

ASPIRE to be Different: Enhancing Skills with Students

Briefing Note

2023

**Dr Michael Snowden
Maureen Alderson
Dr Jamie P. Halsall
Dr Denis Hyams-Ssekasi**

School of Human and Health Sciences

 @Hud_HHS

1. Introduction

- Higher Education and Further Education require institutions to evidence their worth and address the issue of employability within the curriculum. The focus, traditionally, is largely on young undergraduates who are studying full time and preparing for their first job. However, increasingly students are not primarily concerned with the ability to get that first job, but the ability to keep their current job and/or progress on to the next job.
- Social enterprise is advocated as a solution to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic; the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasises that social enterprise and social entrepreneurs are integral to building a new normal in the post-Covid world (Halsall et al., 2022a; Halsall et al., 2022b; Oberoi et al., 2021; Snowden et al., 2021). Furthermore, this is reiterated by the United Nations' (UN) recent statement reinforcing the place of social enterprise as a strategy for meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and calling for global institutions to enable the development of social entrepreneurship skills and capabilities to meet the aims of the SDGs (UNCAD, 2023).
- The ingenuity that utilises entrepreneurial proficiency and spirit to respond to social problems, whilst not new, is ahead of the conceptual construct, and is crucial to fulfilling the demands of the changing world. It is clear that we need to broaden the mindset and perspective of educators to develop entrepreneurial learning.
- To ensure equality and social justice, society today demands graduates develop new skills, knowledge, and abilities that are responsive to the challenges of the day – individuals who can create social value by generating innovative solutions through a process of social entrepreneurship.
- Social enterprise is complex and dynamic; it is a multifaceted change process through which social entrepreneurs offer economic inclusion and social engagement to different global communities and social groups through creative, solution-orientated strategies (Halsall et al., 2022c; Halsall et al., 2021; Oberoi et al., 2018).
- To combat societal and global challenges, change is needed to provide a response to the demands of today's dynamic global society, and social enterprise provides a resolute solution to these challenges (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). For example,

the global health crisis requires communities to be responsive and to strive towards developing sustainable solutions as a result of COVID-19. As emphasised by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the current Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), at a briefing in June 2020, social enterprise and social entrepreneurs are presented with a distinct challenge – enabling society to build “a new normal”.

- Drawing upon a heutagogical philosophy of learning, this briefing note* Proposes a learning model that enables students to develop social entrepreneurial skills and academic colleagues to develop pedagogic skills appropriate to their context and community. This model, A.SP.I.RE, provides an opportunity to develop a holistic perspective to enhancing entrepreneurial skills with students.

**This work forms the basis of a QAA funded project (Reference Number: 30427/001/2022). Part of this briefing note has been developed from and builds on a recently published report (see: Snowden et al., 2023).*

2. The Model: A.SP.I.RE

The A.SP.I.RE model (see Figure 1) has a four-step cyclical process that involves: (1) Assessment, (2) Solutions-Orientated Problem solving, (3) Implementation, and (3) Reflection and Evaluation. A full explanation of the model is described in Table 2.

