ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

A framework for delivering social change entrepreneurship education

Abstract

This report showcases a module and its portfolio resource developed by a team at the University of Nottingham's Business School, as led by Dr Isobel O'Neil. It summarizes the rationale for the project, details the work undertaken and highlights reflections, feedback and its impact drawing on the voice of both students and the delivery team. The report can be read in tandem with the accompanying PDF of the portfolio– a series of self-complete tasks relating to aspects of designing and delivering social change entrepreneurship. Guidance notes for use are included which offer further reflections and useful recommendations for fellow entrepreneurship educators and interested stakeholders.

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1. Introduction and Rationale for the Project

This report relates to an EERPF award, granted in July 2022 for the project entitled "*Entrepreneurship for Social Change': Developing and evaluating a framework and portfolio approach for social impact enterprise education*". The project pivoted around launching a module to inspire students to consider what comprises social change in relation to the world of business and to reflect on how their own entrepreneurial – widely defined - practices may be able to deliver such social change. There was a strong desire for this module to incorporate authentic learning and assessment and as such, a portfolio resource was developed as a scaffold to facilitate learning and skills development.

The project was driven by a clear rationale that provided four guiding principles for this project:

First, we sought to deliver a new module to enhance our Business School's UN-SDG[1] related pedagogy. We concur with scholars who argue that involving students in socially responsible, sustainable entrepreneurship activity serves is valuable as it disrupts previously dominate 'profit first' mentality (Lourenço, et al. 2013), which historically has underpinned much Business School education. In so doing, we echo those advocating for the need for, and value of, experiential entrepreneurship education in developing the next generation of responsible business leaders (e.g. Friedland & Jain, 2022).

Second, we identified the need for authenticity as related to learning and the curriculum delivered in Business Schools. Indeed, as Stein et al. (2004) posit the presence of authenticity is required to fuel reflections on questions such as "what it is like in the world of work", or "how real individuals understand and perform undertake various practices". We sought to develop our approach so our learners would be involved in completing tasks and roles akin to those in their future professional careers while also ensuring we moved beyond entrepreneurship education that fixates with business plans, pitching and high growth (Dodd et al. 2023). We firmly clasped on to the idea that authentic learning, by embedding active learning pedagogies, helps to highlight the complexities of tacking real world sustainability-type problems (Cross and Congreave, 2021; Pitchford et al 2020).

Third, we placed value on involving a diverse range of stakeholders in developments over the course of a two-year period, and beyond. This process would require different team members i.e. those from practice or with enterprise support prior experience (as opposed to academic experience uniquely). Further, we sought to ensure baked-in methods of gaining feedback and accessing student voice for the purpose of incrementally improving our innovative approaches.

Fourth, when reviewing extant research on the impact of social entrepreneurship education, we noted much work to date focused on measures such as Hockerts' Social Entrepreneurial Intentions (2017) and (Social) Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy e.g. Nga and Shamuganathan (2010). This left a gap in terms of knowledge of the wider impacts of entrepreneurship for social change (ESC) education: we sought to develop an appreciation of impacts beyond any changes to social entrepreneurial intentions and self-efficacy. For example, we wanted to explore the perceptions and sentiments about social change entrepreneurship from a wide set of potential future change makers; i.e. those who will purse many different career paths

[1] United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

in the charity sector, corporates, social enterprises or their own ventures. To do so, we recognised a need for qualitative research and to engage students therein.

Taken together, we built on these four sets of guiding principles to lay out the following project aims:

1. Deliver an innovative framework for a new, undergraduate ESC module. The framework set out to draw students into immediate ESC practice via a groupwork "portfolio", inviting the development of corresponding critical reflections
2. Capture the experiences of enterprise educators and students in using the framework.
3. Report on the framework's effectiveness for ESC education, reflecting on necessary improvements.
4. Assess the impact of this approach on students' ESC mindsets and understanding by analysing pre- and post-module surveys and qualitative interview data.

There is a growing realisation that social entrepreneurship is increasingly viewed as a vital driver for tackling societal challenges (ISBE, OECD), yet we know that Business School graduates are unlikely to start a (social) venture themselves. However, this does not mean such graduates are not contributing to social change through other routes *nor* that they will never become social entrepreneurs in the future. There is increasing pressure for all organisations to help tackle issues relating to the UN-SDGs. Furthermore, as educators we recognise that it incumbent upon us within universities to play our role in shaping and inspiring responsible leaders of the future who may be well-placed to deliver social change. We seek to contribute to efforts to equip our graduates with tools, techniques and know-how regarding how to tackle UN-SDG-related issues.

With this in mind, we are delighted to now present our framework for nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets, capable of delivering societal value more than economic value alone. The framework also contributes to skills development such that our graduates can move forward into their careers possessing insights into how to drive change, irrespective of the level they operate within a business organisation. Through the entrepreneurship for social change (ESC) approach, we invite our audience to find similar means through which students can be supported (including non-business students) to develop skills and knowledge to be change agents needed for addressing UN-SDGs.

