

# Learning & Employability

SERIES TWO

## Work-related learning in higher education

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Neil Moreland, ESECT Research Fellow



## Learning and Employability Series 1 and 2

The Learning and Employability series is primarily intended for staff in higher education institutions who are considering the enhancement of student employability. The publications will also be of interest to colleagues new to the area as well as those who are already engaged in developing employability and who wish to broaden their understanding of the topic.

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The views expressed in this series are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Higher Education Academy.

# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. <u>Overview</u>   | 2  |
| 2. <u>What is work-related learning?</u>   | 2  |
| 2.1 Work-related and work-based learning   |    |
| 3. <u>Why do students in higher education need work-related learning?</u>                | 6  |
| 4. <u>The different components of work-related learning</u>                              | 8  |
| 4.1 Learning about oneself   |    |
| 4.1.1 Metacognition  |    |
| 4.1.2 Cognitive and learning styles  |    |
| 4.1.3 Career anchors   |    |
| 4.1.4 Self-theories, personal values and ethics  |    |
| 4.1.5 Career management  |    |
| 4.2 Learning and practising skills and personal attributes of value in the world of work |    |
| 4.3 Considering and experiencing the world of work                                       |    |
| 4.4 Curricula and learning how to learn  |    |
| 5. <u>Putting these all together: self-efficacy and capability</u>                       | 15 |
| Appendix 1: <u>The revised knowledge aspects of Bloom's Taxonomy</u>                     | 18 |
| Appendix 2: <u>Skills for graduates</u>  | 19 |
| <u>Further resources</u>   | 21 |
| <u>References</u>  | 22 |
| <u>Enhancing Student Employability</u>   | 33 |

## 1. Overview

This is for all the people in Higher Education in the United Kingdom who are involved in the planning and provision of the formal curriculum and the co-curriculum (such as through careers advice and guidance). This paper begins by defining work-related learning, and after comparing it with work-based learning, provides the rationale for incorporating work-related learning in the higher education academic curriculum before discussing examples of what that work-related curriculum might contain. The rationale for providing work-related learning is not related just to the future employment needs of graduates, significant as these needs are, but also to wider academic and lifelong learning.

## 2. What is work-related learning?

An initial search of the British Education Index in early 2004 using work-related learning as the search term produced no references (as distinct from, for instance, work-based or experiential learning). Though contributions to work-related learning have since been published (e.g. Recruiters 1995; Directorate 2004; Hills, *et al.* 2004; SFCFHE 2004), the paucity of materials made it necessary to specify more clearly the ESECT conception of work-related learning. Higher education staff can, increasingly, expect students from schools to be familiar with work-related learning, for it is becoming a statutory requirement at Key Stage 4 (14–16 year-olds) in England and Wales (Quality and Curriculum Authority 2003).

The QCA defines work-related learning as:

Planned activities that use the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work, including learning through the experience of work, learning about work and working practices, and learning the skills for work (Quality and Curriculum Authority 2003: 4).

This definition is a useful starting point as it highlights the centrality of planned learning activities and experiences related to, and drawing upon, understandings about work through such learning opportunities as work placements and work-related projects. The definition also emphasises the range of learning outcomes defined within work-related knowledge, skills and understandings as the basis for enhancing student entry and success at work in their adult lives.

At the same time, this definition does not go far enough to be sufficient for an employability curriculum in higher education. Employability in the ESECT project has been defined in a similar manner to QCA, as:

a set of achievements understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations (Yorke and Knight 2003).

The concern of ESECT at the higher education level is, additionally, to facilitate the development of degree-level learning through an associated emphasis upon the reflective learning processes (Brockbank, McGill, and Beech 2002) and metacognitive capabilities often embodied in higher education learning outcomes (e.g. Young 1999, Cornford 2002, Glastra, Hake and Schedler 2004). That is, many of the outcomes associated with work-related learning are higher order metacognitive skills (Krathwohl 2002) variously described as judgement (Hager 2000), reflection (e.g. Brockbank, McGill and Beech 2002, also Johns 2004 – and critical, for example, Brown 2004).

Though it is possible to view the promotion of such judgmental and action capabilities within an employability strategy in HE as a 'supply side' strategy (Mills 2002), the concern is not with traditional concepts of the 'person-job' fit (how far a person has the attributes required for a job), but also with the development of graduates who are active and empowered to seek out jobs and organisations that fit their preferences and characteristics. By doing this, work-related learning is concerned with the development of a graduate that better 'fits' the changing economic situation and evolving job markets in ways that assist the individual graduate to respond to society-wide developments effectively. Successful work-related learning, consequently, promotes learning across the lifespan as a way of addressing economic and social change as well as related skill obsolescence and evolving needs. Work-related learning, in effect, has at least three categories of higher education student in mind, these being:

- Adults and young people seeking to 'position' themselves with regard to the labour markets in which they wish to participate
- Adults in work who have a need to update their skills and capabilities in order to remain employable
- Adults who are out of work, and thus need re-qualification or additional qualifications to re-enter the workforce (Illeris 2003: 174).

