

University of the Arts London

“Creative Interventions: Valuing and Assessing Student Work-Related Learning Experiences in the Public and Third Sector”

The BA(Hons) Arts and Event Management Case Study

Dr Angeliki Triantafyllaki
University of the Arts London

A key element of programs is that they are sites of learning ... As such, they often embody visions of social futures.

Saville Kushner (2000:3)



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More information on the BA(Hons) Arts and Event Management course can be accessed at:

<http://www.aucb.ac.uk/courses/degrecourses/artsandeventmanagement.aspx/>.

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1. Introduction

(a) Background - Aims

This case study explored the work-related learning experiences of final-year students and graduates on the BA (Hons) Arts and Event Management course at the Arts University College at Bournemouth (AUCB).¹ This three year full time vocational course aims to prepare students for careers in the management of the arts and creative industries. An exceptionally high practical content in the form of group projects where students create 'live' arts and other events with consideration of the arts management environment is a unique and defining feature of the course.² Such events may include, for example, festivals, exhibitions, fashion shows, arts workshops, theatre productions, dance events, gigs and tours. The curriculum includes arts management, cultural theory and practice, arts marketing, human resource management, finance, information technology and various strategic studies that are all integrated into the project work.

The case study drew on final-year student focus group discussions, in-depth interviews with course graduates and their tutors and documentary evidence in order to map the ways in which *students and graduates benefited from the integration into this program of a wide variety of work-related learning (WRL) activities*, particularly 'live' projects. These activities are broadly characterized as not-for-profit. The majority of 'live' events take place in community settings and target multiple audiences, i.e. local youth, families, the elderly, while the profits made are placed back into the course budget for use by next year students' projects.

In this report, I've hoped to strike a balance between the voices of *student/graduate participants* and their experiences and the *course programme* itself, represented through the course handbook; the voices of tutors and administrators; and the wider University context that has contributed to its development.

As part of the *Creative Interventions* project the broad aims of this case study were to explore:

- How WRL experiences contribute to students' employability and creative skills;
- How these are identified by students and tutors; and
- How they are currently valued and assessed.

This wider project also tests the assumption that the creative attributes that arts students gain through their course-based learning experiences transfer into public and third sector professional settings.

¹ The Arts University College at Bournemouth is a project partner on the Creative Interventions Project: see <http://creativeinterventions.pbworks.com/> and <http://www.aucb.ac.uk/default.aspx/>.

² Retrieved online at: <http://www.aucb.ac.uk/courses/degrecourses/artsandeventmanagement.aspx/>.

More specifically, as part of the multiple case study analysis of this project and therefore taking under consideration the findings from an earlier research-based case study (Triantafyllaki, 2009), the specific aims of this case study were to further explore:

1. How creative transfer is 'triggered' by the ways in which the course itself, particularly its practice-based elements are organised and
2. How such WRL activities contribute to students' creative skills and employability by tracking final year students as they graduate.

The emphasis in this case study was placed on students' 'multidirectional' movement: from the course to the WRL activities and back again; and from being a student to graduating and entering the workforce.

(b) Methodology and Research Design

In this case study we draw on theories of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and situated views of learning transfer (Greeno et al, 1993) that support the epistemological assumption that learning involves the *construction of knowledge* rather than its passive acquisition (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2008:26). It takes the approach that learning environments should include *collaborative settings* where teachers act as partners, coaches as well as models, and where students can work together as well as engage in the exploration of ideas (Triantafyllaki & Burnard, 2010). In this theoretical stance, learning transfer takes the form of 'participation' in relatively stable formations or 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991); there is a strong motivational basis (it involves 'real-world', informal and not just formal learning spaces); and knowledge structures include not only mental and symbolic representations, but also physical artefacts and recurring patterns of social practice (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2008:26).

In recognising that tasks and situations where transfer occurs are continuously shifting, we draw also on sociocultural conceptualisations of learning (Beach, 2008) emphasising also the changing relationship between persons and the activities they engage with. Drawing on sociocultural conceptualisations of learning *transfer* we adopt the view that the transition between university and WRL activities involve the construction of new knowledge and skills, identities, ways of knowing and new positions of 'self' in the world; this is understood as *transformation* rather than as mere application or use of something that has been acquired elsewhere (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2008:28).

Drawing on these conceptual understandings, we are also interested in exploring how the WRL activities (work placements/ 'live' events) that constitute an integral part of the BA(Hons) Arts and Event Management course provided students with the support or 'affordances' (Greeno, 1993) for transfer and the creation of new knowledge.

