Paper 38 – Workshop

Engaging with the Employability Challenge

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Abstract

Aim: To explore methods of harnessing staff and student creativity to generate feasible,
viable, creative and original approaches to a shared challenge in a changing environment.

Background and Context

Graduate employability has been a key concern for the UK Higher Education Sector for
decades (for example, Robbins, 1963; Dearing, 1997; Leitch, 2006). However, recent
economic challenges have led authors such as Rae (2008: 789) to accurately anticipate
unprecedented challenges for UK HE institutions (HEIs) to enhance graduate employability
amidst ever increasing, and justified, public scrutiny. Further impetus for HEIs to address the
challenge of graduate employability has been fuelled by Browne (2010).
Recent research into 14 UK HEIs indicates that graduate employability is articulated well
throughout mission statements, teaching and learning strategies, validation process systems
etc. However, the extent to which these strategies are effectively implemented at course level
is rather more variable (Andrews & Russell, 2011). Whilst this research identified pockets of
excellent practice, questions arose regarding issues such as:

  •Mismatches in understanding and perception of employability skills between
   student, staff and employers
  •The effectiveness of communication regarding employability strategies
  •Staff and student awareness, understanding and 'buy in' to HEI employability
   strategies

The workshop will enable participants to:

  • Reflect on a case study involving creative approaches to engaging staff and
   students
  • Formulate ideas through engagement in a group narrative party game

This workshop will allow delegates to explore one HEI's experience of encouraging students
and staff to collaboratively and creatively engage in order to address some of these
issues. The 'Graduate Employability Challenge' required participating teams of staff and
students to identify a range of actions in order to enhance graduate employability. Delegates

will be invited to participate in an exercise to explore aspects of employability, based on the group narrative party game of 'consequences'.   Case study entries will be presented (Jackson, Oliver, Shaw & Wisdom, 2006).

References
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