Whatever category of learner higher education is concerned with (and it will often be all three at one and the same time), there is the necessity for higher education to engage even more fully with work-related learning as well as subject-related study.

In the approach to employability that underpins our analysis, Knight and Yorke (2004) suggest that an employability curriculum involves higher education students in developing:

- Understandings about work,
- Skilful practices (the deployment of skills in different and/or new situations),
- Efficacy beliefs (legitimate self-confidence in one's capacities to achieve and succeed at work), as well as
- Metacognitive capabilities (see more below).

This paper accepts this USEM approach fully (See Knight and Yorke 2004: 87–96), and following this, defines **work-related learning as involving students learning about themselves and the world of work in order to empower them to enter and succeed in the world of work and their wider lives**. Work-related learning thus involves higher education students in four interrelated areas of learning:

- Learning about oneself – one’s capabilities, confidence, life interests and career orientations (Efficacy and Metacognition);
- Learning and practising skills and personal attributes of value in the world of work (Skilful Practices);
- Experiencing the world of work (or facsimiles thereof) in order to provide insights and learning into the world of work predominantly associated with the subjects of one’s higher education studies (Understandings); and
- Experiencing and learning how to learn and manage oneself in a range of situations, including (of course) those to be found at work and central to self-management and development activities (Metacognition).

Each of these will be considered in more detail below. Before that, though, it is helpful to understand how work-related learning and work-based learning relate to each other as the two aspects are often conflated.

## 2.1 Work-related and work-based learning

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In many universities and colleges, work experience – leading to work-based learning – is already provided. Often well managed, such experiences have proved to be beneficial to the students who have access to such learning through work placements and the like in their higher education curriculum (for example, Rossin and Hyland 2003). Gray, for the Higher Education Academy, comments that work-based learning is,

learning at higher education level derived from undertaking paid or unpaid work. Work-based learning, however, is the means through which a discipline is delivered, not the discipline to be studied. So work-based learning is not a subject for study – it is a mechanism for learning (Gray 2001: 4).

She goes on to identify three types of work-based learning:

- Learning through work linked to an accredited programme of study.
- Learning for work (for example, a work placement on a sandwich degree programme or professional development such as a teacher education course).
- Learning at work (a company in-house training or personal development programme, for example).

## Work-related learning in higher education

Each of these kinds of work-based learning is subsumed within work-related learning as well, for work-related learning is more comprehensive. Work-based learning, for instance, normally does not overtly support higher education students learning about their own capabilities or detailed work aspirations, but uses work for academic learning. It is for this reason, for instance, that some universities, such as Glasgow Caledonian University, augment work experiences with additional learning activities. The definition of work-based learning developed by Glasgow Caledonian University is

The achievement of planned learning outcomes [through] the experience of performing a work role or function. In addition, it is normal practice to complement the experiential learning with directed reading, research or group work to ensure that the learning is placed in the context of current theory or practice. Such experiential learning must be capable of being evidenced and assessed.<sup>1</sup>

As Figure 1 below suggests, however, we too have to recognise that some subjects ('applied' subjects) are straight-forwardly more amenable to being related to the world of work than other more 'pure' subjects, though all subjects have the potential to benefit from work experiences within their programmes of study. Employability curriculum outcomes can be achieved in many different ways, as (for instance) the publication by Gallimore for the Higher Education Academy Philosophical and Religious Studies Subject Centre demonstrates (Gallimore 2004).

**Figure 1: A typology of subjects (adapted from Biglan 1973a, 1973b, adapted from**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Hard/Pure</b><br>Physics, Chemistry | <b>Soft/Pure</b><br>History/Anthropology     |
| <b>Hard/Applied</b><br>Engineering     | <b>Soft/Applied</b><br>Education/Social Work |

**Neumann, Parry and Becher 2002)**

What is important, however, for employability are the degree-level processes of reflection that promote a 'critical stance' (Curzon-Hobson 2003), so that the experiences a student has in relation to work-related learning are analysed and realised in learning.

What a work-related curriculum offers, therefore, is a thoroughgoing and systematic approach to work-related learning that promotes self-knowledge and moves towards self-managed learning that students can build upon in their subsequent lives and careers. Consequently, the different facets of work-related learning can be embraced for their educational as well as their professional outcomes. Work-related learning is much more

than preparation for the world of work, relating as it does to the wider aspects of disciplinary and generic higher education knowledge and experience (Boud and Solomon 2001).

### 3. Why do students in higher education need work-related learning?

At its most simple level, higher education students need opportunities for work-related learning because of the changes that have occurred, and continue to occur, in the wider society as well as in higher education itself. Many companies are trying to manage their markets and internal activities so as to reduce the risks and insecurities to their company (Liebeskind 1996; Mowery, Oxley and Silverman 1996). Such developments at company level need to be replicated at the level of the individual, involving a variety of development activities (Popkewitz and Brennan 1998). A student's investment in him or herself by studying and achieving at higher education level is an individual counterpart to companies investing to remain effective and active in the market place (Hager 2000).