2. The Module

In autumn 2022 "Entrepreneurship for Social Change" (EfSC) was launched at Nottingham University Business School as a 10-credit, Level 3 – for third and fourth year students -, optional module. It has now been delivered twice. The first three sessions involve more traditional lecture delivery to provide materials from theories and frameworks to understand entrepreneurship for social change generally i.e. its theoretical basis and some practical applications (see section 3.2 below). By building in networking and other activities, the early stage of the module also supports students to find a group to work with and begin to work to identify a problem area to focus on (see below in 3.3). We offered UN-SDGs for groups to consider and selected three: Good Health and Well-being; 10: Reduced Inequalities and 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities,

EfSC was designed around experiential learning and from weeks 4 onwards the session become workshops during which activity pivots around a series of tasks in "the portfolio" (see below). The portfolio innovates beyond using a traditional business plan and a pitch as the outcomes of a module. Instead, EfSC students dive-deep to explore practice tasks, i.e. identifying beneficiaries and their needs, developing a theory of change, and evaluating impact (see the portfolio below). The final task is to complete a social business model canvas to summarise their venture idea and its mechanisms.

Student numbers were capped at 48, allowing eight groups of six students per group to be formed. This cap ensured enough time and resource to be given corresponding research and evaluation and to also ensured all participants on the module could be fully supported and mentored.

2.1 The delivery team:

The delivery team comprised of four members of Business School staff in the first year of delivery. Yet, only two were academics – Dr Isobel O'Neil and Dr Punita Bhatt. The two other members of the team were:

- Claire Donaldson, Social Impact Entrepreneurship Expert/ Educator
- Elizabeth (Lizzie) Smith, Social Impact Programme Specialist

Figure 1: Dr Isobel O'Neil delivering a session

While both had several years of experience of delivering social impact entrepreneurship programmes, neither had delivered assessed content in a university. Claire and Lizzie, however, brought with them a large dose of practical insight and mentoring skills. Feedback shared how this was very well-received by students:

- *I like the interactive element with [Claire and Lizzie] because it also makes the module more practical.*

To support the delivery of the module further, EDI-diverse speakers from social enterprises, charities, and corporates gave inspiration and enhanced practice knowledge while ensuring wider role modelling. These were used largely in the first few weeks to set the scene, however, amendments in the future will ensure guest speakers and cases are used throughout the module's delivery.

2.2 The groupwork:

Sessions 3-11 of the module (8 workshops) focus on the portfolio tasks and their completion. Each session frames the concepts, examples, and the portfolio task (30 mins) and students' work in groups (mentored) to refine their portfolio input (1 hour).

The portfolio requires iterative, collaborative groupwork, i.e. to reflect on social issues while mapping out ideas to drive change, designed to enhance skills. A full explanation of the portfolio is given below (sections 3.1 and 3.4) and version used in 2023-24 is attached to this report as a PDF.

Figure 2: Students engaging in a portfolio workshop

2.3 Student feedback:

Students fed back about the portfolio approach as they had experienced it. They told us:

- [it was] very positive. I really enjoyed digging in and creating a social enterprise.
- it was quite different to the entrepreneurship modules that I have taken. It wasn't just sitting in a lecture theatre and having someone lecture at you that you then put into an essay to prove that you understood it. It was much more practical which I really enjoyed.
- A good skill that I've developed is listening to other people and taking on other people's opinions. And translating that into a collaborative effort to create the best outcome possible
- The portfolio approach develops skills for driving social change e.g. how to influence others, and how to consider perspectives of others compassionately.
- It made me think carefully about different social issues.

Beyond the above, we heard how the portfolio helped to shape career aspirations:

- telling businesses how to become more sustainable and ethical and create their own social change is becoming massive and roles are opening up in sectors... So I do want to go into that in the future.

In the first year of delivery, the groundwork put in places in EfSC, fuelled a real venture for the local ENACTUS team:

- it's a fully-fledged ENACTUS project and it's doing really well.. So when we were presenting it to the [Enactus] team and getting them to push this ahead, they understood the groundwork of the beneficiaries, the different types of funding available...

2.4 The Module and the Future

The module will enter its third year of deliver in 2024-2025. Only two of the initial team remain onboard, Isobel and Claire (who plays a minor role now due to different role commitments). New members of the team have been onboarded and ongoing improvements continue to be made.

Top recommendations:

Space
Due to the groupwork element during class time, space is key to success. We propose flat rooms with sufficient areas to walk around. Furthermore, nearby breakdown rooms or areas would further assist with professional and comfortable delivery of the module.

Themes and speakers
Having trialled two approaches to assist with issue framing 1) guest speakers held online teams calls for 15 minutes with each team individually and 2) all students viewed recorded interviews with practitioners in class time. Both had advantages and disadvantages. In 2024 a panel of speakers (in person or online) will offer insights on the single area of focus for the year UN-SDG “Good Health and Well-being”. This theme proved popular and has much depth and possibilities for the students to pursue as they work on a social change idea.