Data collection took place across two stages. In November 2008, a two-hour long focus group discussion with 6 **final year students**³ and one course tutor took place at the AUCB. In May 2009 a second focus group discussion was held with two students from this initial group. In September 2009, the researcher interviewed five **graduates**⁴ from the course. Documentary evidence was collected throughout the study. Three of these graduates were interviewed by email. The two remaining graduates, who had also participated in both of the previous focus group discussions, were interviewed in-depth at the AUCB. Their work-related learning experiences and excerpts from their 3rd year major project reports are presented in the final section to this report.

(c) Summary of the Findings

Corresponding to the aims of this case study, the main findings are summarised below:

1. Students and course graduates were afforded opportunities to ‘translate’ their theoretical knowledge and understandings in ‘real world’ situations and develop new knowledge and skills through:

- a. *Tutor scaffolding throughout the WRL activities* (before, during and after). This seemed to initiate students’ reflexivity and enable them to make important connections between theoretical understandings and their practical application. The support took the form of:
 - *Tutorials*: individual or group sessions where students’ progress is closely monitored and ‘interactive’ feedback is provided.
 - *Learning agreements*: learning goals/aims co-developed during tutorials by tutor and individual student.
 - *Written reports*: students’ reflective analysis on the degree of achievement of Learning Agreement goals.
- b. *The strong integration of practice-based elements in the course*. Experiential learning was integrated throughout the course, and reflected the course philosophy of ‘learning by doing’.

2. The development of creativity in this case study resembled an apprenticeship model of creative learning, aspects of which were:

- a. *Authenticity of the activity and the task*
- b. *Student ownership of their own learning*
- c. *Genuine risk-taking*

3. A variety of personal and professional qualities, many of which linked to students’ ‘creative learning’ was evidenced in the data. The most prominent of these were:

³ These were Level 6 (3rd year) students, who were aiming to achieve a minimum of 360 credits in order to be awarded the BA(Hons).

⁴ All graduates-participants in the study had been awarded the BA(Hons).

- a. Personal: risk-taking/self-confidence, self-awareness/reflexivity, communication.
- b. Professional: teamworking, leadership/managing people, organisation, time-management.

3. Students translated their prior knowledge and understandings during the WRL activities in different ways. The first, evidenced strongly in the data, involved students drawing on their immediate knowledge and skills (or 'tools') that they developed during the course and using them in the work-based activities. This is akin to what Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström (2008) call 'horizontal expertise'. The second conception of transfer, that was less evidenced but nevertheless present in the data, involved students employing their course-based understandings in a more generalised way in order to make connections between different contexts and to create new knowledge (see Beach, 2008 and his concept of 'individual developmental transfer').⁵

2. Outline of the Course

(a) Philosophy – Aims – Outcomes

The BA(Hons) Arts and Event Management course at the AUCB began in 1993 as a 2-year higher national diploma course and has been running as a BA honours degree for the last ten years. For the last 4 years the course has run under the name of Arts and Event Management, and in 2009 it was re-validated for a 5-year term. In accordance with its *2009-10 Course Handbook*, the BA(Hons) Arts and Event Management course:

Exists to prepare students for careers in the management of the arts and creative industries, balancing the needs of the arts and creative industries sectors for innovators, entrepreneurs and managers with the students' needs to develop initiative and a personal critical approach to creative challenges, including the organisation of live arts events. (p.7)

The aims of the course are:

To develop critically informed and resourceful graduates who have the ability to conceive, plan and manage a range of innovative live arts events and arts and creative industries organisations, and the ability to be reflective about their practice and the environment they work in and take responsibility for their personal development in the longer term (p.8).

⁵ All images in this case study are accessed at:
<http://www.aucb.ac.uk/courses/studentworkfromcourses/artseventmanagement.aspx>

A unique and defining feature of the course is its exceptionally high practical content, a commitment to **learning by doing**, whereby emphasis is placed 'on the development of students' abilities through engagement in the creation and organisation of live arts events of all kinds from conception to realisation' (p.8). One tutor reports:

It's the experience thing that is the most important element of this course, and that's what students take away from it – to a certain extent the degree classification is less important I think than the experience they are getting on the course. (Tutor)

The organisation of site-specific events encourage 'event-based learning' (Shreeve, 2006) by providing opportunities for students to actively participate in 'real-world' activities beyond the university. Due to the high practical content of the course and strong tutor-student interaction, student intake numbers are kept relatively low (between 40-45).

(b) Course Structure

Theoretical work is related to practical application and this integration of theory and practice is promoted through a team teaching approach. Students are provided with opportunities to both develop a thorough grounding in the principles of management and marketing and to reflect on and test these principles in practice (2009-10 Course Handbook, p.8).

