Enterprising students: a values-driven, competency-based framework for embedding enterprise in the HE curriculum

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Stage one: background

Higher education (HE) needs to equip students with enterprise skills, alongside the technical and subject knowledge they receive, to enable personal growth and successful transition beyond the university (Wilson, 2012). The wording is important here, with the focus on the development of the individual not just on employment outcomes (although these are very important). Enterprise skills are present in every aspect of teaching and learning but are not always clear. The enterprise concept focuses attention on maximising opportunities for the development, enhancement and application of enterprising behaviours, attributes and competencies. Enterprise and enterprise education (the latter primarily used in the UK) are terms with no clear agreement of definitions (Mulholland and Turner, 2019), but for simplicity, enterprise is defined here using the QAA's definition (2018, 7):

> "… 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."

Enterprise education is also defined using the QAA's description:

> "… as the process of developing students in a manner that provides them with an enhanced capacity to generate ideas, and the behaviours, attributes, and competencies to make them happen. It extends beyond knowledge acquisition to a wide range of emotional, intellectual, social, cultural and practical behaviours, attributes and competences, and is appropriate to all students. These are all underlying factors that can enhance employability prospects as well as be taken further through Entrepreneurship Education." (QAA, 2018, 9)

The key aim is to equip students with the awareness of enterprising skills, *mindset* to act on these skills, and *ability* to apply these skills at some future point. The QAA (2018, 8) goes on to highlight:

+ enterprise behaviours can include: taking the initiative, making things happen, reflecting, communicating, pivoting and adapting, storytelling, taking responsibility, networking, personal effectiveness and managed risk taking

+ enterprise attributes can include: open mindedness, proactivity, curiosity, self-efficacy, flexibility, adaptability, determination and resilience

+ enterprise competencies can include: intuitive decision-making, identifying opportunities, creative problem solving, innovating, strategic thinking, design thinking, negotiation, communicating, influencing, leadership and financial, business and digital literacy.

UK higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly accountable to employability or employment outcomes (Department for Education, 2017). Employability has become intrinsically embedded in university strategies. For example, at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) it is present in the Teaching and Learning Strategy 2017-2022, and the Student Employability, Enterprise and Employment Strategy 2019-2023. UK employers typically use competency-based recruitment to test an applicant's skills or competencies (Swain, 2021), and increasingly this is being supplemented (or replaced) by values-based recruitment, particularly in healthcare (Health Education England, 2021) and policing (College of Policing, 2018). With this external context and increased expectations, providing HE students with opportunities to develop enterprising skills, thus demonstrating their competency and values, is important.

The Faculty of Arts, Professional and Social Studies (APSS) at LJMU has more than 7000 students, which is the equivalent size of a small HEI. The subjects range from art to architecture, education to fashion. The students go into roles across many sectors, typically graduate roles which do not require a specialist subject, so having the right skills, abilities and values is very important.

How enterprise skills are recognised and understood by students in HE programmes requires urgent attention. One key challenge is that lecturing academics are not well placed to demonstrate the enterprising elements of their programmes (Nicholson and Wood, 2015). This does not mean they cannot do this, but that they are not necessarily able to do so; for example, not possessing the knowledge to create assessments which measure skills and technical and subject knowledge, or perhaps not motivated to do so due to high workload demands. Identifying new approaches to clarify enterprise skills within HE programmes will enhance:

1 the student and staff experience; benefiting understanding and knowledge of how key skills and competencies are addressed at modular level

2 HE programmes; enhancing consistency across modules within programmes

3 equip students with necessary enterprise skills to transition beyond the university (QAA, 2018) enhancing their awareness and ability to apply these skills. This will also be of benefit to faculty APSS management in demonstrating how enterprise skills and competencies are being addressed and achieved, which can link to the employability need, creating more efficient and focused practice around employment support.

A one-size solution cannot fit all subjects, staff or students so a flexible and adaptable approach is needed. The Advance HE Enterprise and Entrepreneurship in Higher Education framework (Advance HE, 2019) provides an approach which can be adapted, and this is our starting point.

