Educating for the Real World Symposium
Summary of Propositions & Challenges

Symposium Aim
To share and deepen our understandings of what we mean by educating for the real world and how we design experiences and assessments that encourage, integrate, value and recognise learning gained through these forms of education.

Participants were invited to advance their own propositions for what 'educating for the real world' means.. this is what they said

- It's about bringing a subject to life, explaining the theory, nurturing an understanding and articulation of knowledge & ownership of that theory – then running with it & exploring an individual perspective within it – how can they add, develop, expand upon?

- Exploration of students collaborating with staff in designing their learning, especially at level 3.

- Producing world-class graduates who have been provided with the best facilities, resources & learning approaches available to prepare them for the real world.

- The development of skills which will be helpful for solving real problems.

- The experience of real practice helps to increase the motivation of gathering necessary knowledge.

- Understanding of self, role, impact & context at different stages of life & career – relative this to interactions with other people individually & en masse.

- The real world is in constant flux, so requires adaptability.

- It is unpredictable, so requires resilience.

- Buy-in by university, society at large is essential, so dialogue and public awareness needed.

- Communicating, not very effectively but efficiently.

- Educating for today, tomorrow and for life and coping with the resulting conflicts.

- Is your real world my real world? WE may overlap but are we the same? (Why should we be takers vs givers etc?)

- Regarding proposition 2 – not on vocationally based degrees that work to blend subject knowledge & specialist skills with the industry (one that involves people-centred relationships)/communication.

- Progress i.e. employability, progress contexts, progress skills.

- Regarding the first proposition: This is essential in our subject area – dance.

- What if the novel is the best way to access the 'real world'? Perhaps because life 'in the real world' is an ongoing story 'real world' as experience and text.

- Real world learning involves experience plus reflection on and abstraction from experience. As distinct from experiencing alone (as can happen in the worlds outside it), or reflection & abstraction alone (as can happen in the real world).

- Modelling the flexibility that is the fundamental terrain of life outside the academy, within the academy, through curriculum, environment and management processes.

- I've latched onto the idea of 'enjoyment' how that motivates us, gives us confidence, a sense of being true to ourselves, how it sustains & feeds our sense of identity. (Recently saw a programme on how professionalism is ruining sport & how our best sportsmen perform best when they are 'in the tone' like totally absorbed children). I've seized onto this because it could raise student satisfaction & retention (key strategic issues) & what's more 'real world' than loving & enjoying whatever it is we decide to do.

- Avoid reading to 'protect' from real world until 'ready'.
- Learn by doing things but also by 'being' things/ roles: enacting them.
- Being aware; building awareness of one's learning.

- Regarding the first proposition, I'd prefer 'as well as' rather than 'rather than' …Even if we create (or just experience) a world in our minds, it is very real to us. 'Nothing's good or bad but thinking makes it so' (or words to that effect) Hamlet. Indeed, self-directed, personal, intuitional learning & change (R.Boyatzis) can result in new neural pathways. Our minds determine our real worlds as well as being part of them. Student Learning Journey : QUT 'transitions out' – 'confident, self-aware and practical': the first two depend on inner perceptions. Also individual identity vs professional identity: in whose eyes?

  Regarding the second proposition, attending to the effective domain, for students, staff and external 'stakeholders' and participants.

  Other comments

- Full agreement with presentation(s) – issue is the reality of generating and sustaining curriculum change.

2. **Using your department and institution as a reference point. What are the key challenges and issues relating to encouraging higher education institutions to engage more deeply in designing curricula and assessments that combine, integrate, value and recognise learning gained from informal situations outside the classroom?**

- At Bournemouth University we already do this, it is part of our strategic planning which incorporates the following:
  - Enhancing the first year experience
  - Technology-enhanced learning
  - Globalisation & internationalism
  - World based learning
  - Employability
  - PDP

This is now successfully embedded into the curriculum and they are university-wide accepted into the curriculum, if development teams undergoing review & validation omit these areas in their curriculum then they will be stipulated as conditions within the outcomes process before they can recruit/proceed.