3. Portfolio Overview and Guidance Notes

The report will now elaborate on the portfolio by describing its nature and detailing its contents. It will further explain ideas for setting it into context – through use of scene setting early module content as mini lectures at the start of workshops - and gives additional recommendations for how to use a similar portfolio.

3.1 What is the Entrepreneurship for Social Change portfolio?

The Entrepreneurship for Social Change (EfSC) portfolio is a resource containing eight self-complete tasks to assist learners/ students, usually in groups, evolve a social change initiative idea over the course of a semester-long module. The tasks have been curated to assist groups with designing, implementing and evaluating an entrepreneurship for social change initiative – whether that takes the form of a social enterprise, non-profit, charity initiative or sits within another entity. The portfolio has been developed to be completed over eight consecutive weeks of delivery during one and a half hours, or two hours, sessions.

3.2 What content should be delivered prior to introducing the EfSC portfolio?

The portfolio has been designed to be delivered as part of a module and it is recommended to begin with 3 or 4 weeks of lecture content to include general concepts around entrepreneurship as a social change driver (e.g. content on social entrepreneurship’s role in contemporary contexts and the opportunities and challenges those involved therein may face). Educators are advised to also provide initial insight from practitioners on for example, UN-SDGs or using a different method to communicate potential and feasible areas of need for social change entrepreneurship effort.

The portfolio, therefore, comes into play after this dual introductory content; once groups are formed and they have an understanding of ESC and the SDGs theme/s posed.

Delivery Approach: Our reflections on year two

To provide insight and thought leadership, we recorded interviews with guest speakers on three UNSDGs: (3) Good Health and Well-being (10) Reduce Inequalities (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Each guest speaker set out the broader issues in the UK relating to the given SDG and then spoke about how their organisation and own work aims to contribute to tackling the issue. The interviews concluded with a summary of future challenges and possible opportunities in relation to the SDG. This approach helped the students think more broadly about their chosen SDG.

For 2024-2025, the focus changed to UNSDG (3) Good Health and Well-being. This proved to be both an inspiring theme and meaningful/ relevant for the students in the UK context. Feedback had shared how the recordings were not as engaging as hearing ‘live’ from speakers, so we now host a panel of experts on Health and Well-being in class time in week 2.

3.3 Issue identification prior to portfolio use

Moving on from general insight into ESC, and the relevant UNSDGs, the groups should be supported to narrow down a more precise social issue while keeping an eye on what type of service/ product they’d be seeking to implement. This is needed in advance as the portfolio serves to aid groups evolve and flesh out their social change venture idea through engaging with the tasks. Indeed, participants will begin the portfolio not only with a problem area outlined, but with a rough idea of a possible solution pathway.

Educators may use any preferred entrepreneurial ideation approach/es to assist the students identify a problem area; we use Task 0 **(see figure 3)**.

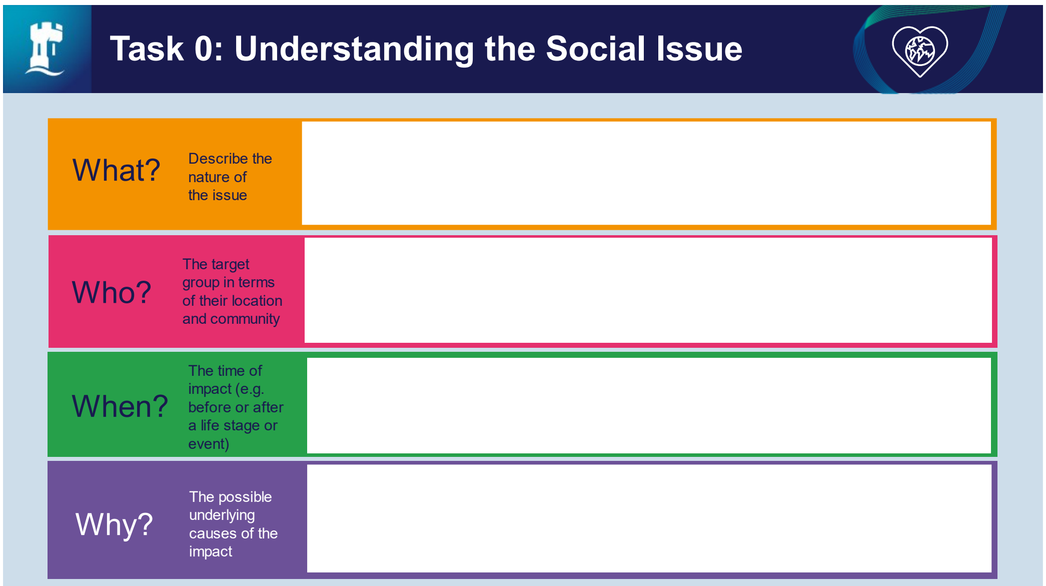


Figure 3 Task 0 for participants to record outline of the social issue

Delivery Approach: Our Reflections

Serving as a bridge between general insight and commencing the portfolio task, Task 0 was designed after realisation in year 1 that a crucial stage of preparation for the portfolio was missing. After Task 0, we advise asking the groups to write a guiding problem statement (see example we provide). Such a 'starting point' statement enables the groups then to move forward to deepen their idea and thinking as they go through the tasks and plan their venture more.

