




BeyndScale

Workshop User Story

-  Workshop Organizer - **NHL Stenden, Centre for Entrepreneurship, the Netherlands**
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-  Type of Activity - **Outbound Workshop**

How to read the document

This document represents the series of workshop user stories within the BeyondScale project. These stories are based on the combination of the HEInnovate dimensions and the Value Proposition Canvas, and they depict the experiences of the partner higher education institutions. To understand the concept of the workshop, we provide a **glossary** below:

- **The Aim:** BeyondScale is one of the Forward-looking projects to create a pan-European community of practice, that will share, and document emerging good practices based on the outcomes of the individual and collaborative activities of the participants. Within the BeyondScale project, the HEInnovate tool is deployed beyond its self-assessment capacity.
- **Inbound & Outbound activities:** The HEInnovate dimensions are used to drive entrepreneurial and innovative change across a range of inbound and outbound education and engagement activities in higher education institutions (HEIs) with relevant stakeholders. From the BeyondScale perspective, the inbound activity serves to support HEI's institutional development process and organizational capacity; therefore, it targets internal stakeholders (administrative staff, academics, researchers, students). As for the outbound activity, it aims at strengthening HEI's wider regional and societal engagement, thus it targets external stakeholders (students, employers, social enterprises, business, NGOs).
- **The Value Proposition Workshop:** In order to have a structured workshop format, the Value Proposition Design approach was adopted and the BeyondScale team came up with the new format which incorporates the specific HEInnovate dimensions and the Value Proposition canvas. The Value proposition canvas is a tool that helps to understand the inbound and outbound stakeholders, and to target their needs better, which leads to optimized value creation.
- **Buddy System:** One of the main assets of the BeyondScale project is the Buddy System, in which partners engage in a peer-learning, exchanging experiences, and discussing plans. Our partner higher education institutions have been organized as a buddy team throughout the project based on similar challenges, interests, and the HEInnovate dimensions.

Inbound Workshop @ NHL Stenden, our story

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NHL Stenden is a University of Applied with five campuses in the North of the Netherlands and international campuses including South-Africa, Thailand and Indonesia. NHL Stenden was created in 2018 by the merger of NHL University of Applied Sciences and Stenden University of Applied Sciences. The university has approximately 24,000 students and 2,000 employees. It offers over 100 bachelor study programmes and 25 master degree programmes, in the fields of Administration and Law, Communication and Media, Economics and Management, Hotel Management, Tourism and Leisure, Maritime, Education, Engineering, ICT, Health and Welfare.

A new Center for Entrepreneurship (CFE) was established within NHL Stenden at the start of 2020. The goal of the CFE is to stimulate entrepreneurship among students of the university. The CFE wants to function as a central contact point for students and teachers who want to do 'something' with entrepreneurship. At the same time, the internal and external proposition of the CFE is still under development. Due to the rise of Corona, the development of this center has been slower than planned. At the time of conducting this workshop, the CFE had existed for about one year, but most activities had only taken place online. The BeyondScale workshop was used to further define the value proposition of the CFE, in consultation with stakeholders.

This is the workshop user story report, focussing on the outcomes and impact of using the Beyond Scale workshop approach by NHL Stenden for its inbound and outbound activities in HEInnovate dimension areas. In this workshop user story, NHL Stenden reports on how the Beyond Scale workshop format was applied and helped achieve the institute's objectives as well as what lessons can be learned from this experience. With the workshop user stories the BeyondScale project aims to support other Higher Education Institutes that are interested in applying a similar workshop format, showing details of the process, tips, and tricks for a successful implementation of the workshop and collecting detailed feedback from internal and external stakeholders. This user-story thus zooms in to the phase of the change process during which NHL Stenden aimed to adapt its activity plans to respond to the demands of its internal and external stakeholders. The workshop helped NHL Stenden identify the major barriers and facilitators to achieve its objectives.

Value Proposition Canvas

The workshop was carried out by the professorship Open Innovation in cooperation with the Center for Entrepreneurship of NHL Stenden. The aim was to refine the value proposition of the Center for Entrepreneurship of NHL Stenden and to sharpen the way in which NHL Stenden can contribute, from a university-wide perspective to the development of an entrepreneurial spirit among its students. The workshop process was conducted in the period from 3 to 25 March 2021 and was based on an online survey and an online workshop with 21 participants.

