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Enhancing Undergraduate Learning and Employability by Adopting Professional Practice from the Creative Industries

Jo Conlon & Andrew Taylor
University of Huddersfield

Flexible Learning Through Professional Practice Conference
Bath Spa University, 12th July 2013
This project explores the future of fashion business education

What triggered the research

How things worked out

Useful models

This presentation is in three parts:

Inspiring tomorrow’s professionals
Trends in Education

Inspiring tomorrow’s professionals

Background on the module: Global Sourcing for Fashion & Textiles

• Cohort of 90 intermediate level students (UG Y2)
  – Subject area: Textiles
    • Design x2
    • Business management
• Insight into the processes & practices
• Diverse programme of topics and speakers
• Well supported by external industry specialists
• On paper it works...

Inspiring tomorrow’s professionals
Trends in Industry

- What is desirable to users
- What is viable in the marketplace
- What is possible with technology
- What is sustainable for the future

Design thinking for innovation in business

Inspiring tomorrow’s professionals

Image: Adapted from Brown (2008, p.86) and http://chrisbernardblogs.com/design_thinking_digest/business/page/2/
Background on the module: Global Sourcing for Fashion & Textiles

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  – Subject area: Textiles
    • Design x2
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• Diverse programme of topics and speakers
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• On paper it works...
Chaos of a redesign

New conceptual model
Walltexx

WALLTEXX Mission Statement

WALLTEXX's mission is to serve as a non-profit organization working to fulfill hospitals need to create a safe and comfortable environment for children within their care.

WALLTEXX aims to improve children's experiences within a hospital environment, whilst reducing their anxiety.

Our Team

Earth Kids
Future Students as practitioners to local businesses

Inspiring tomorrow’s professionals
The learning design

Resources
- Project Brief
- PLM visual as overview
- Belbin questionnaire
- Tuckmann Model
- Previous projects (depth)
- Role profiles (more than members)
- Lectures topical content
- Lecture on team effectiveness
- External speakers - opportunities - real life perspective
- Proposal form for submission week 5

Tasks
- **Prepare**
  - Bring info on trends & product shows to share
- **Team**
  - Complete / discuss Belbin Contract/evaluation of peers. Communication
- **Allocate Roles**
  - Agree leadership and individual responsibilities
- **Confirm product development**
- **Prototype**
- **Formalise formative feedback to prevent ‘drift’**
- **Presentations to panel**
  - Group mark allocation
- **Team de-brief**
  - Collate / submit concise summary

Support
- Forming team task / icebreaker
- Example of a team contract
- Peer review
- Wiki preloaded with resources / links
- Wiki / Yammer / Facebook group or alternative
- Tutor available end of every session. 30 mins “team time” week 1-5
- Dealing with common problems
- IT Manager session - They can then roll it out
- Other specialist sessions - Finance, HR - Sourcing

Reflection
- Personal reflection log (to include evidence if petitioning against a group mark)

**The learning design**

Constructed using Oliver et al (2007) temporal sequence framework for role-based learning designs
1. Planning and preparation
2. Team project
3. Reflection and evaluation
Key Aspects

1. Planning and preparation
2. Team project
3. Reflection and evaluation

Pre-loaded wiki

Resources

Tasks

Support

Yammer: 2013-14
1. Planning and preparation
2. Team project
3. Reflection and evaluation
Key Aspects

1. Planning and preparation
2. Team project
3. Reflection and evaluation

Resources

Tasks

Support

Consultants
Use of external consultants

IT Managers meet with consultant

Overview of main providers PLM range of technologies in apparel/soft products.

Students research cloud technologies as alternatives and then disseminate relevant lead their team from their position of ‘expert’

Lead their group to consider choices of social media for improving on and adapting on industry PLM software providers solutions.
Software used

Support via Consultation
Next steps

• Extend list of specialist consultants to cover all roles
  – Finance
  – Testing / Quality Assurance
  – Careers

• Include external businesses
  – As specialists
  – As clients

Support via Consultation
Effective teamwork

• Must be assessed
• Belbin
  – Opens discussion
  – Awareness
  – Understanding to work effectively
• Further taught sessions
• Keep professional minutes
  – Evidence: attendance and actions
• Peer evaluation
  – Evaluating WebPA for 2013
• Personal reflection
Knowing, Doing and Being

Reflection

I aspire to be...
Therefore I need to...

- **attributes**: 'I am...'
- **practices**: 'I do...'
- **skills**: 'I can...'
- **access**: 'I have...'

Image: Beetham and Sharpe (2011)
I felt as though I really achieved something through this task as I reached out of my comfort zone [...] The assignment has also highlighted areas I would like to know more about [...] I feel I have gained invaluable knowledge of the industry I aspire to be part of’ L-20

In industry, I will need to be able to work alongside people with other specialisms and different characteristics and attitudes. This module helped me realize this and help me notice that sometimes I have to adapt the way I work to work better within a team’ L-23

I feel that this experience has developed me as a person, in preparation for my role in industry. I now really enjoy working in a group and no longer daunted by working in teams L-7

This project helped me grow, as a designer and as a potential employee [...] It has made me extremely interested in the administrative side of a company and I have applied for a partial administrative placement on the back of this project. To help me develop my skills I have been spending a lot of time researching product development and entrepreneurial skills in the library’ L-18

‘I felt as though I really achieved something through this task as I reached out of my comfort zone [...] The assignment has also highlighted areas I would like to know more about [...] I feel I have gained invaluable knowledge of the industry I aspire to be part of’ L-20
Okayyy, so this is the one I want to use....it turns out I have the rubbish version of imovie so my editing isn't the best.

I used Google sketch up and cyber link power director software. Its not perfect but its alright for a first attempt at software I had no knowledge even existed!!!!!!!!

Keeping in touch through Facebook group messaging was convenient, yet I feel using the ‘wiki’ could have been a more professional way of exchanging ideas and thoughts as Facebook could often be distracting
Using REAP project rhetorical format
(Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006)

• Problem domain
• Educational aspiration
  – Grander than the project itself
• Underpinning educational principles
  – Each principle is backed by research on how their application improves student learning
3 fundamental components

Problem domain
• Learning spaces for the 21st century

Aspiration
• Collaborative learning spaces that mimic and encourage professional practice

Principles
• Digitally connected community
• Participation to seed engagement
• Autonomous learners
• Provide insight & opportunity
• Encourage enterprise
• Develop business language

Inspiring tomorrow’s professionals
Conclusion

• Through the need to redesign a module, a collaborative learning space that mimics systems and roles of the industry was established to provide a realistic context so that learners gain experience of the industry by collaborating in this community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and can rehearse and affirm emerging graduate identities (Holmes, 2001).

• I strongly believe that the creation of collaborative, digitally-supported learning spaces has much to offer for the future development of teaching and learning in the 21st century.
Thank you for your time and attention

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References

References

- Taylor, P and Wilding, D. (2009) Rethinking the values of higher education - the student as collaborator and producer? Undergraduate research as a case study. QAA [online] Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/students/studentengagement/undergraduate.pdf> [Accessed 14th September 2010]