Editorial

Welcome to the latest issue of *Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning*. In our first paper of 7.3, "In-house, university-based work experience vs off-campus, work-experience", Forsyth and Cowap share the results of an investigation into students' perceptions of the value, impact, benefits and disadvantages of in-house, university-based work experience vs off-campus, work experience. The students were based in one faculty at one university and involved in unique work-integrated courses.

The methodology was to use focus groups with differing participants, samples of students who had undertaken work experience off-campus at an employers' workplace, samples of students who had undertaken work experience in-house with a university-based scenario, along with a mixed group, consisting of students who had undertaken both types. Interviews were also conducted, with the resultant data transcribed and analysed thematically. The results will be used to inform future practice in this area of work.

The students' perceptions suggest that both types of work experience enhanced future employment; provided career insight; enabled skill/experience acquisition and application; and were useful for building relationships. Work experience that occurred in-house was, in addition, perceived to be cost-effective and enable students to be more closely supervised and supported. Students who had taken part in this kind of work experience felt that it was good for relationship building between students and university staff and beneficial for increasing student attainment by enabling them to, amongst other things, perceive the link between theory and practice more clearly. In-house work experience was, on the other hand, criticised for being restricted in terms of variety, although it can offer increased connections with external stakeholders.

One of the findings resulting from the research is that decisions around which form of work experience to offer students should take into account the level of support, supervision and observation, that can be realistically offered, together with the travel and time implications.

Our next paper "Undergraduate perceptions of the knowledge, skills and competencies required of today's practicing marketer" by Carter and Yeo continues with the theme of students' perceptions, this time into the skills, knowledge and competencies required to perform as a professional marketer. The research was undertaken in a Malaysian context and aimed to discover how, as a result of their experience of a Higher Education Institution (HEI) and the undergraduate learning teaching experience of the subject of Marketing, the opinions of the students had evolved in this respect, and, furthermore, what the implications of this might be for curriculum developers.

Based on the undergraduate student population from the Accountancy, Finance and Business Faculty, a descriptive, positivist, cross-sectional study was used. The authors employed inferential statistics to measure the relationship between the four components of marketing knowledge, skills and competencies: the marketing mix; performance; social and emotional competencies; and responsible decision making.

The authors share their quantitative results which reveal that all students' perceptions of the requirements to be a "fit for purpose" marketer (with very few exceptions) were highly correlated with requirements from the literature, subject benchmarks and practice.

The editor hopes you enjoy these exciting new pieces of original work and find them useful and inspirational in your own practice. Please do get in touch if you would like to discuss your ideas for publication.

However, they do point out that the findings are based on one institution and that the knowledge, skills and competency requirements by student level of study and practitioner experience could vary according to type of HEI, organisation and geographic location.

Despite this caution around possible differences it is still possible for them to make some recommendations for curriculum enhancement to address both employability and career development, particularly in terms of interdisciplinary co-operation and the teaching and learning of concepts.

Pitan's paper "Graduate employees' generic skills and training needs" continues the theme of workplace skills, looking at the increased demand for generic skills, caused by technological changes, globalisation, sector reforms and changes in output demand. This study uses the perceptions of graduate employees and their employers to investigate the extent to which university education in Nigeria is responding to employers increased skills requirements.

Questionnaires and purposive sampling techniques were used to collect this data, building upon the previous surveys, focussed on employer skills requirements, undertaken in Nigeria. The generic skills regarded as important by the sampled graduate employers are listed in the study. The employed university graduates state that in terms of generic skills, they were not adequately prepared to meet the requirements of their jobs; similarly the employers also stated that their graduate employees required further training to perform satisfactorily. Different fields of study are taken into account.

Sutherland and Ho's paper "Undergraduate perceptions of social media proficiency and graduate employability – a pilot study" further interrogates the issues of students' perceptions and graduate employability but prioritises social media as a key area of interest. This study explores undergraduate students' attitudes towards the inclusion of social media training within higher education pedagogy, students' perceptions of social media proficiency as professional expertise and its impact on graduate employability.

