

PSEM: An Audit Tool for Higher Education

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Introduction

The aim of this guidance paper is to present the proposed social enterprise audit tool. The idea of the social enterprise audit tool is to set out what should be covered when designing a social enterprise curriculum for an interdisciplinary social science subject area. The work that is presented here is formulated from a funded Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) project undertaken by the authors and reflection from previous research (see Halsall et al., 2022; Oberoi et al., 2021; Snowden et al., 2021).¹

The Social Enterprise Audit Tool

As has been well documented, social enterprise is playing a more crucial role in the higher education curriculum. When examining the area of social enterprise there are other interchangeable words associated with it, namely: entrepreneurship and innovation. Figure 1 presents a contemporary definition of the three key concepts that are interlinked.

Enterprise:

- “Enterprise is defined here as the generation and application of ideas, which are set within practical situations during a project or undertaking. This is a generic concept that can be applied across all areas of education and professional life.
- It combines creativity, originality, initiative, idea generation, design thinking, adaptability and reflexivity with problem identification, problem solving, innovation, expression, communication, and practical action.

Entrepreneurship:

- Entrepreneurship education is defined as the application of enterprise behaviours, attributes, and competencies into the creation of cultural, social or economic value. This can, but does not exclusively, lead to venture creation.
- Entrepreneurship applies to both individuals and groups (teams or organisations), and it refers to value creation in the private, public, and third sectors, and in any hybrid combination of the three.

Innovation:

- Innovation is related to the improvement of something that not only entails creating something new but also involves applying what has been created to solve an existing problem. It is linked to the process of re-learning aspects previously known or implemented, and sometimes it means using existing solutions as starting points and adapting them to fit new scenarios and/or address fresh challenges.”

(Adapted from: QAA, 2018, p. 7 and Paños-Castro & Arruti, 2021, p. 300)

Figure 1: *The fundamentals of social enterprise in a language context.*

¹ Part of section 3 of this guidance paper has been taken from a recent peer-reviewed paper (see Halsall et al., 2022) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41959-022-00084-w>

At the heart of social enterprise is the importance of society. Society can be applicable at different levels: local (i.e. community), regional, national or global. More than ever before social enterprise is paramount within the key social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental challenges of the day. For example, Guzman (2022, p. 23) observes that in the case of the United States:

“Entrepreneurship is key to the country’s economic development. High-growth entrepreneurship is a driver of innovation and increasing employment, and local entrepreneurship keeps cities and neighbourhoods vibrant, allowing access to much-needed goods and services. It serves as a solution to economic inequality and empowerment, and can produce meaningful wealth for those who succeed.”

In essence, this focus on entrepreneurship has created new dimensions in social enterprise. In 2018, the QAA pointed out that are different forms of entrepreneurship, which have been driven by international public policy measurements in the form of social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental encounters. This in turn has developed the new introduction of specific terminology that is driven by the sustainable development agenda (see in particular: QAA, 2021, 2014; UN, 2015). Figure 2 presents the different labels that encapsulate social enterprise, entrepreneurship and innovation.

“**Social entrepreneurship** is where entrepreneurial ventures are driven by solving social or cultural issues, as opposed to financial gain or profit.

Green entrepreneurship is where environmental problems are explored to result in a net positive impact on the natural environment using sustainable processes.

Digital entrepreneurship is where digital products and services that are created are marketed, delivered, and supported online.

Intrapreneurship is the application of enterprise behaviours, attributes, and skills within an existing micro or small business, corporate or public-sector organisation.”

(Adapted from: QAA, 2018, p. 8)

Figure 2: *Different labels for enterprise.*

The Need for the Pedagogy Social Enterprise Model (PSEM)

The enhancement of social enterprise within an education perspective creates opportunities, challenges, and solutions. The opportunities pertain to what social enterprise can actually do in a community setting and for the stakeholders who are involved in this process. The challenges are derived from what the students learn in an education setting. The focus here is more about real life employability situations, where social objectives that assist a primary purpose form the basis instead of theoretical elements.

The opportunities can be developed from the teaching and learning curriculum in terms of skills and development. Hence, drawing on the above findings, the authors have developed a Pedagogy Social Enterprise Model (see Figure 3). There are six characteristics in this model that are seen to drive social enterprise as an innovative ideology, which are:

1. Institutions – structures of rules and norms that develop social change in society. In this context, an institution is a private business, governmental or education establishment. Here, institutions are, on the whole, seen to have an important effect on citizens in society (Halsall & Powell, 2016).
2. Stakeholders – members of a particular group whose support enables an institution to function and without whom would not be able to function. Examples here are: administrators, students, teachers, and entrepreneurs.
3. Teaching and Learning – a process whereby the learner gains skills and understanding. The idea here is that the student can apply what they have learned into practice.
4. Personal Skills and Capability – a framework for skills and knowledge growth from a social entrepreneur development perspective. This characteristic is embedded from the authors' earlier research (see Snowden et al., 2021).
5. Curriculum – what the learner will cover in their course over a period of time. The curriculum is centrally driven by knowledge, practices, and critical engagement (Weller, 2016).
6. Work Placement – a period where the learner has the opportunity to experience expertise in the area of employment they want to enter. As Neugebauer and Evans-Brain note, internships and placements are focused on “getting a start, establishing a track record and then adjusting from that to the path that is right” for the learner (2016, p. 59).

Social enterprise has continued to forge its path into the local arena as a change agent, a social wealth creator, and a means to tackle the social problems that are prevalent in the community. It is clear from the study undertaken that social enterprise has positive effects on both local and regional developments. The emphasis is placed on social and economic purposes, which implies a reinvestment in the community. The study also suggests that social enterprise improves people's lives, creates community cohesion, and promotes local economic growth.

Despite the importance of social enterprise in society, students are still studying theories as opposed to acquiring practical skills. Hence, there is an urgent need to encourage students to learn by doing, and to develop an understanding of how to collaborate and engage with each other in order to address social problems. Such engagement can only take place if the key stakeholders play an active role in the transformational process, if social enterprise is embedded in the curriculum, and if opportunities to acquire skills through work-based learning, and/or, structured internship programmes are offered. All in all, there is still work to be done towards the recognition of social enterprise in the local community, as well as its establishment within the academic curriculum.



(Adapted from: Halsall et al., 2022)

Figure 3: *The Pedagogy Social Enterprise Model (PSEM).*

4. Summary

Social enterprise is undergoing a renaissance, and it is widely viewed as a resolution strategy to the challenges presented in contemporary society. These include social inequality and injustice, public health, and socio-environmental issues as they present in society, and distinctly, the manner in which the issues empower communities and groups locally, nationally, and globally. Undoubtedly, for a 'new' curriculum to develop, it must do so within a cross-disciplinary framework that is both global and heutagogical in nature, as presented in Figure 3. It is clear that the emerging social enterprise curriculum is multifaceted and complex, therefore enabling the learning experience to be dynamic and context specific to ensure that the needs of the social entrepreneur, community, and society are met by the training provider in the form of the higher education institution.

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