A work-related curriculum is needed as there are many changes occurring in relation to the world of work: some significant changes are listed below, in no particular order:

- The shift from manual to non-manual employment and the associated belief in the rising importance of cognitive and skill upgrading as opposed to physical forms of skill (National Skills Task Force (NSTF) 2000);
- The shift to a service-based economy, with an increasing emphasis upon 'aesthetic labour' (bodily appearance and deployment) allied to a changing gender balance in the workforce (Keep and Payne 2004: 60);
- Globalisation of companies and intensifying international competition (Carnoy 2002);
- The growth of post-modernist complexity (Barnett 2000) through the use of new technologies and communication media (Castells 2000; Carnoy 2002: 129; Keep, *et al.* 2004);
- Labour market marginalisation, skill polarisation and a marked intensification of work (Gallie 2002: 96; Amoore 2004);
- The trend to smaller, directly employed workforces and a related increase in alternative employment forms such as consultancies, short-term contracts, sub-contracting and the like (Baiman 2001; McMaster 2001);
- An increasing emphasis upon innovation and change through high performance work systems that emphasise interactive and creative capabilities such as problem-solving, team-working, initiative, judgement, leadership and lifelong learning (for example, Boreham 2002; Druskat and Wheeler 2003; Bailey, Hughes and Moore 2004);

- Knowledge itself is becoming of greater significance in maintaining 'competitive edge', and increasingly seen as the key to performance in the professions and higher order 'graduate jobs'(Gow and McDonald 2000);
- Knowledge creation is more dispersed across organisations in societies (Hager 2000: 54), leading to increased networking, and economic links being developed between universities and industries (Sundaramurthy and Lewis 2003);
- A decreasing emphasis on disciplinarity ('Type 1' knowledge) in favour of 'Type 2' knowledge that is 'non-hierarchical, pluralistic, trans-disciplinary, fast changing, and socially responsive to a diversity of needs such as students' dispositions and industrial priorities' (Smith and Webster 1997: 104).
- The changing relationships between citizens and their States (Taylor-Gooby 2004), where increasingly an emphasis is placed upon citizens taking more personal responsibility for their actions and fates, especially in the light of increased personal risks but also opportunities (Beck 2000).

This last point is possibly an outcome of the other developments listed above for, as Ulrich Beck puts it,

The ethic of individual self-fulfilment and achievement is the most powerful current in modern society. The choosing, deciding, shaping, human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of an individual identity, is the central character of our times (Beck 2000: 165).

At the same time, we have to recognise that, alongside opportunities for individualism:

Insecurity, risk, acceleration and change are words that are increasingly used to describe contemporary social and economic life (Olsen 2003: 351).

Recognising such developments, and helping students to recognise and prepare themselves for them, has implications for higher education.

This increasingly complex world creates opportunities for universities and colleges to define their potential students and audiences on a global as well as national, regional and local scales (Scott 1998, Welch 2001). Higher education institutions consequently are defining their strategic priorities, which paradoxically may lead them, whilst they may recruit students globally, to decide strategically to emphasise their enterprise activities (Williams 2003), regionalism and/or localism in a similar way to the bank that calls itself 'the world's local bank' (Smith, *et al.* 1997, Williams 2003). This has given impetus to developments of relationships with industry and commerce (Lambert 2003) as well as partnerships and consortia within the different sectors of education that exist or potentially exist for mutual benefit, though they do have to be worked at and nursed along (Abramson, Bird and Stennett 1996; Farmer 1999; Lownes and Sullivan 2004).

## 4. The different components of work-related learning

In the majority of writings that deal with the higher education-work couplet, the emphasis tends to be upon job-person fit (for example, Plumbly 1981). In work-related learning, we place a different emphasis. Here, as a counterpoint, we correct the bias by placing the emphasis upon the person/employment fit – of graduates, on the basis of an understanding of their strengths and personal preferences, entering the world of work with jobs or a career trajectory that fits their needs, whatever they may be (see ‘Career anchors’ – 4.1.3 below). In the self-employment couplet the emphasis is upon graduates knowing what their strengths, weaknesses and career goals are, and searching for a job or career that meets those needs and plays to one’s strengths. Learning about the self, therefore, is an important aspect of work-related learning.<sup>2</sup>

Besides learning about one’s self, the other areas within work-related learning are:

- Learning and practising skills and personal attributes of value in the world of work (Skilful Practices);
- Experiencing the world of work (or facsimiles thereof) in order to provide insights and learning into the world of work predominantly associated with the subjects of one’s higher education studies (Understandings); and
- Experiencing and learning how to learn and manage oneself in a range of situations, including (of course) those to be found at work (Metacognition).

### 4.1 Learning about oneself

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Whilst a number of possible areas are briefly provided below, we do not wish to be prescriptive about where in the student higher education life-cycle those aspects are covered – only that students in higher education should have the opportunity to cover/discover the different aspects. We do not prescribe how those learning opportunities are provided, but only that such learning opportunities should be available, perhaps in or alongside the formal curriculum in areas such as Progress Journals/Professional Development Profiles (QAA 2001) or through lifelong careers education opportunities (Watts 1994).

