

Applying Psychology to Enhance Reflective Ability Allied to Career Planning & Employability: 'Using Psychology to Understand Your Work Related Role'

Shirley J Pressler

University of Huddersfield

Students in the division of Psychology at the University of Huddersfield are being offered an intermediate module where they are encouraged to combine work related *experience* with their developing academic knowledge of psychology – 'work related experience' is defined fairly loosely here. Students are introduced to a series of psychology based tutor facilitated tasks which they undertake relatively independently in small groups. In this context they are introduced to a number of ways in which they might make use of psychology suitable for a number of work related roles they may undertake. Students are then required to select from, and explore at least one of the practical based task topics from an 'experiential' work related context of their choice e.g. paid work, voluntary work, and role as a parent or carer in order to closely examine the relationship with their chosen role. Here they are required to give some focus to making use of experiential perspectives in contemporary psychology. However, this does not directly involve research based activities within a workplace; rather the ability to be *reflective* about psychological knowledge in relation to the selected work related experience is sought. Students are expected to capture any *Perspective Transformations* they experience as a result of integrating their knowledge and understanding of psychology with experiential aspects of their selected work related role. They are asked to consider the question '*Does your understanding of psychology not only help you better understand your experience of your work related role but does reflecting on it also help you recognise how this changes your actions?*'

The tasks introduced in the module give some focus to naturalistic observation, communicative aspects of psychology, interpersonal relationships and some organisational issues, all in the context of team work and constructive peer support against a backdrop of ethically driven ground rules. Methods of assessment foster ongoing online record keeping and reflection; online POST responses, WIKI, BLOG and DISCUSSION BOARD, as appropriate are utilized. This culminates in submission of a Reflective Portfolio followed by a focussed Reflective Assignment evidencing that students have read both psychological and work related literature and attended to experiential aspects of their 'role'.

The module has run for one year, is being developed in negotiation with students (for example more career advice and support is being included this academic year) and is being prepared for blended delivery and expansion into a mandatory module ready for the next academic year. More focus on career planning from the onset, development of a bank of voluntary work opportunities and a gradual shift over to more virtual activity in negotiation with the current student cohort is planned.

Overall, this module addresses several issues identified in respect of 'fitness of purpose' of psychology provision for undergraduates identified by Trapp et al (2011) and importantly addresses concerns expressed by employers therein.

Email: s.j.pressler@hud.ac.uk

References

Trapp, A., Bannister, P., Ellis, J., Latto, R., Meill, D. & Upton, D. (2011) *The Future of Undergraduate Psychology in the United Kingdom*, HEA, York, available at <http://www.psychology.heacademy.ac.uk>