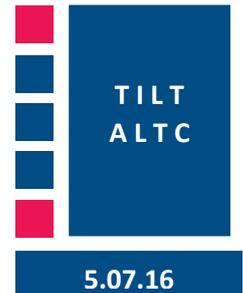


Transforming learning through Scholarship

Session Abstract



Dimensions of scholarly activity in employability from different disciplines

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In this session, participants were engaged with presentations from different disciplines who shared followed how they contextualised the delivery of employability agenda in their disciplinary pedagogy. This was followed by a discussion aimed at sharing effective practices and reflecting on the issues and challenges faced in delivering employability development.

Employability agenda has been at the heart of the Higher Education sector for 20 years. Since the mid-1990s, UK HE institutions (HEIs) have been encouraged by government policies (e.g. NCIHE, 1997) and labour market demands, to promote employability throughout curricula and pedagogies. From the government point of view (e.g. Department for Business Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2013; NCIHE, 1997), HE plays a fundamental role in making the country more competitive to fulfil the 'broad' requirements from the market by providing graduates with the types of knowledge, skills and qualities to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing global economy (Tomlinson, 2007). To achieve and thus ensure HEIs are fulfilling this purpose, the government suggests *"universities need to produce a statement on how they promote student employability, setting out what they are doing to prepare their students for the labour market, and how they plan to make information about their employment outcomes of their provision available to prospective students", in order to address the 'top concern' of business in which 'students should leave university better equipped with a wider range of employability skills"* (BIS, 2009, p.61). At Nottingham Trent University, "all students will develop relevant professional attributes gained through meaningful work placement or experience embedded into the design, learning, and assessment of every course" (NTU, 2015).

Embedding employability in curriculum and assessment is believed to be the most appropriate and meaningful way for employability development (Harvey, 2005). In theory, many teaching activities that promote good learning in the particular subject also promote employability in general; and employability and subject-specific learning are complementary not oppositional (Brown et al., 2006). Although it is believed that good 'employability agenda' should encourage teachers to use pedagogical approaches that are likely to enhance general employability whilst dealing with the specific of the subject (ibid), in practice the challenge remain. Nevertheless, NTU has developed strategies to support how academics could effectively deliver the embedded employability development in their curriculum and assessment, and make sure students remain employable upon graduation.

The TILT employability group has a particular interest to identify current employability best practices. Thus, the first part of the session (presenters from different disciplines (e.g. Economics, HRM, Sociology, Mathematics and Statistics, etc.) aims to share how

different academics contextualised the delivery of employability agenda in their disciplinary teaching and assessment practices. Rather than using a pure evidence based approach to suggest what works, this session promotes an approach that utilises academics who are well acquainted with scholarly evidence and who use experience and expert judgement in their employability pedagogy accordingly. Although no one can be expected to have the complete answer to employability challenges, this session aims to pool the insights across the University together – to share effective practices and to discuss and reflect on the issues and challenges we face in delivering employability development. The second part of the session will allow participants to discuss and evaluate key ideas presented and explain the importance of scholarly related activities to enhance students' employability prospects.

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Sarah Rayment is an Academic Associate Biosciences, is currently undertaking a piece of research on what digital skills STEM graduates are acquired to have by employers.