What, then, are these desirable areas of self-knowledge? Higher education should, within a supportive learning context, enable students to find out more about their current strengths and development needs with regard to:

- Metacognition;
- Learning and cognitive styles;

- Career Anchors;
- Self-theories, personal values and ethics; and
- Career Management Skills.

## 4.1.1 Metacognition

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Metacognition is the term now routinely applied to higher order awareness that assists active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning (Yzerbyt, Lories and Dardenne 1998). In the short time that the term has been used, 'metacognition' is most often associated with John Flavell (1979). Flavell divides metacognitive knowledge into three categories:

- Knowledge of person and self variables;
- Learning task variables; and
- Learning strategy variables.

Metacognitive knowledge of person variables refers to the general knowledge a person may have about how human beings learn and process information, as well as the individual knowledge of one's own learning processes (see 'Cognitive and learning styles' below) of task variables includes knowledge about the type of cognitive processing demands that it will place upon the individual – creative or analytical capabilities, for example. Finally, knowledge about strategy variables includes knowledge about when and where it is appropriate to use particular strategies such as action learning and problem solving (Flavell 1979). If, by empowerment, we mean the development of the insight and capabilities of a person so that they are able to become more responsible for their actions (Williams-Boyd 2004), then enabling students to become aware of their metacognitive preferences is an important step on the road to reflexivity and self-determination (Edwards, Ransom and Strain 2002).

Activities such as planning how to approach a given learning task, monitoring self-comprehension, and evaluating progress toward the completion of a task are metacognitive in nature. As metacognition plays a critical role in successful learning, it is important for students to be familiar with metacognitive activity and development, and for this to be assessed, to determine how students can be taught to better apply and widen their cognitive resources through metacognitive self-management capabilities (Imel 2002). Metacognition is now considered so important that it has been included in a revised version of knowledge component of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Krathwohl 2002) – see Appendix 1 for the revised Taxonomy.

Increasingly, the revised taxonomy is being used to structure learning experiences in higher education (Pintrich 2002). Metacognitive knowledge and processes need to be taught explicitly and opportunities provided for students to practice their capabilities as well as widen their application into unfamiliar areas and learning tasks.

## 4.1.2 Cognitive and learning styles

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Cognitive styles and learning styles are related to metacognition, but often highlighted separately. Cognitive style refers to the preferred way any individual processes information – their typical mode of thinking, remembering, organising and representing information and problem-solving (Riding and Raynor 1998). By contrast, a learning style is defined as a consistent preference in learning approaches (FEDA 1995, McKay 2002) that enables cognitive styles to come into play. Linked to this are informational processing styles, which refers not only to how we best learn, but also the extent to which we process information visually (diagrams or mind maps), verbally (writing and talking) or through physical manipulation (Ashman and Conway 1993).

Needless to say, there are a number of cognitive and learning styles that have been defined and researched. Some of the best known include:

- Myers-Briggs approach that focuses on extroversion-introversion and allied traits (Myers 1962);
- Kolb's leaning style inventory based upon two axes (concrete experience/abstract conceptualising and active experimentation/reflective observation) (Kolb 1984); and
- Honey and Mumford's Learning Styles (activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist) (Honey and Mumford 1992).

Such models have a number of uses, not only in promoting student self-knowledge, but also in teaching and in research, though at the moment there is a contention that learning styles and pedagogies have still to have a major effect upon the organisation and management of learning situations (Coffield, Moseley, Hall and Ecclestone 2004). Having said that, McKay (2002), for instance, uses a version of wholist-analytic and verbal-imagery learning styles to research cognitive skill acquisition over the internet.

As with metacognition, the concern for tutors in teaching or facilitating learning about cognitive and learning styles is not only increased self-awareness and reflexivity by the students, but also that of enlarging or widening the learning approaches so that the students become flexible learners well able to learn in a range of situations, including lecture halls, small group work and work-based learning (Boud and Symes 2000, Rossin, *et al.* 2003). Indeed, it has been suggested that, 'learning to become an effective self-directed learner is probably the greatest intellectual and psychological challenge that an individual can face in a lifetime' (Dealtry 2004: 108). To become an effective learner requires each student not only to know their strengths, but also to address their weaknesses by engaging in learning events and situations that allow practice and the development of the flexibility that allows learning to occur in all or most learning situations. This recognition extends nowadays to post-graduates, for the list of capabilities needful of development by research skills includes the following:

Demonstrate an insight into the transferable nature of research skills to other work environments and the range of career opportunities within and outside academia. (Research Councils and Arts and Humanities Research Board 2002)

Other skills highlighted by the various Research Councils include communication skills, networking and teamwork (Research Councils and Arts and Humanities Research Board 2002).

### 4.1.3 Career anchors

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Career anchors are one of the major ways in which an individual's career orientations have been conceptualised. Career anchors are closely associated with self-concept and personal identity, for a career anchor is,

his or her concept, consisting of 1) self-perceived talents and abilities, 2) basic values, and most important, 3) the evolved sense of motives and needs as they pertain to their career (Schein 1996:80).

Based upon extensive research, Schein (1993) originally identified five career anchors and added three more as a result of further research. The eight career anchors (propensities that are desired in jobs) are:

- Autonomy and independence
- Security and stability
- Technical-functional competence
- General management competence
- Entrepreneurial activity
- Service or dedication to a cause
- Pure challenge; and
- Lifestyle.