- Initially this was quite widespread across review & validation events, but now it is successfully embedded & staff are well educated through university policy, guidance and staff development. We also have checklists to aid staff.
- I deliver a number of QA+ enhancement staff development workshops and these are key areas of information so every new staff member is informed.

- It's hard to make a transition from ordinary/used system to a new thinking.

- We appoint/value HE staff on subject specificity (PHd, research productivity etc) = narrow when what we need is…..
  - Broadening/flexibility in staff
  - Even the QA system works against 'innovation' because of proximity to 'league tables', NSS etc.

The Issue is Cultural Change (among real people).

- Silo mentality – each school operates autonomously, funding allocation reinforces that. 'Research' led – poses problems/conflict with student experience.
- Packed 'teaching' timetable – time can be a genuine issue in some schools/depts
- Lack of genuine recognition of need for WIL – academia is an intellectual pursuit – can learn 'real world' when graduate!

- Definition & systematic refinement across the university as 'a whole' – often initiatives don't always suit all subject areas. Getting the balance of understanding the student as an individual & tailoring experiences, outcomes & reflection accordingly.

- Balance of time and value. How much do we want to give to fulltime new university students and how much can the students take or willing to take?

- Not designing around current industry needs. Needs to be broader. Move it to the centre of the curriculum. Fear of loss of control. Fear of loss of purpose (knowledge importer).

- 'Elephants without any legs' as F.D.R. called them. Encouraging teaching/facilitating that reaches out and engages informal student experience.

- Overcoming the mindset described by Deborah Peach as 'autonomy' within Faculties, disciplines etc – so that their members acknowledge that theirs' is just one block in the lego set that is the Real World.

- Putting the student in the driving seat and enabling them/empowering them to take (more) responsibility for their own learning. This means standing the traditional learning model on its head – bottom up not top down.

- Senior management that encourage & allow space for course teams to develop ideas & new ways of working. Not withstanding the weight of day to day admin that is involved in running a course, but praising and disseminating good practice (from the top).

- To enlarge understanding and to develop common approach that it is important – to cognite real world not only from books or not only in library. And to understand the changes that happens all the time – so preparation is not for 'job role' but to 'ability to act' in changing environment.

- Power & control – encouraging thinking around how learning happens rather than the discipline knowledge of stuff.
- How do we evaluate informed learning?
- How do they i.e. learner themselves evaluate?
- Digital stories and criteria – Gloucester.

- Outside 'normal' boundaries.
- Fear of more work in a VERY stretched HEI setting – having to 'capture' all the informal learning situations.
- Change/development is uneasy.

- Winning hearts and minds – academics.
- Competing agendas – research; teaching; employability; student satisfaction; recruitment/survival; strategy & effect on HE

- Disciplinary knowledge emphasis in HE, supported by systems & structures e.g. REF.
- Vested interests of powerful players in HE.
- Difficulty in making change in HE through general behaviour of many academics i.e. focus on their own disciplinary knowledge/research.

- Values/rivalries
- Time
- Finance
- Wicked problems e.g. how to assess
- Deferred results.

- Budgets to adhere to
- Environment – is it receptive to the idea e.g. employers
- Students who come in with experiences (which are not necessarily productive) especially those who have dropped out of school and pick up education at a later date.

- Challenges of designing and resourcing this with very large classes.

- A climate of needing to control & deliver predictable learning outcomes.
- A risk averse culture (i.e. wider society).
- A preference for technological knowledge is embodied and that learning involves emotions.

- Assessment criteria; how do you assess individual experiences?
- The number of students: group/team work but it loses individuality/individual stories.
- International students: confidence, language barrier – writing/debate skills

- Challenges to others
  - Conflict of change, need to widen out to new philos of education & learning.
  - Fear of change.
  - Resistance to adapting new (non-subject specific curric design & outcomes.
  - Already on the journey to more clearly articulate the model & help others to adopt it…