A ‘fresher’ look at employability

Larissa Bdzola
NACADA International Conference – Melbourne 2015

Leeds University Business School

Me

- Head of First Year, Senior Teaching Fellow and an experienced personal tutor at Leeds University Business School, UK
- Joined NACADA in 2013, and presented at the international conference in Maastricht, Netherlands
- Executive committee member of UK Advising and Tutoring Network (UKAT), launched in March 2015

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Session objectives

1a) What is the role of an academic personal tutor in employability advising?
1b) How can models of employability can inspire module design, assessment and advising?
2) What kind of practical activities are suitable for developing first year employability?
3) How can we evaluate and evidence students’ employability?
4) Module evaluation - what have I learned?

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Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Module</td>
<td>Credit bearing course contributing to degree programme (usually made up of lectures and classes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Work submitted by students which is marked that contributes towards their grade</td>
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<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Passing judgement or canvassing opinion about the module or piece of work, student or staff performance</td>
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<td>Fresher</td>
<td>First year undergraduate student (i.e. freshman)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Subject area e.g. ‘Faculty of Business’ (may be divided into departments/divisions e.g. Management)</td>
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<td>Class/seminar</td>
<td>Weekly or fortnightly teaching session in a classroom</td>
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BA Management student profile

- Approx 130 in first year
- Mainly 18 & 19 years old
- Approx 10% international (‘outside EU’)
- Approx 50:50 male/female ratio
- Generally choose to study Management because they want ‘a good job’ and to keep their career options open
- But… the vast majority have not studied Management previously

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1a) Role of academic personal tutor in employability advising

1b) Integrating and applying models of employability

The role of a personal tutor (UK)

- Every student is assigned to a personal tutor
- Normally a member of academic staff (faculty)
- One-to-one meetings throughout the year
- Discuss academic and personal development
- Work in partnership with other services

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University of Leeds Context

University of Leeds Personal Tutoring Policy:
‘It’s about inspiring students to get the most out of their academic and co-curricular experiences and build on their time studying at the University of Leeds. We want our students to be able to recognise the value of everything they have done at university and be at ease articulating this clearly and confidently….Encompasses the full range of the student experience: academic, preparation for careers and life after graduation, pastoral support.’

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What do we mean by ‘employability’?

- “A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes - that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy” (Yorke, 2006, p8)
- ‘A lifelong process’ (Cote & Tibby, 2013)
- Components of employability – ‘USEM’ (Yorke & Knight, 2006)
  - Understanding
  - Skilful practice
  - Efficacy beliefs
  - Metacognition

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DOTS (Law & Watts, 1977)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Decision learning</th>
<th>Help given to students to understand decision making styles and skills, and to learn about risk taking, responsibility and accountability, to help them make decisions which integrate their self and opportunity awareness.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity awareness</td>
<td>Help given to students to understand the working world and the opportunities and demands within it. Should include educational, occupational opportunities plus community/leisure/family opportunities.</td>
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<td>Transition learning</td>
<td>Help given to students to manage life transitions e.g. differences between school - university - work and supporting them in developing the skills they need to be successful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self awareness</td>
<td>Help given to students to enable them to explore actual and potential strengths, abilities, needs, aspirations…</td>
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Integrating USEM and DOTS

Opportunity awareness
Self awareness
Skillful practice
Efficacy beliefs
Understanding
Decision learning
Transitional learning
Metacognition

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Discussion

‘Exploring Your Potential’ module

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Induction &amp; Transition</th>
<th>Welcome, expectations of University, initial action planning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Development</td>
<td>Supported first essay assignment. How to think, read, research and write critically in Management. How to reflect on learning and feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>Generating career ideas, building commercial awareness through research, social media and networking: self presentation/CV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Development</td>
<td>Articulating personal identity e.g. skills, emotional/social intelligence and identifying opportunities to develop personal attributes</td>
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Assessment

• Essay on a Management topic (40%)
• Employability portfolio (60%)
  – reflective statement on academic, career and personal development plus evidence
  – DOTS model is introduced and revisited in class and the elements are interwoven into the assessment criteria.

2) Practical ‘employability activities’

Prospects Planner (Graduate Prospects Ltd 2015)

• Available at [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)
• Skills, motivations, desires
• Identifying common themes
• Company Secretary, Theatre Manager, Horticultural Therapist?
• Information on sectors and roles
• Set up alerts for job/internship opportunities
• Reflect on ideas in employability portfolio
• The start of a conversation
Engaging with business

(Video)

Targeted CV

- Work in partnership with the University Careers Centre
- Two workshops on CV writing
- Students find a “live” opportunity and produce a CV and letter of application tailored to the role (a number of students subsequently decided to actually apply for the role)
- CV included in employability portfolio

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3) Evidencing & evaluating developments in employability

Discussion

4) What have I learned?

Student case studies & student feedback will be presented on the day

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Summary

- Reflection was generally viewed as a positive process - it wasn’t the ‘hard sell’ I expected.
- Students generally found the portfolio interesting to put together.
- Employability messages seemed to have more impact from business leaders than lecturers. The conference was an overwhelming success on all fronts.
- There is scope for further development of critical reflective writing.
- Support from other specialists is invaluable.
- It is difficult (impossible?) to measure ‘employability’ but finding a way for students to benchmark their progress and engagement is essential.

Discussion

References