As individuals are rarely aware of their career anchors, Schein advocated that people develop self-awareness about those anchors so that they are prepared in advance for critical career decisions. In addition, Schein suggested that there are three main ways of preparing oneself for jobs, these being:

- a) Experimenting experientially with possible identities (work placements and experience)
- b) Finding and interacting with new networks of people who have jobs similar to those desired by graduates; and
- c) Making sense by interpreting what is happening today in national economies.

The third item, of course, is closely linked to economic awareness, and the provision of subject opportunities for students to talk to past graduates about their career opportunities and experiences. Based upon his research, Schein has developed a careers anchor self-assessment instrument that is available to use (Schein 1993) though there are other similar instruments around such as the Morrisby Test (see [www.morrisby.com](http://www.morrisby.com)). Within a work-related curriculum, students should have the opportunity to take such tests, and consider the outcomes of the tests for their self-awareness as well as for their future career aspirations.

#### 4.1.4 Self-theories, personal values and ethics

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Self-theories are the belief systems that learners have about themselves, and the extent to which they believe their personal characteristics – for example, intelligence(s) and the ability to learn – are fixed, or malleable and capable of change (Yorke and Knight 2004). Needless to say, teachers in higher education should recognise that intelligence, and academic achievement predicated upon such intelligence (albeit affected by environmental factors) are malleable to varying degrees, and can be developed through appropriate learning tasks that lead on from the current achievement levels of the students. Tutors too should recognise that the development of positive self-theories amongst students is not usually a rapid process, but comes about through prolonged interaction and constructive feedback that (for instance) separates out the task achievements from the potential of the students themselves.

Carrying on, knowing one's values and ethics (standards of conduct or moral judgement) is a key part of self-awareness, as well as potentially an area for development. It is important for graduates to know and understand the moral principles upon which they base their decisions and behaviour. Etzioni, for instance, has noted a trend in business and life generally for more and more people to pursue lives of voluntary simplicity (Etzioni 1999), whilst other writers have highlighted the importance of values in job hunting and self-development (Pedler 1990, Bolles 2002). So too have other authors in the worlds of business and management (for example, Covey 1999 and Bowie 2005).

Such writers base their work upon well-known theories of moral development, such as that of Lawrence Kohlberg and his six-stage model of development<sup>3</sup>. Whilst Kohlberg suggests that the majority of the wider population do not reach 'post-conventional values' of autonomy (Levels 5 and 6), the emphasis in those levels upon mutuality, interaction and a genuine interest in the welfare of others implies that graduates should be able to do so with suitable guidance from either inside or outside universities.

That guidance could well be provided by the careers and counselling services of universities and colleges. Such services typically carry out three essential roles in serving the university and college community. The most prominent is providing counselling and/or

therapy to students experiencing personal adjustment, vocational, developmental and/or psychological problems that require professional attention. The second role involves supporting and enhancing the healthy growth and development of students through consultation and outreach to the campus community. Finally, guidance and counselling services have a role to play in assisting students to identify and learn skills that will assist them in effectively meeting their educational and life goals. (Boyd and Hattauer 2003).

## 4.1.5 Career management

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Before discussing career management, it is important to know that the term 'career management' is used to integrate two different meanings. Firstly, there is the more traditional meaning of the word 'career', which is the progression through a succession of jobs through one's working life. An underlying assumption is that each job is a development on previous jobs, increasingly senior, and designed to improve one's work status and rewards. The second meaning of career management is the more social-psychologically based notion of career as being a set of understandings about oneself that locates the past, the present and possible futures within a developmental perspective that makes sense to the individual and provides most, if not all, of the parameters within which decision-making about subsequent goals, directions and actions are constituted. Careers, in this latter sense, are far more than just jobs and job moves, but about stages in one's life.

Appendix Two contains the list of career management skills collated by the Association of Graduate Recruiters. Not surprisingly, that list contains key items such as:

- Assessing oneself (for example, qualifications, work experience, skills and personal qualities, interests, values, needs, responsibilities and constraints)
- Finding and checking out job ideas and possibilities
- Applying for jobs (for example, CV writing and effective applications, interview skills)
- Lifelong learning during working life; and
- Accessing and using career and other services support.

These are all key career management capabilities.

## 4.2 Learning and practising skills and personal attributes of value in the world of work

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Most, if not all, universities and colleges of higher education now utilise some model of transferable, generic or core skills, though what is included within those terms does vary

(Keep, *et al.* 2004). Whatever list is used, it is important that the list relates to empirically derived evidence. Once agreed, the skills need to be integrated into the curriculum, and assessed appropriately so that any claims graduates might make about their capabilities, as in student subject profiles, can be backed up with evidence and exemplars.

The practice of such capabilities comprises one example of 'technologies of the self'. As Foucault articulates them, technologies of the self are related to self-theories, and are the different ways in which we develop ourselves (Gutman and Hutton 1998). The three major ways in which we develop ourselves are by learning, reflection and imagination. It is this ability to 'transform ourselves' through learning that lies at the heart of the higher educational endeavour, but also at the heart of work-related learning. Work-related learning seeks to enhance the skills and capabilities of graduates so that they are able to take a more proactive role in determining their own careers and wider futures.