Example Problem Statement:

Overall, UK 16-24-year-olds have one of the highest rates of programming skill in the world (22.8%), yet the rate is only 12.4% for women in this cohort compared to 31.4% of men. If left unaddressed, this digital gender divide will continue to put women at a significant employment disadvantage in an increasingly digital world.

3.4 The portfolio tasks: description and support resources

We recommend following the order of the tasks as given. Within the portfolio, each self-complete group task is preceded by a brief description (e.g. see Figure 4) and provides a couple of accessible resources for the students to review and assist their understanding.

In class, we recommend spending up to 25 minutes setting up the task in a mini-lecture, which will include references (both those on an academic reading list and those with a more practical 'how to' focus) for each task and a short and insightful commentary, and critique, on why the task matters for building a social impact venture. Figure 5 is a sample slide from Task 1's set up mini lecture. The quotes - and narrative given around the slide - focus on the rationale behind why considering others' perspectives and developing compassion matter for social change entrepreneurship.

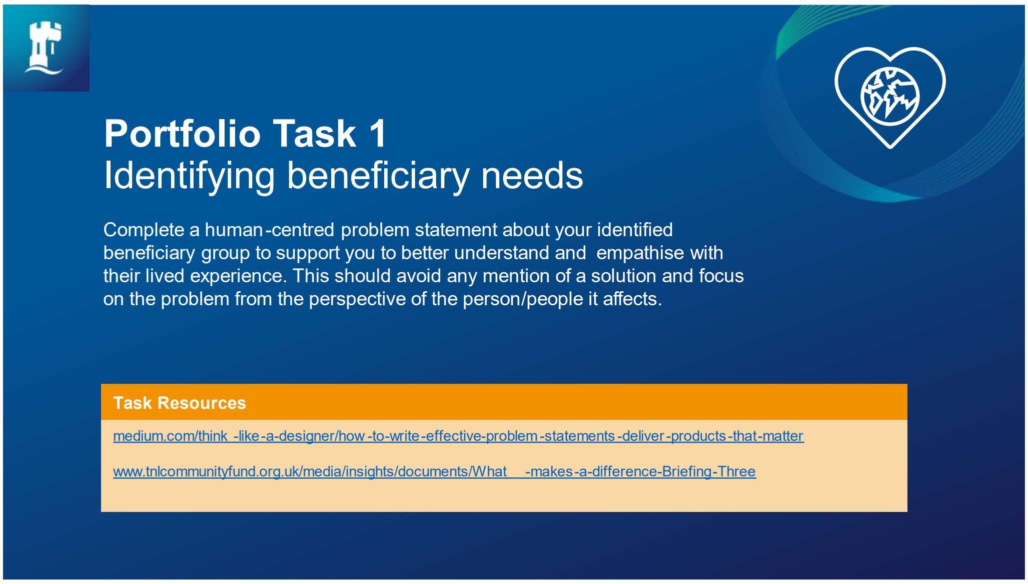
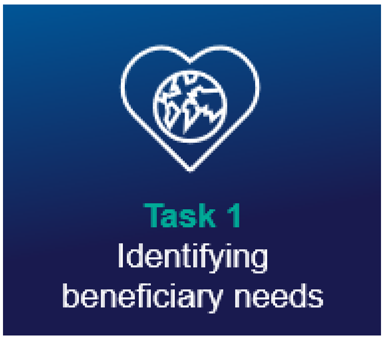


Figure 4: Task set up example

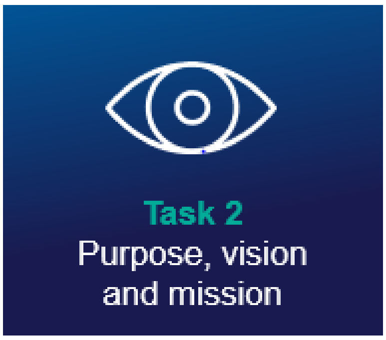
Figure 5: Sample slide from a mini lecture

3.5 Task by task purpose and intended outcomes



Task 1 invites groups to explore the lived experience of the intended beneficiaries. The intended outcomes from both the mini lecture and the task are to:

- Consider the importance of identifying beneficiary needs to the design and delivery of successful social change initiatives.
- Develop a human-centred problem statement about your identified beneficiary group to better understand and empathise with their lived experience.



Task 2 requires writing clear and aspirational statements for the emerging venture idea, as a means of motivating others towards the desire social change. The intended outcomes of are to:

- consider the importance and role of purpose, mission and vision statements
- develop three statements for your group's portfolio.