Responses to an online survey completed by 81 undergraduate students studying medicine, law, science and arts have been analysed. The questions examined student attitudes towards the delivery of social media pedagogy at university and the perceived benefits of social media proficiency. The responses suggest that undergraduates across a range of disciplines are receptive to developing professionally relevant social media skills within higher education pedagogy and identify a link between social media proficiency and graduate employability.

Despite the increasing necessity for social media skills in professional environments, few studies have examined the teaching of social media skills as a core competency in higher education. Instead, social media is largely examined in relation to curriculum delivery and student engagement. This study explores attitudes towards the delivery of social media pedagogy in higher education and the perceived benefits of social media proficiency exclusively from the viewpoint of undergraduate students, to provide an alternative insight rarely explored.

The next paper by Christensen, Henriksen, Thomsen, Lund and Mørcke is "Positioning health professional identity: on-campus training and work-based learning". This paper examines students' and supervisors' activities and positions at workplaces and on-campus skills training sites across the higher health professional educations of medicine, sports science, and nursing. Drawing on positioning theory, the study characterises these activities and furthermore, explores the impact of work-based learning and skills training on students' personal professional identity development.

The research takes the form of a qualitative case study, conducted across six workplace sites and three on-campus skills training sites; it includes 20 days of observation and 21 in-depth interviews. The data are analysed with 12 characteristic narratives identified. Abductive analysis, using Harré's concept of positioning, is then used to create the theoretical framework.

The work-based and on-campus skills training sites appearing in this study are characterised by learning spaces with distinct positions, rights, and duties. The work-based learning sites are shown to offer the students rich opportunities to position themselves, act independently, and behave as professionals. The on-campus sites see students behaving less seriously, aware of their rights to try out things, get support, and have fun.

The study adds to the empirical evidence and conceptual frameworks of personal and shared professional identity development in the field of skills and work-based learning, and it underlines the ongoing value of Harré's positioning theory in educational research.

Continuing the scrutiny of the workplace Wall offers us, "A manifesto for higher education, skills and work-based learning: through the lens of the Manifesto for Work", a paper prompted by recent professional and political events and specifically the politically oriented "Manifesto for Work" recently published by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), to propose a manifesto for the broad professional sphere of higher education, skills and work-based learning.

Applying a unique form of political ideology critique, to the CIPD's Manifesto for Work, the paper proposes alternative directions for practice, research and policy by highlighting four key areas needing further research and development. These key areas are discussed in relation to: overhauling corporate governance; inclusive workplaces, flexible working, and disadvantaged groups; investment in skills, lifelong learning, and well-being; and re-balancing working practices and rights. The paper offers a distinctive, time-bound political response to the current political landscape, and is the first to propose a manifesto for the professional sphere of higher education, skills and work-based learning.

Finally, Ellenbogen's paper, "An alternative model of community service learning: students, community, and instructors learning from each other" describes and analyses experiences which embed community service learning (CSL) into an assignment for a Bachelor of Social Work course. The author uses these experiences and their connections with early conceptions of progressive education and community work principles to present a pragmatic and supple CSL model (SCSL).

Students and community organisations participated in SCSL and the data analysed were gathered from focus groups, participatory observation, evaluations, e-mails, and documents. A naturalistic case study methodology has been used to describe the teaching and learning experience. The SCSL model is claimed to be useful for weaving current local realities into course lectures, promoting professional development, and providing community organisations with timely research syntheses.

Six features of the model emerge as beneficial: multi-course scaffolding, bottom-up management, asymmetrical student roles, integration of academic and experiential learning, and student involvement in course delivery. Relevant contextual factors cited include: small class size, maturity of students, and cohesion within cohort. The author acknowledges that the findings are based on a small-scale study, however, SCSL appears to be a promising model for encouraging knowledge mobilisation between universities and community organisations, and providing future professionals with experience in such activities.

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