Course content – integrating theory and practice

As viewed in Table 1, the course units at each Level combine both theoretical knowledge (i.e. Event Production, Arts Management, etc.) and practice-based understanding, (i.e. Live Event 1, Live Event 2, Work Placement, Major Project).

Table 1: Course Units at each Level

Units	Credits
LEVEL 4	
Event Production	30
Culture and Society	22.5
Creative Entrepreneurship 1	22.5
Working in the Arts	15
Live Event 1	30
LEVEL 5	
Managing the Arts	22.5
Creative Entrepreneurship 2	22.5
Research into Contemporary Practice	22.5
Live Event 2	30
Work Placement	22.5
LEVEL 6	

Strategic Arts Management 1	22.5
Strategic Arts Management 2	22.5
Major Project	45
Extended Investigative Study	30
TOTAL	300

During the 1st year, students are equipped with basic skills around arts marketing and management, and through the unit 'Event Production', they are prepared for the live project work. Units in contemporary arts practices, i.e. 'Culture and Society', provide a thorough grounding in the cultural context in which they will be working in from an Arts perspective. In the 2nd year, key operational elements are developed further, i.e. arts management and marketing, programming, funding issues, etc. At the end of the 2nd year, and during the summer term, students undergo a five-week work placement, in order to reinforce the project-based learning in a professional context. Finally, during the 3rd year, there is a move away from events-based activities, towards an examination of the management of arts organisations, particularly the concept of entrepreneurship, alongside an extended piece of investigative study and the major project – a more complex, ambitious and demanding experiential element of the course to those undertaken at years 1 and 2.

The content and structure of the course strongly reflects the course philosophy of 'learning by doing', as noted by one tutor:

I think there are key elements of the course which haven't changed at all over the 16 years – principally a commitment to learning by doing, which is what we started with, and what we still believe is absolutely fundamental to the success of this particular course – I think our unique selling point is the – both the quantity and the quality of the live project work which our students undertake here, and that's something which has been built into the course from the beginning. Another element, which has been built into the course from the beginning, is the work placement element, that's always been there, and again, we see that as a fundamental – absolutely vital element of the course structure. So there are certainly key things which have remained unchanged – the commitment to project work has been there throughout, and the commitment to project work throughout the course, not just as a sort of something that students come to in the 2nd or 3rd year, but something that they're thrown straight into in the 1st year – I think those are key elements of the success of the course. (Tutor)

During the course, a wide variety of teaching and learning methods are employed, including projects, lectures, seminars, group critiques and tutorials. Work-related learning is integrated throughout the course, not simply in the work placements and 'live' events, as several students note:

The course itself offers a lot of work-related experiences – embedded in its curriculum. Most of the experience is done without one even really being aware of it as most of the course work and all of projects relate back to the REAL world out there or are case studies of it. For instance the Business Analysis unit it always about an existing company so Business Development in that case is extremely work-related and applicable. There is of course the projects we have to do each year and the actual internship in the second year. Looking back, I realize that most of the units are actually a work-related experience in themselves. (Student)

Each unit slowly builds you up to being ready for the real world. (Student)

The ‘real world’, project element of the course was noted by most students that were interviewed:

I think, for me, it was the fact that I was part of a real thing, something that has an affect on the *real world* and something that contributes to it. Working with others who are not students and for whom that job is their reality makes the course so much more purposeful and makes one realise that it is not an end in itself but a means to getting into the real world.

In an effort to differentiate itself from the plethora of event management degrees across the U.K., the course draws away from activities that are more commercially oriented. Situated within a creative institution of arts, design and media, and with students constantly surrounded by artists working across genres, the course draws on all art forms, from visual arts, craft and design, to performing arts areas (theatre, music, dance, film).

(c) Characteristics of the Work-Related Learning Activities

This section will describe the types of work-related learning activities that refer to work placements and the organisation of ‘real’ arts events throughout the course – their nature, organisation and structure. Tutors’ and students’ views are combined with documentary evidence (i.e. course handbook, 2009-10) to reveal the nature, organisation and integration of WRL activities on the course.

WRL Activities: type, structure, and assessment

Level 4

WRL activities are evidence throughout the course, growing in size and complexity across the three levels. During the second term at *Level 4*, students, in consultation with their tutors, work in small teams of 5 or 6 to devise, plan and deliver a live project (*Live Event 1*): i.e. a live music event, a fashion show, an exhibition of visual arts, dance or theatre workshops, a film or animation festival, or a community arts

event. Students are required to come up with an idea, find a venue, plan and budget the event, raise the money, commission, produce and distribute marketing material and stage the event to fellow students and the general public. Regular team tutorials monitor the project work. This unit is tutor assessed through individual students' project files of documentation, compiled throughout the unit (50%) and a 2000-word evaluative team Project Report (50%).