Task 3
Safeguarding against mission drift risks

Task 3 asks groups to reflect on hybridity, mission drift risks and how to safeguard against significant deviations from the intended mission/ vision. Outcomes are:

- consider how hybridity can have an impact on social change organizations
- knowledge about mission drift and ways to guard against it
- identifying and explaining suitable steps to guard against mission drift risks for your venture

Task 4
Impact planning and theory of change

Task 4 relates to logic models and how to deploy a designed approach towards social change. The task outcomes are being able to:

- consider the importance of impact planning and how a theory of change logic model can help inform business decisions.
- plan for and then explain, deploying causal analysis, how a specific series of interventions can lead to desired outputs, outcomes and long-term impact your venture

Task 5
Funding a social impact venture

Task 5 prompts the groups to research potential funders to understand the funding context for social impact ventures. The task and session's outcomes are:

- considering the difference between funding for commercial and social ventures.
- Reviewing different purposes and criteria of grant funders
- Identifying a suitable funder and understanding your eligibility for the funding.

Task 6
Finances for a social impact venture

Task 6 requires groups to map out cost areas that would be critical to starting up. The outcomes are to:

- consider and explain what constitute reasonable and feasible costings for social ventures generally.
- identify and explain suitable cost areas for your social venture specially.

Task 7 relates to designing impact measurement approaches and how to evaluate the effectiveness of social venture activities. The outcomes are to:

- consider the different techniques that social enterprises use to measure and evaluate their impact.
- explain and justify the use of particular methodologies and techniques to evidence impact.
- Complete your own impact evaluation plan.

Task 8 enables the groups to consolidate and finalise their effort into one social business model canvas task. In so doing, the outcomes are:

- consider the importance of designing for success across multiple, overlapping operations of the social business
- review how a business model can provide structure to key conversations and help shape your idea.
- Complete the social business model canvas.

3.6 Delivering the portfolio: approaches in the classroom

The below are suggestions as to how educators could implement the portfolio in class time. Delivery staff may, of course, blend together ideas from below and/or introduce their own ideas about how to inspire student progress. Remember the overarching aim is to complete the tasks while building up participants understanding – and to stimulate critical thinking - of where and how entrepreneurship for social change is feasible and plausible.

The standard delivery approach

How:
Following the task introduction (mini-lecture), groups begin work independently to complete the task in class time. The focus is on their discussions and decision-making around how to complete the task at hand for their emerging venture idea. Group discussions will dominate the one hour of class time allocated to task completion. Mentors should circulate between the groups to give clarity to the task and formative verbal feedback on any drafts. Occasionally, groups may request they send a completed version at a later date for additional mentor-review.

Why use:
This works well for motivated, self-assured groups of students, i.e. those with good leadership and a clear social purpose around what they would like to achieve. The approach empowers these groups to seek their own examples, with a gentle mentoring approach. Ongoing feedback should be available in real time for these groups as requested.

Advantages:
Places task completion in hands of the groups, for the most part this will be achieved in class time which allows feedback and checking in by the delivery staff.

Disadvantages:
Requires a certain degree of maturity, therefore some groups may not remain focused during the activity time. Structure is loose for the students and time can be lost. Some members of a group may have to deliver more to compensate for those who do not remain focused on the task. While the ideal is to encourage negotiation and debate, classroom realities can leave some unable or unwilling to fully participate (confidence and/or attitude/ commitment issues).

Top recommendation:
Ensure sufficient delivery staff to nurture and mentor groups that struggle with the looser classroom structure. Set up expectations and ensure mentors circulate adequately and keep an eye on any problems arising in groups. Allow plenty of opportunities for students to raise their concerns, in an open and honest way, with delivery staff.

The enhanced, research-led approach

How:
Following the task introduction, groups are asked to research and review relevant content from an existing social venture. Educators can decide whether the example would be provided to the students or identified by the students themselves and/or whether that example remains the same each week or could differ.

Groups are given set discussion questions to evaluate why and how the example is fit or purpose and/or prompt to consider where they would like to see improvements.

Following this preliminary activity, groups can then either present to an accountability partner group (if paired up with another group already), or where time allows selected groups could present their insight and evaluation of the example to the whole class.

Why use:
As discussed in the standard approach groups are sometimes not motivated or do not have sufficient leadership to spend their unstructured activity time on task completion. By building in a ‘research’ element to identify existing social ventures and understand their models, student may be better focused on how to complete their own tasks.

Advantages:
This develops students research skills, knowledge of existing social ventures and invites them to engage critical thinking as they set about evaluating the content of a real social venture. All of these skills help toward the learning objectives while also offering structure to groups that may otherwise become distracted if left to own device to complete their own task in relative independence. In presenting their ideas back to either paired group or the whole class they also develop communication skills.

Disadvantages:
Social ventures may not have easily accessible content that aligns with the exact nature of the task, at times students may struggle to find a completed task e.g. Mission drift risks.