Stage two: approach

We are adapting the Advance HE Enterprise and Entrepreneurship in Higher Education framework (Advance HE, 2019) to create an Enterprise Education Framework that goes beyond more commercial or simply employability outputs, to think more broadly about enterprise, and include values-driven elements. Most, if not all, HE institutions advocate *values* as part of the organisational vision and strategy. For example, LJMU (at the time of writing) states transformation, innovation, excellence, partnership, leadership and community as 'our values' (LJMU, 2017). It follows that if the organisation adopts these values, that HE programmes use these as starting points to direct competency and skills enhancement. A strength of the Advance HE framework is that it can be adapted to include a values-driven approach.

This is being tested with a small pilot in the 2021-22 academic year. Starting with a values-driven approach, the model aims to identify and develop key competency areas (see figure 1). Values (in the centre) should be informing all elements of the model throughout the key areas (from the centre outward): (1) competencies (in yellow) which are primarily student responsibilities, (2) elements (in green) primarily module/programme level responsibilities, and (3) elements (in blue) primarily institutional responsibilities. In this case study we will focus on the values and competency elements.

Figure 1. A values-driven, competency-based framework for embedding enterprise in the HE curriculum

Key:
Values throughout
Micro – Student
Meso – Staff
Macro – Institution
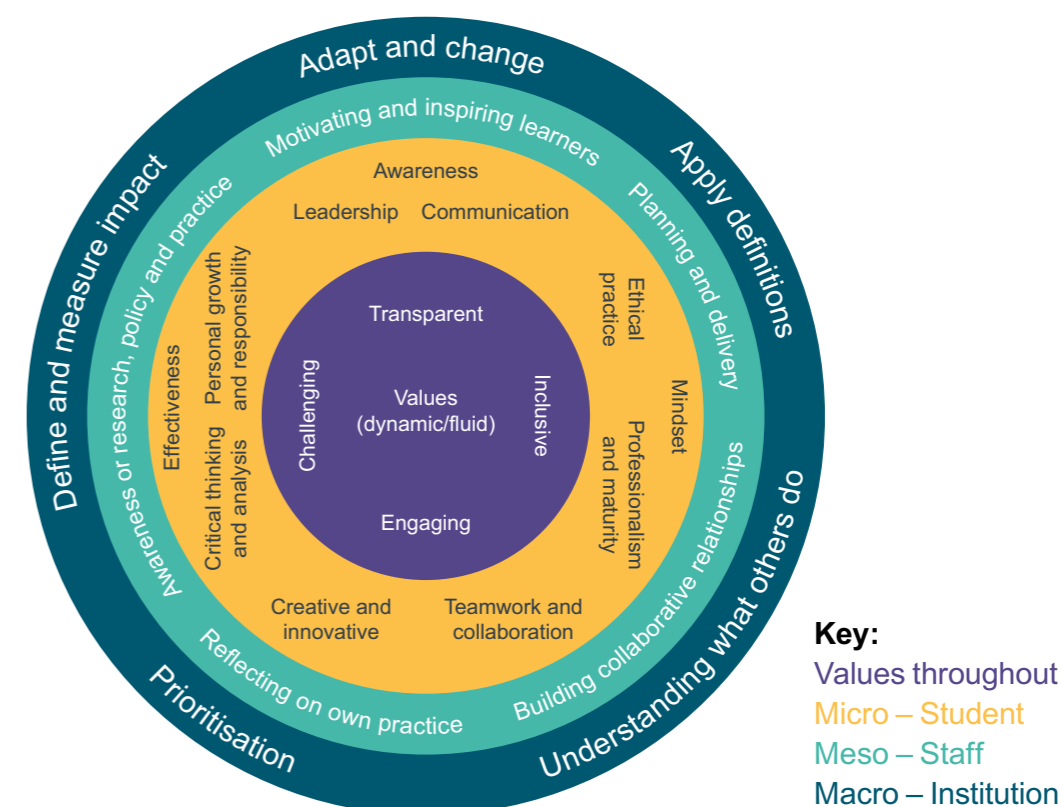
Values are fluid and dynamic, they will and should evolve with time and change. The values presented here are for demonstration purposes, and should be defined by the local delivery of the framework (there are many ways to decide on values – see for example, www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_85.htm). The aim is to maximise opportunities for the development of enterprising behaviours, attributes and competencies in students in the expectation that these will be used, deployed and developed at some future point. For example, within these broad competency areas of awareness, mindset, capability and effectiveness, enterprising skills can be addressed such as: communication, teamwork, professionalism and personal growth.