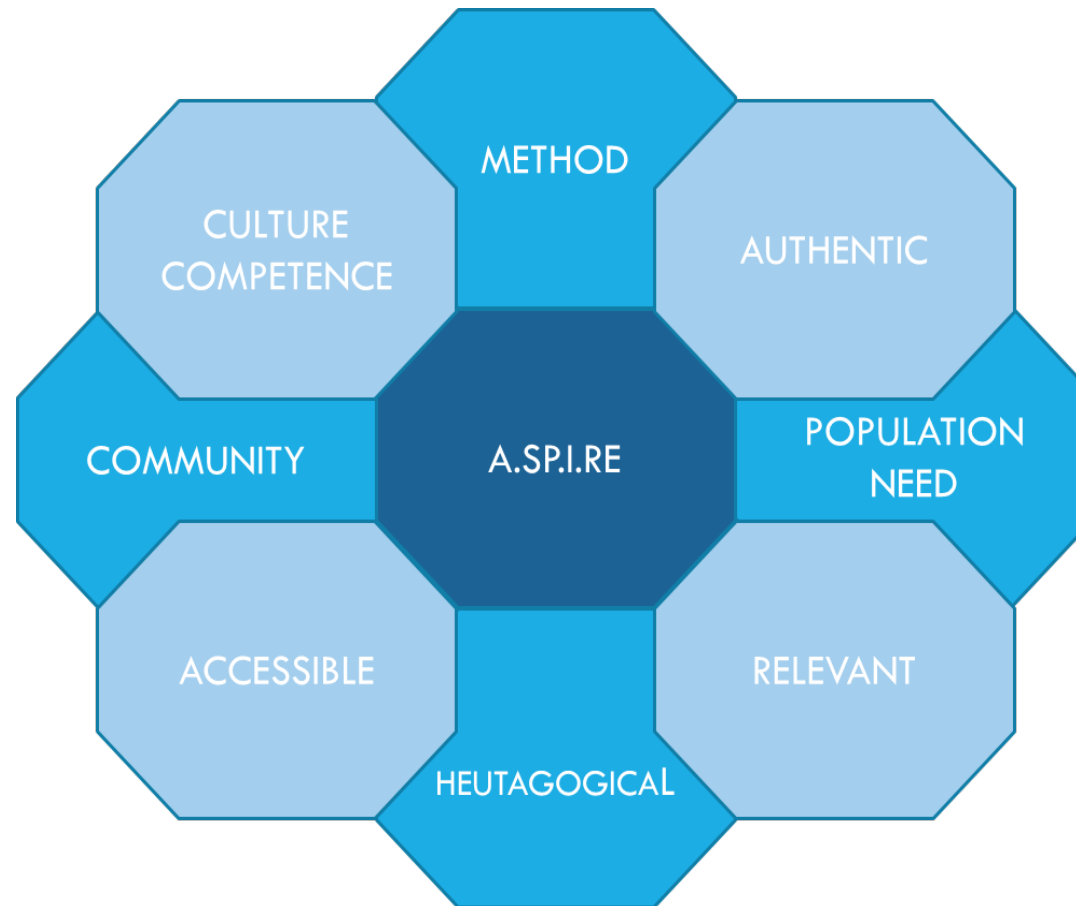


Figure 1: *The A.SP.I.RE model.*

Layer 1	Layer 2	Layer 3
<p>Assessment: Comprises a holistic method of data collection from all available sources.</p> <p>Solutions-orientated Problem solving: Involves the development and design of solutions to problems and challenges identified from data collected in the assessment phase.</p> <p>Implementation: Is an active phase delivering the solutions designed.</p> <p>Reflection and Evaluation: Involves holistic evaluation and testing in addition to embracing the reflective elements of Kirkpatrick’s model (2006).</p>	<p>Competence: This is the ability to learn from and effectively interact, work, and develop meaningful and respectful relationships with people of various cultural backgrounds, beliefs, customs, and behaviours.</p> <p>Authenticity: Authenticity in this context means adopting an honest, real-world experience that reflects the values and spirit of the role. Integral to this dynamic is the notion of wisdom and trusted voices. Respecting the voice of the beneficiary enables authenticity.</p> <p>Relevant: This refers to the congruence of the setting of interest with the phenomena and provides an accurate representation of the case. It requires the reinforcement of the importance and value of accessing community and beneficiary wisdom. Key to achieving this is recognising the value and interpretation of the real world – within a social realist perspective.</p> <p>Accessible: This is concerned with ensuring equal access to services, resources, and facilities for everyone.</p>	<p>Heutagogy: This is a process of sharing knowledge and wisdom within a self-determined approach, but importantly it is “participant” centred and focused. This means that it is stakeholder centric and based upon their real-world experiences.</p> <p>Method: This is the collegial and collaborative mechanism established to ensure a community participatory approach.</p> <p>Population Need: These are the perceived and expressed holistic needs of the community.</p> <p>Community: This is the community of practice that is formed to enable the development of the project and should include representation from all stakeholders and beneficiaries. Establishing the community enables sustainability, contributing to dissemination and the development of change in practice.</p>

Table 1: Explanation of the A.SP.I.RE conceptual model.

3. Concluding Comments

- The authors of this briefing note have set out the key tenets that constitute social entrepreneurial skills. This is vital as these skills develop an innovative drive to address the key problems in society, whether social, economic, political, cultural, and/or environmental.
- Social enterprise creates opportunities and solutions at different levels, whether in an international, national, or local context. The concept of social enterprise offers different ways of thinking and enhances the learner's employability skills.
- At the centre of developing social enterprise are Further and Higher Education institutions, as they offer training and opportunities to the educator and the student. The curriculum that is designed enables the learner to develop their knowledge, skillset, and social networks.
- The A.SP.I.RE conceptual model is a new way of enhancing social entrepreneurial skills with different stakeholders. The main aim of this model is to provide an overview of the skillset that is needed for a social entrepreneur.

4. Acknowledgements

- Special thanks go to Hannah Whitehead (University of Huddersfield) and to our proofreader Dr Stefanie El Madawi.

5. References

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