Leaps of faith may have to be made or groups may have to try to make some reasonable 'best guesses' based on what is available.

Top recommendation:
To overcome any potential gaps in which content for some tasks are not available, educators would have to think very carefully about the question posed and at times, consider some alternative 'research tasks' Indeed, there is not a week by week, standard here but educators have to amend slightly depending on the context etc.

The enhanced, social venture-led approach

How:
Following the task introduction, a presentation is given by an existing social venture representative (founder, manager or similar), who has completed the task themselves. The social venture guest speaker can talk through how and why they completed it in such as way and offer reflections of where the tool offers their venture value.

Groups are empowered to ask the guest further questions to gain insight into their example and are encouraged to evaluate in smaller group discussions what they came to appreciate through the guest's example. These conversations can be facilitated by the mentors, and may also involve asking some groups to raise their ideas to the whole class.

Advantages:
Students are exposed to a live example and to a professional who is engaged in ESC. This brings to life a range of social ventures and their activities, lets the students engage more directly with practice and practitioners, and provides scope to reflect and evaluate the example given.

Disadvantages:
The need to recruit eight guests from social ventures may be arduous for the delivery team. The task may not have been completed in the expected manner, so if ineffectively managed the guest's input could confuse the students and send them off on tangents. There is also a very small risk of groups being overly critically evaluative of any guest's completed task, and they may flag uncomfortable or sensitive aspects if given a floor to ask any questions to the guest.

Top Recommendation:
If recruiting social venture guests is tricky for class timings, consider asking them to record a presentation for the students that can be played in class time (or provided prior to class), the delivery team can add additional context and explanations to assist the class with the example. So doing may eliminate the risk given above relating to raising critical or sensitive points.

Further, the delivery team may wish to be present when the guest is completing the task so it can be done collaboratively, avoid any confusion for the guest and ensure they remain focused. This could be done on MS Teams or similar.

3.7 Assessing the portfolio

The decision was taken not to assess the portfolio's tasks. Instead, the module assessment was 3-fold involving a) an individual critical reflection statement b) an individual participation mark (see below) and c) a critical evaluation essay piece (not discussed here as unrelated to the portfolio).

The rationale for not assessing the Portfolio content

The portfolio tasks are completed collectively in a group yet we sought to make the *process* of completing the task *collaboratively* more significant than the eventual end content. That said, of course, we did seek to encourage groups to ensure quality of expression and to think through and improve/ amend their tasks based on formative feedback and mentoring.

We also sought to minimise any negative impacts on members of groups that experienced poor dynamics - such as the presence of free riders. Some groups' would inevitably have members playing greater and lesser roles and taking on fewer responsibilities for task input and completion. Relatedly, past experience told us that third and fourth year undergraduates (our cohort) find assessed group work stressful and at times, unfair.

The alternative approach to ensuring the Portfolio 'counts'

Although we do not assess the portfolio content specifically, we recognised fact learners can be fairly instrumental in how they engage if content is not assessed. This lead us to decide that assessments must be linked to the portfolio - both in terms of the process and content the groups develop. This led to designing two specific assessment pieces;

a) **The individual reflection statement.** This invites participants to select one of the eight tasks from their portfolio and to critically reflect on both their role and actions undertaken in completing the task and to provide their perspective on how that task furthered their learning about social change entrepreneurship. For example, this encourages reflection on their personal development such as on team dynamics and how they may take any learning and new skills forward into future careers.
b) **The participation mark.** As we felt it important to secure good attendance in the portfolio tasks (i.e. reducing the free rider issue, potentially), we awarded a percentage mark to each person for attendance at each of the eight portfolio workshops. This was done through real time QR code registration in class. The remaining percentage of the participation mark was a peer contribution mark but this created some challenges (see below).

Assessment amendments following year 1

Year 1's assessments (detailed above) produced some mixed results and mixed feedback from the students.

In relation to the **individual reflection statement**, students were unsure of the value it added. They told us that they felt as though they were over elaborating their own role, and while it did allow reflection it felt limiting in respect of its connection to the fuller portfolio. Students were proud of their completed portfolios and wanted an opportunity to showcase that somehow. The markers also felt that the statements were on whole rather shallowed and formulaic; this appeared to limit the scope to achieve the higher grades i.e. to get a distinction.

The participation mark's peer assessment element had been based on each group member's evaluation of their team mates with an system to translate their averages into a percentage mark. As carried out anonymously, we hoped this would lead to fair evaluations and hence, a range of different marks. However, in practice, the vast majority of students awarded full marks to their peers. So in effective, most students were getting a full 100% for this element. For perhaps MBA student groups, peer evaluation may work but we decided that for undergraduates a different approach was needed. Again, students questioned the value of the peer evaluation and highlighted that they would prefer the portfolio itself to have counted for some percentage of the module's assessment.