The workshop was based on the HEInnovate self-assessment tool and focused on two of the eight themes of HEInnovate, namely: 'Entrepreneurial Teaching and Learning' and 'Preparing and Supporting Entrepreneurs'. On 3 March, a questionnaire was sent to employees of NHL Stenden. The people approached were managers and team leaders of the university and lecturers who are involved in one way or another in working on issues around the theme of entrepreneurship. The workshop took place online on Thursday 25 March 2021 based on a preparatory workshop held on Thursday 18 March 2021. The workshops lasted 1.5 hours and was attended by 21 people.

During the workshop, the BeyondScale Value Proposition Canvas has been used. The Value Proposition Canvas is a tool which can help ensure that a product or service is positioned around what the customer values and needs. The canvas consists of a leftward square and rightward circle. The circle represents the customer profile. It is further divided into three parts: jobs, pains, and gains. The square represents the value proposition map. Like the circle, this is also divided into three parts: products and services, gain creators, pain relievers.



Step 1: Defining the clients / stakeholders

The participants in the workshop distinguished several target groups for the activities of the Center for Entrepreneurship. These can be roughly divided between students, teachers, and external parties. These three target groups can then be divided into several subgroups:

Pro-active student-entrepreneurs

Students who already (want to) engage in active entrepreneurship. These are students who want to complete their studies, but who also want to be active entrepreneurs at the same time. Some students already have a one-man business or are self-employed alongside their studies. The challenge for these students is to find synergy between their entrepreneurial work and their studies. Stenden might facilitate this by allowing them to graduate based on the work in their own company.

Students that are potentially interested in entrepreneurship (not yet active and not yet aware)

Students who are potentially interested in entrepreneurship, but do not yet have any active experience with it. Some of them may have thought about the possibility of becoming an entrepreneur, but others may not. If NHL Stenden wants to stimulate entrepreneurial students, these students must be made aware of the possibilities and opportunities that this offers for them.

Entrepreneurial students in non-commercial sector

Students who are not focused on a commercial way of doing business, but who want to do work in an entrepreneurial and socially innovative way within their own professional field (e.g. care, social work, education) as a form of intrapreneurship.

Lecturers / professors who teach in the field of entrepreneurship

Teachers who are already actively involved in entrepreneurship education at the university. There are probably quite a few of them, but often they do not know of each other's work in this field, and they primarily focus on their own program or academy.

Lecturer-Entrepreneurs

A number of lecturers have a double affiliation and work both as an instructor and as an entrepreneur. At the moment, these are often separate worlds, and the lecturer within the university is only acknowledged for his or her work as lecturer. As a result, opportunities for synergy between teaching and entrepreneurship may have underexploited.

Lecturers in other subject areas (not specifically aimed at business)

Teachers who do not focus on the subject of entrepreneurship, but who do have to deal with students who are (potentially) interested in it. These teachers often do not know how to respond to these students and their demands.

External stakeholders

The external perspective was mentioned during the workshop, but mainly from the perspective of the student or the university. It was mentioned a couple of times that 'the region is eager for this' and there were possibilities of carrying out projects together with the business community, but no specific consideration was given to the way in which the Center for Entrepreneurship could play a role in relation to various external organisations in the region. The participants indicated that government, businesses, and civil society organisations need enterprising students, and that entrepreneurs are important for the prosperity and well-being of the region. Participants also indicated that the Center for Entrepreneurship can play a driving role in this, but there is no clear idea so far as to what such a role would look like in practice.

Step 2: Filling the canvas

After defining the target audience of the workshop, the canvas was filled. As discussed, the canvas consists of a leftward square and rightward circle. The circle represents the customer profile. It is divided into three parts: jobs, pains, and gains. The square represents the value proposition map. Like the circle, it is divided into three parts: products and services, gain creators, pain relievers. The result of the workshop looked like the canvas as depicted in figure 1. In a second step, the Post-Its as placed on the canvas were relocated to posters, enabling the clustering of similar subjects into sub-groups, as presented in figure 2.

