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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

Inspiring tomorrow’s professionals
This project explores the future of fashion business education

This presentation is in three parts:

- What triggered the research
- How things worked out
- Useful models

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 possible with technology

Design thinking for innovation in business

What is viable in the marketplace

What is sustainable for the future

Inspiring tomorrow’s professionals

Image: Adapted from Brown (2008, p.86) and http://chrisbernard.blogs.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
    - Business management
- Insight into the processes & practices
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- Well supported by external industry specialists
- On paper it works...
Chaos of a redesign

New conceptual model
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

Constructed using Oliver et al (2007) temporal sequence framework for role-based learning designs
Key Aspects

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

Pre-loaded wiki

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

Authentic, autonomous
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
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

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

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 be realize this and help me notice that sometimes I have to adapt the way I work to work better within a team' L-23

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. It's not perfect but it's 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

Contact: Jo Conlon
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I am grateful to Andrew Taylor for his contributions to this module and research.
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]