Assessment Amendments:

The individual reflection

In our second year of delivery we shortened this to 500 words from 1000. This was done in effort to ensure efficient reflection on a specific Portfolio task. The markers found the statements were more focused now but it remained the case that most statements struggled to get into the higher grade brackets as deeply reflections on Esc were not forthcoming, for the most part. Further student feedback flagged that they continued to feel the statements nudged them into formulaic reflection rather than adding to their learning outcomes. We concluded that this is the least beneficial of the assessments and this is being redesigned again.

Participation Mark:

The attendance mark element remained in place in year two but was reduced to 1% per session from 2% and now included attendance at 10 sessions rather than eight. For the remaining 10% of the participation mark, students were graded individually on their participation in a showcase presentation. The marking rubric focused on their input into the presentation and on their participation in the Q&A. This provided the students with the opportunity to still receive an individual grade and also with the ability to showcase their idea and Portfolio work at the end of the module.

4. Project's Research Approach

This section will briefly review the data collection approach pursued over the course of two years in its effort to a) secure robust insight into the impacts of the framework on student participants and b) to include student voice and delivery team's reflections on how to continuously improve the framework and module overall.

Full research ethics approval was sought and granted by the Nottingham University Business School's research ethics committee[2] in 2022, lasting the duration of the data collection period and beyond.

4.1 The Qualitative Research Design

This project combined an action-research approach with a qualitative research design.

In terms of action research, the PI – Dr Isobel O'Neil - is a central member of the teaching team behind the EfSC module and who worked in collaboration with other delivery staff (see 2.1 above) to design and deliver the portfolio. In year one, the team engaged in reflective discussion through the design and delivery process by regular check-ins with a non-delivery member of the research team (Dr Hannah Noke). These conversations were at times 1-2-1 and at times included all the team; they were recorded in a Teams channel and transcribed to become formal research data.

Further to this, the researchers gathered additional data in multiple ways. First, a non-delivery member of the research team conducted 10 interviews with module participants prior to the first session of the module in both years 1 and 2. In both years, 9 of the 10 students further participated in post-module interviews. Second, in year 1, the PI – and module convenor - completed three post-module 'walk through' discussions with members of 3 of 8 coursework groups. Finally, in year 1, and to a lesser degree in year 2, the delivery team completed reflection MS forms after the sessions. in by the students. A thematic analysis (see Braun and Clarke, 2012) of the data has been completed for all of the student data, and is ongoing for the delivery team data.

4.2 The Quantitative Research Plan: Reflections

In our stated project research aims (see section 1 above) we outlined the objective to review the impacts of our portfolio approach and framework on module participants. Part of our plan was to include a student survey to use pre and post module. This was a less successful element of the project (due to questionnaire size and lower response rates than anticipated). However, we detail a few key elements below in case of use for readers.

Survey Design

A survey was designed for use in year 1 with all students either prior to or during the first session (circulated via email and time given in class to complete). Approximately 60% of students completed this – around 30 in number. The survey included a scales used in previous research into social entrepreneurship such as Empathy scales(see Bacq & Alt, 2018) who used Perspective-taking (Davis, 1980). A passion *scale based on Jachimowicz et*

[2] Documentation can be supplied upon request to the author.

al.'s (2018) work was included as well as an occupational status choice intention (Kolvereid, 1996) as used in Souitaris et al.. (2007).

A post module survey was also designed and deployed in year 1, with a lower response rate. This survey repeated a couple of core questions about career plans and expanded the scales used to capture further insight into the trends of the module participants; the scales now included:

- Perceived Behavioural Control as deployed by e.g. Souitaris, et al. (2007)
- Social entrepreneurial self-efficacy (e.g. from Zhao et al., 2005) as deployed in Bacq & Alt (2018)
- Social entrepreneurial intentions (see e.g. Liñán and Chen, 2009; Bacq & Alt 2018)
- Entrepreneurial passion e.g. Cardon et al. (2013)

Overall, analysis is still ongoing for this data therefore no quantitative insights are shared here It is noteworthy that the low number of responses (the small annual cohort size) reduces the robustness of potential analysis that can be carried out on this quantitative data gathered to date. However, the survey data has allowed us helpful descriptive insight into characteristics and perspectives of the first cohort.

In year two the survey was not carried out with the cohort., With more limited teaching resource on the module in year two, effort and emphasis was placed on gaining and maintaining the qualitative data collection approach, which was proving more fruitful.

Recommendations to others wishing to conduct ESC research

1) Refine a short and focused survey only using the necessary measures. Students are often reluctant to complete surveys and lengthy questionnaires will be off-putting.
2) Use innovative and more novel scales where suitable, rather than reverting to much-used social entrepreneurial intention scales.
3) Collaborate with a partner Business School/ university to improve response numbers, if suitable and comparable courses are offered.
4) Consider the use of qualitative data collection as a significant means to gain meaning data into impacts, especially if this can be longitudinal.

5. Findings (Qualitative)

The section below provides some insights into the characteristics and interests of the participants as well as some of the reported impacts from having participated in EfSC. Please note this focuses on the research participants involved in the qualitative interviews in both years 1 and 2 of delivery. Text in the boxes can be considered to be a representative quote.