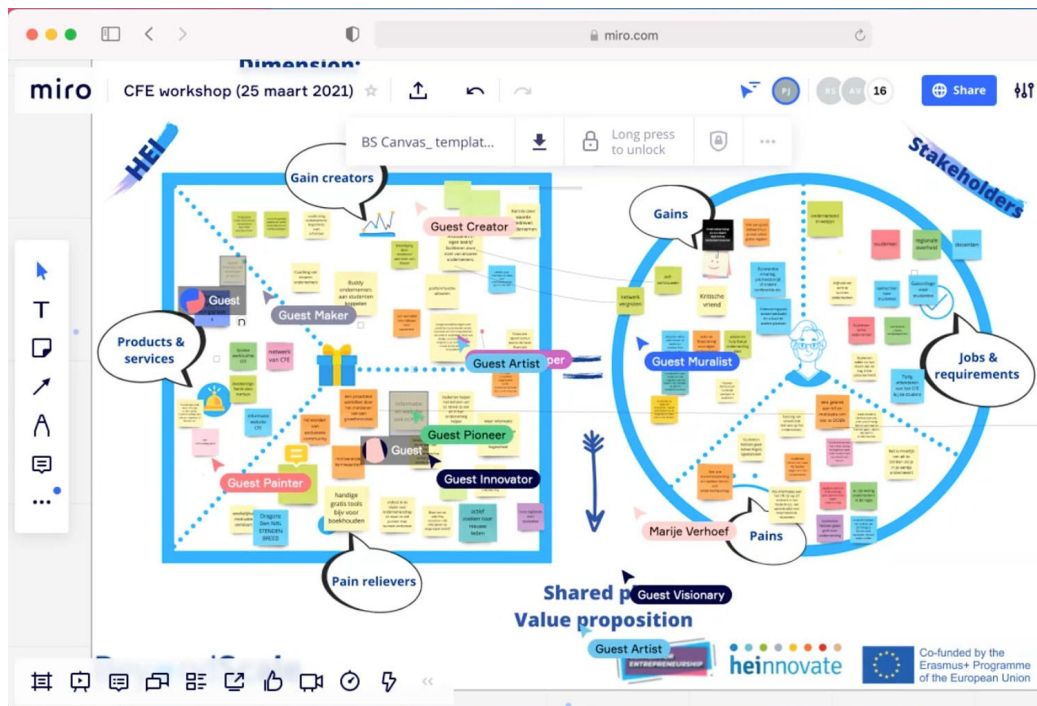


Figure 1: Filled Value Proposition Canvas

Step 3: Separation in sub-themes

In order to interpret the results of the workshop, the topics that were mentioned during the workshop were then clustered into seven themes. The large quantity of apparently unordered Post-Its, could be organised into a number of sub-themes. This clustering is visualised in figure 3.

