban environments that are socially contextually appropriate. He is also an educator and is currently the head of the architecture department at the University of Johannesburg. He has published numerous conference papers and is currently writing a proposal for a doctorate.

His extensive experience in practice, teaching and business provides him with the unique insight into the architectural professions. He has worked in many aspects of architecture from private homes, public architecture to community participation projects. He has an innate ability to identify the empathy through projects and facilitate win-win processes.

Denver has 15 years of professional practice experience, 10 years of teaching and 10 years of business management. Recently his passion for education has driven him to
transform pedagogy. He is also reshaping the architectural profession by consulting to the council for architects in South Africa. He has been invited to international guest lectures, panel discussions and participate in various committees.