## 4.3 Considering and experiencing the world of work

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In modern day global societies,

The individual is faced with a kaleidoscope of possibilities and choices, which present both threats and opportunities. This necessitates an increasing use of reflection, in which individuals look critically at their action and ask what they are making of themselves (Butt 2004: 128).

A key way of promoting reflection in work-related learning is to use actual work experiences as the basis for learning, either directly (as in work-based learning above) or in association with other learning activities such as work-derived projects (Rossin, *et al.* 2003). Wherever possible, work experience should be built into learning programmes, either as modules or in larger chunks such as block placements or sandwich course placements.

In order to make the work-based learning of good quality, it is suggested that the following characteristics need to be addressed:

- All stakeholders appreciate and support the intentions of the experience
- There is induction, ongoing facilitation of reflection, formative assessment and a thorough debriefing afterwards
- Students gain credits for the process
- Students develop a work-experience portfolio
- Students can identify what they have learned, and communicate it to others (Knight, *et al.* 2004: Chapter 7, pp. 102–119).

## 4.4 Curricula and learning how to learn

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Whilst learning how to learn is part of metacognition and learning styles (see above), consideration needs to be given to how the curriculum is developed and provided in order to ensure that opportunities are available for such capabilities to be developed. In effect, there are three ways in which such WRL learning opportunities are provided. The three ways are:

- As an adjunct to the curriculum;
- As a metacurriculum (integrated within the subject); and
- A mixture of the above two (Cornford 2002).

There are questions to be asked regarding each of these approaches (for example, what resources are necessary, what demands are being made upon students, what is taken out from the existing curriculum), so we cannot afford to be prescriptive. What is important, however, is that these aspects are covered and/or available in ways that do not discriminate directly or indirectly against any students.

An example here is that of reflection, which is often considered to be a key generic capability of higher education. Whilst reflection is a slippery concept, it is usually related to a 'critical stance' (Curzon-Hobson 2003). That is, reflection refers to the thought processes associated with encounters (including encounters of knowledge and work experiences) that seek to critically evaluate encounters in order to draw conclusions and learning from those experiences and our responses to them. Mezirow suggests that all people have the capacity, to varying degrees, to reflect on the content of encounters, on processes of encounters and on the premises (such as ethics) underpinning encounters (Mezirow 1991). To these three different elements of encounters we might add outcomes as the fourth aspect upon which we can reflect. Whatever the nature of the reflection, the process of reflection initially is a descriptive one (what occurred) followed by an evaluative element (that can be empirical, aesthetic, ethical or personal-historical) that hopefully leads to learning. If tutors have difficulties carrying out reflection (Kreber 2004), then their students will probably do so too. On that basis, it becomes vitally important that staff development occurs to enable tutors to tutor students in the processes of reflection.

## 5. Putting these all together: self-efficacy and capability

The future, as we know, is a cognitive construction, 'Because it has not happened, it must be conceived, imagined, or otherwise created as an explicit cognitive act by one or more individuals' (Narayanan and Fahey 2004: 38). At the same time, the future is inaccessible

due to the incompleteness of information and the unfolding of events, some of which will not be capable of being foretold. Does that mean, therefore, that we should not plan, and just let events take over?

The answer, of course, is no, even though some people (Biglan, 1973b) may do just that. Instead, this paper has argued for an activist approach to the future and career planning by students in higher education. To achieve this activist approach, however, there are two possible metaphors for grasping the future – those of navigation and invention. Navigational approaches to futures management is based upon the assumption of there being some regularities and trends in society that are likely to continue into the future, and the risks which individuals and companies can therefore take account of in planning their lives and careers (Ring 2003). Navigation focuses upon adaptation by emphasising learning – detecting and analysing trends, developments and changes – so that some form of rational response can be defined and implemented.

Invention, however, is optimistic, in that it recognises the capability of an individual or company to manipulate their futures by their own actions, even though we do not have complete freedom to do so. Within the invention mode, the emphasis of approach is upon strategic flexibility, and the use of the imagination to visualise futures that can be attained through the identification of interim activities and the achievement of 'staging posts' along the way. Invention is more tolerant of fuzziness and incomplete knowledge than navigation, and more likely to use such analytical methodologies as Appreciative Inquiry (contextual awareness) to help structure the view of the future and actions within it (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2003). To use Schumpeter's insightful aphorism, invention is 'the capacity of seeing things in a way which afterwards proves to be true, even if it cannot be established at the moment' (Schumpeter 1934: 85). Invention works best with foresight as well as insight, and is a key ingredient in proactive career planning as well as establishing new businesses (Fuller, Argyle and Moran 2004).