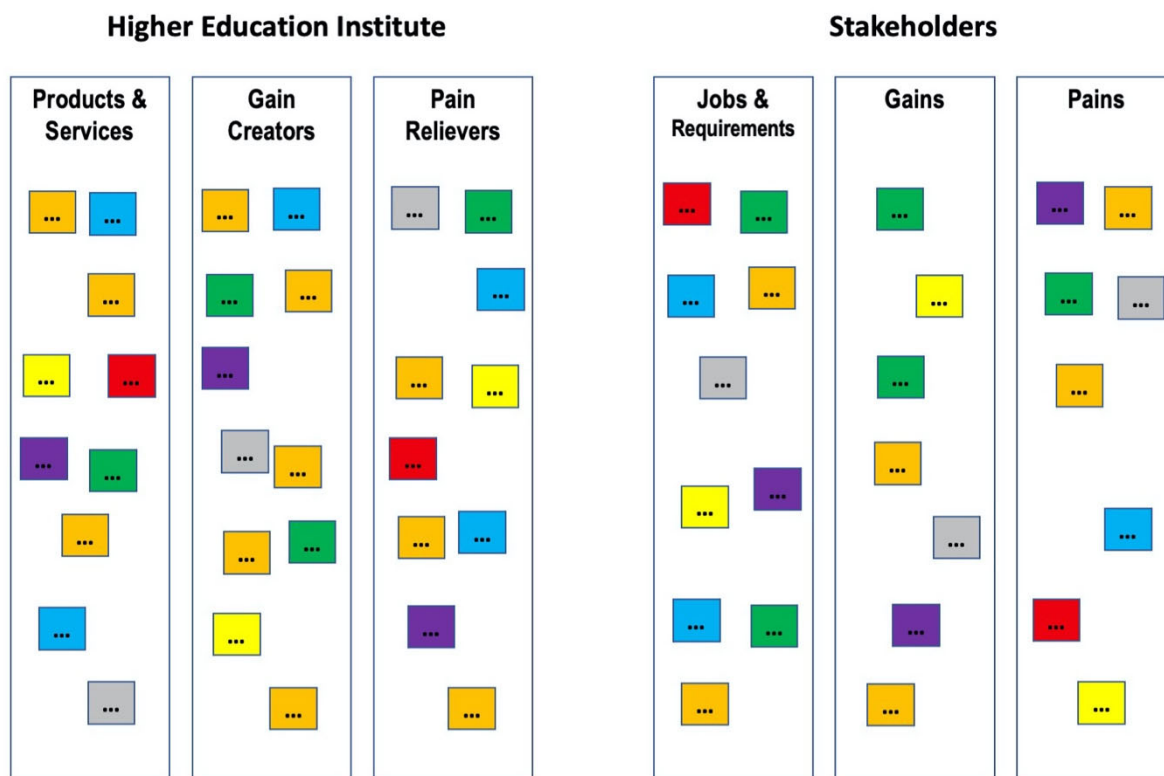


Figure 2: Seemingly unordered Post-Its resulting from the Value Proposition Canvas

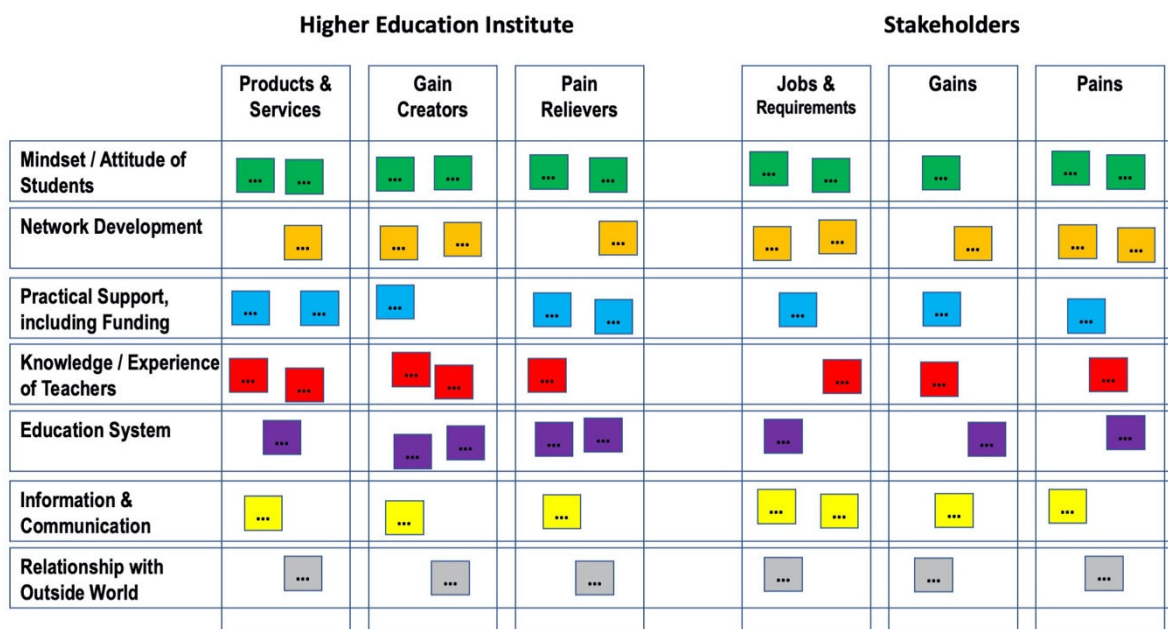


Figure 3: Clustered Post-Its, reorganized in seven themes.

For each of the themes, the gains that the stakeholders want to realise and the pains they want to avoid were identified. Also, the possible gain creators and pain relievers were identified. And a suggestion was made for possible products and services that can contribute to this. The themes that were identified were, successively:

1. Mindset / attitude / awareness / skills of students
2. Network development
3. Practical support including funding
4. Knowledge / expertise of teachers
5. Education system / testing / points / ECs
6. Information and communication
7. Relationship with the outside world

This list of topics is obviously not exhaustive, but useful to help us focus on each of the topics and discuss the possible additional gains, pains, gain creators, pain relievers and the suggested actions to be undertaken by the CFE. It should be noted that this list was not created before the actual workshop, but was a result of clustering the various ideas and suggestions, during and after the workshop. So, the multitude of ideas and post-it's (as visualised in figure 1 and 2) then led to the definition of the 7 theme's as described (as visualised in figure 3).

