

≈ SUMMARY ≈

**IDENTIFYING ENTERPRISE SKILLS: AN ENTERPRISE BEHAVIOURS,  
SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES MAP FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Principal Topic**

This paper outlines ongoing work being undertaken at the University of Salford, in relation to enterprise and entrepreneurship, in particular the related skills and attributes of learners.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published its vision for the Future of Higher Education in 2003. In the foreword, Charles Clark the then Secretary of State for Education commented that the pace of global change was accelerating. In order to keep up universities needed to ‘mobilize even more effectively the imagination, creativity, skills and talents of all our people. And it depends on using that knowledge and understanding to build economic strength and social harmony’ (DfES 2003). He urged that universities needed to make ‘better progress in harnessing knowledge to wealth creation’ and ‘to help turn ideas into successful businesses’ (DfES 2003).

Encouragement was given to institutions to develop work focused foundation degrees in order to respond to these economic needs (DfES 2003 Section 3.22). However, graduates, studying traditional academic disciplines, still needed to have the ‘right skills to equip them for a lifetime in a fast changing work environment’ and so continued encouragement was given to ‘integrate the skills and attributes which employers need, such as communication, enterprise and working with others, into higher education courses, on a subject-by-subject basis’ (DfES 2003 Section 3.23). Prior to 2003 the DfES had talked about Key Skills or Common Skills, the 2003 publication, for the first time, talked about enterprise skills. Nowhere was a definition given of these enterprise skills.

The growing demand from learners, coupled with an internationally driven skills agenda for community, business and future entrepreneurs has led to the conclusion that we needed to identify and evidence the enterprise skills that our students and learners require. These skills or attributes contribute to learners’ employability at the outset of their career, encourage entrepreneurial venture founding and innovation and promote “intrapreneurship” and business growth in the labour market.

**Methodology**

The starting point was to look back in detail at the evolving skills agendas’; employer needs surveys and studies, which have informed the evolution of enterprise attributes and learning. These were tabulated and compared to identify commonalities over the decades.

The University of Salford had developed, in response to the 1997 Dearing National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, a skills mapping tool that is used by all tutors to identify the six skills (Communication, Numeracy, Information Technology, Working with Others, Problem Solving and Managing Own Learning) that are in evidence in their taught modules. The

six skills which were broken down into specific performance criteria against which modules of study could be assessed as to whether the student was given; taught input, a chance to practice the skills, whether it was assessed or alternatively an opportunity to develop the competence. This map was reviewed and applied to non-award bearing programmes.

In order to identify the skills that employers say they want from graduates, work of The National Skills Task Force (set up by the DfEE in 2000 ) was consulted. The Task Force identified that there were three main categories of skills: 'Generic skills, Vocational skills and Personal attributes (Skills for all: Research Report from the National Skills Task Force 2000). The Task Force found that those organisations that reported skill gaps, said that their employees lacked a mixture of generic and vocational skills and that the Generic skills most in demand, were those of communication, team-working and problem solving (page 14). The Learning and Skills Council (2004) conducted a National Employers Skills Survey (NESS) in 2003. It gives estimates of 'skills deficiencies and workforce development for each of forty-seven local Learning and Skills Councils and for twenty-seven industries'. The specific skills that employers said were lacking were: Communication, Customer handling, Team-working and Problem-solving.

Bridge et al (2003) provide one definition of enterprise skills by examining the overlapping of enterprise competencies and entrepreneurial traits. It can be seen that the lists they provided combined 'personal qualities, set alongside skills and individual orientations'. Allan Gibb (2004) agrees that there is 'no absolute list of behaviours' that can be described as entrepreneurial and comments that the available lists usually include behaviours (which can be observed), attributes (which are deemed to be part of the personality) and skills (which can be developed). A table was constructed that linked enterprise behaviours, attributes and skills using the appended guide linking teaching methods to the entrepreneurial behaviours, provided by Allan Gibb in his paper.

These three lists of skills were cross-referenced to explore the potential of – and to develop a framework for entrepreneurial teaching and learning, ultimately developing a more focused tool for mapping programmes of study, both award and non-award bearing.

### **Implications**

If the Dearing skills are compared to the Gibb framework then it can be seen that the skills can be mapped onto the Gibb grid. However the Numeracy and Information Technology skills are not explicitly covered by the Gibb framework but then as Hesketh (2000) found these were not skills that employers found were lacking in their graduate employees.

The Gibb framework expands the concept of skills beyond the Dearing skills to encompass wider skills for enterprise to include behaviours, attributes and skills for enterprise. Using these three categories students/employees will be able to develop those skills and attributes through their behaviours that would lead to a portfolio of evidence for living in the modern world.

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