5.1 Student motivations for studying ESfC

Students' motivations for studying ESfC are rooted in their desire to create a positive social impact. Many students expressed a passion for social change and sustainability, indicating a strong alignment with the principles of social entrepreneurship. For instance, one student emphasised the importance of identifying significant issues that resonate personally to potentially address through business ventures. Another student highlighted a keen interest in social change and a desire to learn more about its application in fields like HR and EDI. The enthusiasm for combining business skills with social impact is evident, showcasing a clear drive to make a difference through entrepreneurial means.

> I'm very interested in social change. I'm also interested in sustainability and things. I'm just passionate about business for impact.

5. 2 Career aspirations

Career aspirations among students vary, but a common thread is the desire to integrate social impact into their professional lives. Some students aim to influence climate policy and work towards sustainability, while others are inclined towards marketing, digital marketing, and roles within larger teams. There's also a recognition of the value of initial career steps, such as a job offer at PwC, as foundational experiences. Notably, the aspiration to pursue further education in fields like international disaster management reflects a commitment to humanitarian efforts. Additionally, the module has reinforced the idea of pursuing social entrepreneurship as a viable career path.

> I want to go into climate policy, setting regulations within business environment to help work towards net zero.

5. 3 Module expectations, hopes and skills seeking to develop

Students entered the module with specific expectations and hopes, primarily focusing on acquiring practical skills like people management and logistical planning. The module delivered on these expectations by providing opportunities for teamwork and practical application of social venture setup. Through group work, students honed their communication skills, logistical abilities, broadening their perspective on business beyond traditional models to include social enterprises.

- I was expecting practical skills, like people management. I think I gained that eventually as we progressed with the teamwork.
- I suppose just kind of thinking broader because doing a business degree you always think about like typical business and not a social enterprise.

5.4. Pre-module understandings of ESC

Before starting the module, students had varying levels of understanding about social change and entrepreneurship. Social change was generally viewed as a broad concept encompassing efforts to make a lasting impact on communities. Social entrepreneurship was seen as a practical approach to achieving social change, involving businesses that go beyond profit to address community and stakeholder needs. Students recognised the importance of empathy and the increasing trend of businesses aiming for sustainability.

However, they also acknowledged the barriers, such as scaling challenges, resource limitations, and maintaining a balance between impact and profitability.

- I envision a company that does more than its core business purposes, so it cares about the community, it cares about the stakeholders not just the shareholders… I think social entrepreneurship is a means to an end of social change
- social change to me means making a difference and an impact. And something that leaves a big legacy almost fit for you, and whatever difference you're trying to make, and it's doesn't necessarily have to be worldwide.

5.5 Post-Module understandings of ESC

The module significantly deepened students' understanding of social change and entrepreneurship. They realised that creating an impact is more complex than initially thought, with numerous challenges to overcome. The insights gained highlighted the balance required to achieve success in social ventures. Students appreciated the feasibility of making a difference through structured approaches and recognised the importance of understanding beneficiaries. Group dynamics played a crucial role in this learning process, with students navigating interactions with new peers and valuing diverse perspectives.

- Before the module, I thought it was straightforward to make an impact with a good idea. But I realized it's not that simple. There are other schemes functioning in other areas, and it's hard to prove yourself against them.
- It did open my eyes up to sort of like the idea of what could be done through social change... how many caveats like businesses, charities, governments, entrepreneurs have to face.
- The module highlighted how it's not easy; there's not one solution... it showed me how businesses can be profitable while doing good.

5.6 Insight into student voice and module feedback

Students suggested several areas for improvement, such as more theory to support essay writing, clearer explanations of concepts like the theory of change, and adjusting the weight of presentations and participation marks to reflect their importance and effort. They also felt that certain elements, like the finance section, could be more realistic and that more structured content would enhance learning.

The reflective piece received generally negative feedback, with some students questioning its necessity and others feeling unprepared to write it. It was felt that teaching the style and purpose of reflective writing could potentially address these concerns.

Students enjoyed the group work, guest lectures, and the freedom to create their own projects. They appreciated the module's challenge to their ideals and values, the practical experience of presentations, and the enforced attendance, which ensured active participation.

6. Conclusion and Acknowledgements

This project set out to address four key objectives through a two-year process, beginning with the development of a new Entrepreneurship for Social Change module based on a portfolio approach and culminating in this report. Through engaging with the engaged and impressive module participants, the team benefited from clear student voice input and gathered insight research data. Building on the corresponding reflection process, the researchers and delivery team have been able to ensure the module evolved in a series of incremental improvements. Effort is also being deployed to craft a research publication and possible ongoing research into this important topic.

At the heart of this project has been an open team who have been keen to listen and to share. We welcome feedback and conversations with any readers of the report who wish to share their experiences or build collaborations with us. Furthermore, if you wish to ask any questions or find out more about our project, please do get in touch.
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