The capacity to invent (visualise) one's future and to act in such a way as to achieve or move towards that future is a key feature of self-efficacy, defined by Bandura as, 'People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives.' In turn, Bandura goes on to note that, 'Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave'. Self-efficacy is thus a combination of self-knowledge, the invention of desirable futures, and the undertaking of actions such as learning in order to achieve or move towards those futures (Bandura 1994). In this way, the individual is empowered, and utilises 'knowledge that works' (Hager 2000) in a way that goes well beyond the concept of operational competence (Barnett 1997) and emphasises the importance of 'judgement' in performance and the achievement of desirable outcomes.

It is possible to conceive of the higher education system as unduly involved in the construction of the self through the public reach of higher education into the private spheres of life (Butt and Langridge 2003) (as if it did not do so in the past!). Whilst we

recognise the power of this critique, and the consequent necessity for higher education to foster the independent-mindedness of students, the failure to give the students the wherewithal to understand their options and possibilities is to disempower them (Simon 1987) at precisely the time in their lives when their understanding and options should be expanded, if not transformed (Williams-Boyd 2004). Self-knowledge of at least those areas identified above is a key part of their learning and subsequent empowered capacities to take a major role in determining their own futures.

Allied to this self-knowledge, however, is the enhancement of knowledge and experiences of and about the world of work. The final word, therefore, is a quotation that clearly supports work-related higher education. In effect,

Success will come to those who know themselves – their strengths and values, how they best perform, where they belong and what they should contribute; and to those who update and expand their expertise, knowledge and skills, who build and maintain networks, and who increase and display reputations (Opengart and Short 2002: 222).

## Appendix I: The revised knowledge aspects of Bloom's Taxonomy

### Structure of the Knowledge Dimension of the Revised Taxonomy

**A. Factual Knowledge** – The basic elements that students must know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems in it.

**Aa. Knowledge of terminology**

**Ab. Knowledge of specific details and elements**

**B. Conceptual Knowledge** – The interrelationships among the basic elements within a larger structure that enable them to function together.

**Ba. Knowledge of classifications and categories**

**Bb. Knowledge of principles and generalizations**

**Bc. Knowledge of theories, models, and structures**

**C. Procedural Knowledge** – How to do something; methods of inquiry, and criteria for using skills, algorithms, techniques, and methods.

**Ca. Knowledge of subject-specific skills and algorithms**

**Cb. Knowledge of subject-specific techniques and methods**

**Cc. Knowledge of criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures**

**D. Metacognitive Knowledge** – Knowledge of cognition in general as well as awareness and knowledge of one's own cognition.

**Da. Strategic knowledge**

**Db. Knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge**

**Dc. Self-knowledge**

(Source: Krathwohl 2002: 214)

## Appendix 2: Skills for graduates

### Self Awareness

- Able clearly to identify skills, values, interest and other personal attributes.
- Able to pinpoint core strengths and 'differentiating factors'.
- Equipped with evidence of abilities (e.g. summary statement, record or 'portfolio').
- Actively willing to seek feedback from others, and able to give constructive feedback.
- Able to identify areas for personal, academic and professional development.

### Self Promotion

- Able to define and promote own agenda.
- Can identify 'customer needs' (academic/community/employer) and can promote own strengths in a convincing way, both written and orally, selling 'benefits' to the 'customer', not simply 'features'.

### Exploring and Creating Opportunities

- Able to identify, create, investigate and seize opportunities.
- Have research skills to identify possible sources of information, help and support.

### Action Planning

- Able to plan a course of action which addresses:
  - Where am I now?
  - Where do I want to be?
  - How do I get there?
- Able to pinpoint core strengths and 'differentiating factors'.
- Equipped with evidence of abilities (e.g. summary statement, record or 'portfolio').
- Actively willing to seek feedback from others, and able to give constructive feedback.
- Able to identify areas for personal, academic and professional development.
- Able to implement an action plan by:
  - Organising time effectively
  - Identifying steps needed to reach the goal
  - Preparing contingency plans
- Able to monitor and evaluate progress against specific objectives.

### **Networking**

- Aware of the need to develop networks of contacts.
- Able to define, develop and maintain a support network for advice and information.
- Have good telephone skills.

### **Matching and Decision Making**

- Understands personal priorities and constraints (internal and external). This includes the need for a sustainable balance of work and home life.
- Able to match opportunities to core skills, knowledge, values, interests etc.
- Able to make an informed decision based on the available opportunities.

### **Negotiation**

- Able to negotiate the psychological contract from a position of powerlessness.
- Able to reach 'win/win' agreements.

### **Political Awareness**

- Understands the hidden tensions and power struggles within organisations.
- Aware of the location of power and influence within organisations.

### **Coping with Uncertainty**

- Able to adapt goals in the light of changing circumstances.
- Able to take myriads of tiny risks.

### **Development Focus**

- Committed to lifelong learning.
- Understands preferred method and style of learning.
- Reflects on learning from experiences, good and bad.
- Able to learn from the mistakes of others.

### **Transfer Skills**

- Able to apply skills to new contexts. This is a higher level skill in itself. Skills are not automatically transferable.

### **Self-confidence**

- Has an underlying confidence in abilities, based on past successes.
- Also has a personal sense of self-worth, not dependent on performance.