Those present indicated that it was important to clarify the way in which the university and the CFE defines the concept of entrepreneurship. What does the university mean by terms entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial skills, entrepreneurial mindset? A number of participants emphasised that it should not only be about starting a new business. They argued for a broad definition, in order to include entrepreneurship within non-profit organisations, for example.

Step 4: Possible propositions for CFE

After filling the canvas, a number of possible value propositions for the CFE were formulated. It is striking that most of the propositions mentioned focus on the connecting, facilitating role of the CFE. Perhaps specific consideration of the seven themes, and the added value that the CFE can offer on each of these themes, can further strengthen these propositions. During the workshop, no specific proposition was selected. However, the various value proposition served as inspiration for the CFE team to define their future activities based on the input of the workshop.

- *"The CFE is recognisable, accessible, inspiring and accessible to students, teachers and the region."*
- *"The CFE supports the organisation of intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship in terms of products, services, ideas and collaborations."*
- *"The CFE is known for its execution power through knowledge sharing in connection with O3."*
- *"The CFE focuses on bringing together and connecting studies with entrepreneurs, field of work, practice and more creating beautiful, shared creations."*
- *"The CFE is the place where entrepreneurial students meet, work and learn. With workshops for teachers to create more affinity with entrepreneurship."*
- *"The CFE facilitates the bridge between education and entrepreneurship."*
- *"The CFE supports the student in learning needs and mediates to academics."*
- *"The CFE organises the opportunity for entrepreneurs to find each other and network."*
- *"CFE facilitates the entrepreneurial student and all his/her facets, both internally and externally."*
- *The CFE adds value to the student and always thinks from the student's perspective.*
- *"The CFE is not only active within the college building but fulfils a connecting role between the college and the outside world."*
- *"CFE is the place for entrepreneurial students where they can meet, work and learn."*

Step 5: Translation to Action Plan

Based on the results of the BeyondScale workshop, an action plan has been developed by NHL Stenden. As the CFE is still in its developing phase, the action plan contained a broad spectrum of activities, focussing on Strategic actions: Vision, Mission, Strategy and Objectives, Organisational development, Internal stakeholder involvement, Development of the physical environment of the CFE, Development of digital/online environment of the CFE, Communication and network development, Research development, External network development.

Lessons learned and added value of the workshop format

Doing the workshop has been of benefit for the development of the new Center for Entrepreneurship of NHL Stenden. Doing the workshop has brought different stakeholders together and has enabled the sharing of opinions and experiences between these stakeholders. This has been a valuable contribution to the process of developing the Center for Entrepreneurship.

Having said that, one could ask if specifically this tool was needed for this purpose. In other words, one could ask if using another tool, with the same stakeholders, could have provided the same results. Of course, the Value Proposition Workshop is only one of many tools, which are described in the book Business Model Generation of Alex Osterwalder (2010). It is possible to imagine that other tools could be as useful, or even more useful, depending on the specific phase of development that a specific HEI is currently in. Therefore, we would suggest not focusing on one specific tool, but rather on a series of tools and methods, which together could support the further development of the HEI in its efforts to develop its entrepreneurial activities.

An important aspect of the BeyondScale project is the external time pressure that came as a result of the project. Where in our organisation, activities sometimes tend to be postponed somewhat, for instance waiting for more information or a better moment, in this case the external time pressure made sure that the activities were carried out in time. This has resulted in valuable insights, which otherwise may have been missed.

Another added value of the BeyondScale project of course is the international dimension. However, due to the COVID-19 situation, this turned out to be mainly through online contacts. Although online connection with other HEIs in other countries still has some value, the real value of visiting other countries and benefiting from their insights, has been limited in the project.

As a final remark we may notice that working in a top-down manner by doing a specifically defined workshop in a specifically defined timeframe may be effective. However, working in a bottom-up manner, based on the specific ideas of the involved experts themselves, may be at least as effective. Probably a combination of both a top-down as well as a bottom-up approach may work best.

Disclaimer:

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