Dance Map – The Employability Journey

Reflections on Experiential Learning and Facilitating Employability

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Embedding Employability into the Curriculum?

- Over the last decade we have developed an applied approach to pedagogy
- Developing a dance company experiential model as part of the curriculum design at BA & MA levels
Why the Strategic Enhancement Programme?

- We lacked definitive evidence to tell us whether our approach is successful and truly enhancing employability.

- Limited by DLHE statistics (6 month perspective) and therefore a need for a more rounded, current and longitudinal perspective to really reflect on employability.

- To gain a practical insight into operationalising employability and utilising an experiential learning model to develop reflective practitioners.
Why the Strategic Enhancement Programme?

- Concerns over perceptions of gaining employment within the arts sector after graduation, particularly in Dance.
- Increasing emphasis on students to utilise creativity, innovation and interdisciplinary skills embedded within the curriculum.
Research Objectives

- To identify and articulate the practice-led approaches embedded within the University of Chichester Dance curriculum.

- To critique the employability journeys of current and past students, in relation to:
  - Their understanding of their studies and where the employability elements were seen as most effective
  - Skills acquisition and practice
  - Current employment and challenges
  - Routes to gaining employment

- To interview sector professionals to gather current evidence of the skills and competences that they look for in a dance graduate.
Identifying Dance Career Destinations

- Self Employed/Freelance Dance Artist
- Employment Outside Of Dance
- Choreographer
- Dancer/Performer
- Community Dance
- Further Education/University Lecturer
- Your Dance Journey
- Health & Well-being/Fitness Instructor
- Dance Movement Psychotherapy
- Technical Theatre/Stage Manager
- Dance & Digital Media
- Primary/Secondary Teacher
Methodology

- Qualitative interviews with past BA (Hons) Dance students, current MA and graduate MA students
- Online survey to Dance Alumni
- Views of employers/sector professionals
- Consultation internally with Careers and Employability Service, and other Departments
‘...[for a student]...you come out of your initial university experience with a deep skill (dance) but you can’t stop there, you need to keep adding further deep skills but you will need to have horizontal skills at the top of the ‘T’ which are the interpersonal…and you only learn these soft skills by doing them on the job’

Pauline Tambling
Creative and Cultural Skills
Stage 1: Discussion and Reflection
Creating and defining a shared point of reference

Stage 2: Review/Mapping
What are we doing/not doing?

Stage 3: Action
How do we share and enhance existing practice?
How do we address gaps in provision?

Stage 4: Evaluate
What does success look like and how is it measured?
How can we enhance practice further?

Goals:
A defined, cohesive and more comprehensive approach to employability
CBI Employability Skills

Self Management

Application of Numeracy

Application of IT

Communication

Business & Commercial Success

Problem Solving

Team Working
CBI Employability Skills

Team Working

Self Management

Problem Solving

Business & Commercial Success

Communication

Application of IT

Application of Numeracy

Generic v Discipline Specific Employability Skills

Reference Points
Experiential Learning/Reflective Practitioner Model

Concrete Experience
Creative process working with a choreographer, experiencing, engaging directly with professionals, learning new knowledge, placements

Analysing/Reflective Observation/Sharing
Group work, discussing, interpreting, watching, doing

Sharing/Engaging
Deepening subject knowledge, contextualising sharing what has been learnt with other through teaching workshops, doing, employer engagement and testing out responses to plans

Repetition/Rehearsal

Implementing Experience/Active
Taking the studio learning into the theatre, conceptualising, production of publicity literature, posters, programmes, lighting plans

Applying/Abstract Conceptualisation/Honing Skills
Refining, creating, liaising, reviewing, interpreting

Repetition/Rehearsal

[Adopted from Kolb, 1984]
What does Embedding Employability into the Dance Curriculum Look Like?

- Real not simulated experiences
- Working with choreographers
- Teaching workshops and residences
- Developing choreographic skills
- Working with a budget
- Organising a tour
- Lighting a show
Key Questions:

- How to operationalise this framework?
- How does it link to the student journey?
- What does it mean at Level 3, Level 4 and Level 5?
Employability Journey Model

Pre-University
- Marketing and Recruitment

During University
- The Student Experience

Post Graduation
- Capturing the Graduate Voice
Employability Journey Model

Pre-University
- Creating the Employability Proposition

During University
- Embedding the Employability Proposition

Post Graduation
- Monitoring and Evaluating the Impact of the Employability Proposition
Employability Journey Model

• Pre-University
  Marketing and Recruitment
  *Creating the Employability Proposition*
  - Website / Prospectus / Social Media
  - Widening Participation
  - Open Days / Auditions
  - Employer Engagement

Managing expectations and clear messages about employability
Assessing the Impact of the Project

- **National Student Survey statistics**
  - Consistently high scores in the NSS
  - 100% overall satisfaction for the UG programmes

- **Engaging students in the research process**
  - Two graduate students were employed to work on the data gathering/interviews
  - Raised all students awareness

- **Refinements to curriculum**
  - Embed rather than ‘bolt-on’
  - Students need constant reinforcement of what they have done, why and how to use the new knowledge
Conclusions

- The project has helped to critique approaches to employability within the Dance Department both pedagogically and operationally

- Basis of continued research programme (utilising students as partners in research)

- Development of a transferable interdisciplinary research methodology that affords a greater opportunity to capture the employability journey of students

- Interdisciplinary toolkit and checklists for employability which will form basis of new staff development sessions and wider dissemination
A final thought!