We need to make these competencies 'actionable'. If we can measure and demonstrate these competencies in HEIs, we can begin to see where we are excelling and where there are gaps to develop. This will assist in programme design and, ultimately, lead to enhanced learning for everyone – students and staff alike.

Initially, we have reached out to decision-makers and key staff in the history department and begun working with students from LJMU history degree programmes, in focus groups, to identify their thoughts on support around their studies. History students have been chosen as the initial pilot group as they typically encounter more obstacles to employment on graduation. This is supported by data from the Student Graduate Outcomes Survey, demonstrating that only 26.1% history undergraduate students (subject level) are in highly skilled employment at the point of the survey. A pilot enterprise programme will run with these students, grounded in the enterprise framework (see below).
The development of enterprise skills is an integral part of the programme to empower students to recognise and reflect on core competencies they encounter in HE, improving personal growth, employability awareness and graduate outcomes.

Linked to LJMU institutional strategies (the outer, purple layer of figure 1), and history programme criteria (the orange layer of figure 1), we are implementing an 'awareness-journal' approach to test the embedding of enterprise education in the HE curriculum. This will consist of:

1   a pre-semester and post-semester survey of level 4 (first year undergraduate) history students. The framework will directly link to an initial questionnaire (administered as an e-survey to participants) to assess student thoughts on values, competencies, skills and LJMU support)

2   an initial awareness session for students (delivered in week one of the semester) about the presence of behaviours, attributes and competencies in their teaching and learning (guided by the inner, green and blue, elements of the framework and the initial questionnaire)

3   a 'semi-structured reflective journal' which students will complete throughout their modules in semester one, thinking about what enterprise competencies they have covered. This will include a checklist of weekly module sessions and a list of core competencies met each week with some detail of what exactly was completed in a session – for example, in this week's lecture, teamwork: there was a break-out group discussion. Students can identify this and reflect on what they did aligned to the competency not just the specific lecture task. Using the semi-structured approach, there will also be scope within the journal for students to add to the list of competencies and self-reflect on their awareness and application of these.

Stage three: outcomes

As this is a work in progress, we anticipate that students who complete the 'awareness-journal' approach will have enhanced awareness and ability to apply enterprising behaviours, attributes and competencies. Evidence suggests that the semi-structured reflective journal approach may lead students to perceive themselves as self-regulated learners (Alt and Raichel, 2020) and can enhance student learning, fostering students' understanding and application of concepts (Connor-Greene, 2000). Although reflective journals are not without their downsides (Dyment and O'Connell, 2003), with some structure and clear instruction, students are likely to engage with and enhance their self-learning.

At the time of writing, the faculty has been planning a separate 'employability audit' across all subject areas, to discover what employability projects and support is available. This audit will provide useful knowledge alongside the pilot enterprise project to highlight levels of need across the faculty, working examples of employability projects, and engage staff in thinking about skills within programmes.

On completion of the pilot, the key learning will form the basis of further roll-out to other subject areas within the faculty. This will involve consulting with respective subject heads and staff to identify needs around enterprise and employability. In turn, key learning can inform faculty, and university, strategic development; in particular the Teaching and Learning Strategy and the Student Employability, Enterprise and Employment Strategy, which are periodically reviewed. The framework is adapatable and will be a continuous work-in-progress as it is embedded into different subject areas.

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