

Welcome to the final issue of 2017. Issue 7.4 opens with Mortimer's paper, "Transforming the student-learning experience: the Triple-V model of experiential learning" which explores the centrality of the student learning experience to modern-day higher education (HE). The paper suggests that student experience can be enhanced using the Triple-V model of experiential learning, devised and developed by the author. The Triple-V model focusses on vision, value and vocation and the theory behind the model is supported by practical examples which can be used by lecturers from across disciplines. The author argues that the role of educators is to offer students a transformative learning experience and that the Triple-V model can guide educators through practical pathways to transform the student learning experience from an introspective view into an outward-looking vision towards employability. Evidence-based results have informed the innovative methods of the Triple-V model; three scenarios are reviewed, each of which have been trialed by students, whose feedback informed, shaped and honed the development of the model.

The issue's second paper also looks at student employability. In "Preparing sport graduates for employment: satisfying employer's expectations" the author, Dinning, reminds us that the UK remains one of Europe's biggest employers in sport, with the sports industry fast becoming a highly significant employer of people worldwide and presenting today's graduates with some very diverse avenues to explore for employment, compared to those existing even 20 years ago. Universities keen to develop employable graduates are exploring what this means across the sector. Subject-specific research on employability and enterprise is in demand, as much of the existing literature is generic. Mindful of the growth in the sport industry, this paper presents the sports labour landscape by exploring current literature to show its diverse nature, and then considers the specific skills required of a sports graduate today, concentrating on organisations involved with the delivery of sport in communities.

Staying with the idea of employable graduates our next paper, Rothman's "Employer assessments of business interns", discusses perceptions about graduates' preparation for employment, and considers the different stakeholders' opinions on this. Research findings informing the paper suggest that academic credit-based internship programs can aid in the preparation process. The data gathered from questioning intern's supervisors are analysed and discussed. This study has collected data from 389 supervisors across a variety of business functions, and uses this to aid individual career development by identifying interns' strengths, weaknesses and advice for professional improvement. The author suggests that HE providers should collect outcome assessments on interns from supervisors, as they can then not only identify the strengths and weaknesses of their curricula, but also their soon-to-be graduates; and provide support and resources for performance improvement.

Jones, Ardis, McClure, Ma, Ambavarapu and Spears continue the theme of graduate internships in "Work-integrated learning (WIL) in information technology: an exploration of employability skills gained from internships". Work-integrated learning (WIL) is an activity that integrates academic learning with its application in the workplace, thus enabling students to acquire practical skills and experience through their engagement in real work tasks and environments. WIL includes internships, externships, and simulated work experiences and is more widespread in information technology (IT), internationally. The authors report that WIL is growing because it is considered one of the most effective



methods of gaining permanent employment by offering prospective employers concrete examples of practical workplace skills.

Whilst this type of experiential learning has the potential to have significant impact, the authors suggest that employers and participants must intentionally work toward quality, integrated interactions. Furthermore, they suggest that these interactions should be consistent with the concepts of academic engagement, with the student, the student's institution, and the placement site sharing in the responsibility of ensuring that the balance is appropriate and that the learning is of sufficiently high quality to warrant the effort, possibly including academic credit.

The study the paper reports upon explores the question "Which competencies do IT internship postings suggest students will receive as a result of their experience?" This is done by analysing internship postings in the field of IT, and furthermore determining the extent to which the competencies extracted from the job postings align with the technical and general competencies outlined in ACM/IEEE's body of knowledge for four-year IT programmes. The paper also reviews select literature of studies in IT education, experiential learning as well as internships and concludes with a description of the findings and a discussion of the internship analysis, along with next steps for research.

Lester in "Reconciling activity-based descriptions of competence with professional work" continues the discussion around applying competence standards to professional-level work, and notes some limitations in functional approaches by drawing on developments in professions and on a recent Erasmus+ project to propose a more adequate alternative. The Erasmus+ project created competence standards for five higher level occupations in different European countries. A model of competence is endorsed that is based on standards of practice applies holistically to professional or occupational fields rather than focusing on work roles and functions, respects contextual factors in defining competent action and necessitates situational interpretation and judgement.

The author suggests that descriptions of professional competence need to avoid being overly constrained by assumptions about the roles that practitioners might perform or the context in which practice takes place. They instead need to reflect the ethos and ethics of the field as well as more transversal aspects of professionalism; descriptions of this type are much more likely to reflect factors that are also valued in HE. The model of competence proposed seems valid for high-level professional work, and provides an approach to describing practice that is not limited to particular national contexts.

The issue's final paper, "Determinants of skills demand in a state-intervening labour market: the case of South African transport sector" by Tsotsotso, Montshiwa, Tirivanhu, Fish, Sibiya, Mlangeni, Molio and Mahlang offers a response to government policy and interventions around the higher level skills agenda. In an employment market experiencing direct regulation and intervention by a developing state; skills development agents (including the training authority, education institutions and private training providers) struggle to track the nature and quantity of employer skills demand due to lack of understanding of the emerging and dynamic drivers of skill demand in such a sector. The research discussed in this paper aimed to improve understanding of the drivers and determinants of skills demand in South Africa, in order to facilitate skills development and improve employability.

A mixed methods approach has been used and the study draws upon information from in-depth interviews with transport sector key stakeholders. The study also analyses employer-reported workplace skills plans from 1,094 transport sector firms. The main findings are that: changes in competition, technology, ageing employees, market conditions and government regulations are among the most frequently stated determinants reported through interviews. The study identifies eight determining factors, these include: location of firm, size of a firm, occupation type, racial and generational transformation, subsector of the

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firm, skills alignment to national qualification framework, reason for skills scarcity and level of skills scarcity reported, and concludes that the fact that the state plays a close and direct role in employment matters across the transport sector, consequently has a close and direct effect on skills demand in the sector.

The issue closes with a commentary from Adrian Anderson, UVAC. This provides a fascinating, up-to-the minute review of the current situation surrounding higher and degree apprenticeships in England.

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As always, please get in touch with your publication ideas, themes for potential special issues and abstracts for consideration – all best wishes.

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