(Hawkins and Winter 1995)

## Further resources

Apart from the texts referenced above, there are many useful websites relevant to work-related learning. Below are ones that are likely to be particularly useful.

The **ESECT** website has many useful documents and links to useful sources and resources on WRL at [www.heacademy.ac.uk/870.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/870.htm)

**The Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA)** is a national network organisation and a registered educational charity. It seeks to 'promote the awareness of recording achievement and action planning processes as an important element in improving learning and progression throughout the world of education, training and employment'. Their URL is [www.recordingachievement.org/](http://www.recordingachievement.org/)

**The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services** website contains a lot of useful materials on work related learning at [www.agcas.org.uk](http://www.agcas.org.uk)

The **Prospects** website is a mine of information, help and advice at [www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/p!eLaXi](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/p!eLaXi)

The **Prospects Planner** web page has a self-assessment instrument that identifies career anchors at [www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/What\\_jobs\\_would\\_suit\\_me\\_\\_\\_Prospects\\_Planner\\_/p!epkbi](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/What_jobs_would_suit_me___Prospects_Planner_/p!epkbi)

Useful materials on **Personal Development Planning** are provided on the HE Academy Generic Website at [www.heacademy.ac.uk/867.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/867.htm)

Useful **development tools and aids** are provided at <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/866.htm>

The University of San Francisco website has a relevant and amusing use of **the Johari window**, which invokes four different sorts of person depending upon the emphasis there is upon the different panes of the Johari window (The open-receptive person, the pumper, the hermit and the blabbermouth). See [www.cps.usfca.edu/324sh/johari.htm](http://www.cps.usfca.edu/324sh/johari.htm)

A list of Top Ten Tips for developing **emotional intelligence** is provided on website: [www.eqi.org/summary.htm](http://www.eqi.org/summary.htm)

[All websites checked 1 June 2005]

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## Notes

- 1 I am indebted to Tim Slaughter (Centre for Outcomes Based Education, the Open University) for this reference to Glasgow Caledonian University.
- 2 As this paper places an emphasis upon self-knowledge that is missing in accounts of work-related learning, it is important to (briefly) understand the nature of the self, and the role the different aspects of the self play in effective work related learning. Whilst there are a number of perspectives upon the self, and how to analyse it, the simple definition of the self favoured here is that of Layder (2004:7) who suggests that the self may be defined as, 'how a person regards themselves and how they, and others, relate to, or behave towards, themselves'. The self thus consists of knowledge about oneself (learning preferences, for example) that is deployed by a person in the process of living out their daily lives. In turn, those daily lives have effects also for our self-concept, perhaps causing us to modify or substantiate our self-image. Layder confirms this when he says that there are a number of key dimensions or properties to the self:
  - The self is a centre of awareness, with executive agency and control;
  - The self is (also) flexible and pliable, changing, evolving and developing over time and place.

The knowledge, understanding and image we have of ourselves are commonly referred to either as our Self or our Identity. To these characteristics, we may add those of reflection and reflexivity (an awareness of self and one's interface and effects upon the world) considered an increasing feature in our late modern life (see Giddins 1991)

- 3 See [www.nd.edu/~rbarger/kohlberg.html](http://www.nd.edu/~rbarger/kohlberg.html) for a useful short explanation.







## Enhancing Student Employability

There are many definitions of what it is to be 'employable' and views on the processes that develop this attribute. The Learning and Employability Series offers a wide range of perspectives on the employability of graduates, based on the premise that, in higher education, 'employability' is about good learning.

One of many definitions of employability that has underpinned the work of the Higher Education Academy and ESECT is:

'A set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation(s) to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.'

ESECT was an initiative to support the higher education sector in its efforts to develop highly skilled, employable graduates who can contribute effectively to national prosperity in the 21st century.

ESECT consisted of individuals with extensive experience of employability issues. The team comprised representatives of stakeholder organisations including the National Union of Students (NUS), the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR), the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) and the Higher Education Academy. It drew on the expertise of key researchers and practitioners in the field including Professor Peter Knight, Professor Lee Harvey, Brenda Little and Professor Mantz Yorke.

ESECT was funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England between October 2002 and February 2005.

The Higher Education Academy is progressing the work to enhance the employability of graduates developed in partnership with ESECT.

To find out more visit the Higher Education Academy Employability web pages:

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/employability.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/employability.htm)



Higher education institutions are coming under increasing pressure to ensure their graduates have relevant employability skills. Institutions are also being encouraged to help students develop enterprise skills so that more graduates have the confidence and knowledge to set up businesses.

Senior managers and academics are looking for support at all levels to embed employability and enterprise into the higher education experience.

The Higher Education Academy is committed to helping institutions improve the employability and entrepreneurship of all students. The Academy has worked with a number of partners to provide a range of tools and resources in these areas.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funded the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT) to help the sector engage with the employability policy. Its work began in September 2002 and finished at the end of February 2005.

ESECT dovetailed its plans with those of the Academy to provide a one-stop-shop on employability matters. The priority was to strengthen links with others committed to enhancing student employability.

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Heslington  
York YO10 5BR  
United Kingdom

Tel: 01904 717500  
Fax: 01904 717505  
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