Level 5

At *Level 5*, students work in self-initiated teams of 3-5 people to engage in more complex or larger scale projects (*Live Event 2*), focusing on their own specialist art form interest or expanding their knowledge to new art form areas, in collaboration with local arts organizations, arts centres, schools or local government arts departments, etc. Trying out different areas of practice involves students learning new things about themselves and their future professions:

Things that you think that you want to do, doing it actually in that environment and under the pressures and the people and kind of company processes and protocols, I don't know, I suppose you put it into practice and then you realise that you don't want to do it. (Student)

The unit is tutor assessed and includes an individual 300-word evaluative Project Report supported by a team presentation of about 20 minutes, which contextualizes, describes and evaluates the live event.

In addition to this 'live' event, and underpinning the course's 'learning by doing' ethos is a 6 week **Work Placement** in an arts or cultural organisation (in the U.K. or abroad) at the end of *Level 5*. This provides students with the opportunity to test and reflect on what they know and extend that in the professional world of cultural management. At this point in their course, students will be able to make an informed contribution to the activities of the host organisation and it is often that the partnership is extended into the summer term, whereby students continue to work with the host organisation often on a paid basis. In previous years, students have found themselves helping plan and manage stages at the Glastonbury Festival, manage volunteers at festivals across Britain, plan and manage inner city multicultural festivals, road manage touring rock bands on European tours, develop the programmes at live music venues and nightclubs, etc. This unit is tutor assessed through a 20 minute presentation supported by student diary sheets that have been issued to students at the beginning of their placement to record the hours worked, the activities they were involved in and the learning that occurred on a daily basis and with weekly summaries. The assessment of agreed work-based learning objectives through the presentation is informed by supporting evidence including staff progress reports.

Not unlike most creative industries based courses, students learning activities include an assessed element of work experience (Shreeve, 2006). Selecting a placement host is of major importance in the 2nd year, as it is often the case that

students, upon presenting their 2nd year project and being assessed on their work, are invited by their host to continue working for them, until the beginning of students' 3rd year. A course tutor supports that:

Some students have gained perhaps four, five months of experience between the 2nd and 3rd years, which again, is hugely valuable, and it's usually undertaken on a different basis – the formal placement is unpaid, but usually if the student returns after the presentations they will be paid or supported in some way for work they do subsequently – so often what they're doing is, in the formal placement period, involved with the sort of organisational setting up of an event, and then they'll return and see it through to an outcome which might be in June, July, August if it's a festival or whatever...they always return for the start of the 3rd year energised by their placement experiences, and I think, I mean what we find, which again is very gratifying, is that what they encounter in the work placement is very much what they've been doing in college. (Tutor)

Before their work placement students take the initiative in contacting a potential placement host according to their career aspirations and interests. Mirroring ways of learning in creative arts higher education, students are encouraged to become independent practitioners within the safe environment of their institution; this is an ongoing part of their learning on the course (Shreeve, 2006). As early on as the first year small-scale live project events and up until their own major live events in Year 3, students take the lead in independently constructing and designing their projects. As one tutor below reports,

Every project we do starts from a student, or a group of students' minds – their own initiative – and proceeds from that point through to a final event. We don't set projects, we don't tell students what to do – instead we invite students to come to us and propose ideas for the sorts of arts events that they want to organise ... it depends on what the student's interested in developing, and we believe that freedom gives them the opportunity to get their teeth into something they're really enjoying studying. (Tutor)

Student initiative is further explored in Section C in relation to the development of students' confidence.

Level 6

The *Major Project* is the highlight of the course and is held at the end of students' 3rd year, during April-May. It allows students to produce work to a high professional standard and to apply the knowledge, technical skills and intellectual abilities acquired and developed during the course, i.e. project management, marketing, human resource management and information technology. Students work in groups of 2 to 5 to develop a project from scratch and see it through all the necessary stages to a successful conclusion. The project is assessed by a 20-minute group presentation,

using appropriate support materials and technology to contextual, describe and evaluate the project as a whole, as well as an individual evaluation report of up to 4000 words, including a CD with a short summary and a selection of images from the actual events. The projects tend to be highly complex and ambitious:

It's also the scale of things, like obviously everything was a lot bigger – you're suddenly dealing with real people and real money here – it makes it a little bit more scary but that's what you need. (Student)

Learning Agreement

For all WRL activities a 'Learning Agreement' is written by students in collaboration with their tutors. Similar to a proposal, it allows students to vary the work they do whilst still meeting the specified aims and learning outcomes of the units. The learning agreement is an agreement between students and tutors about what it is that the former need to do in order to meet the requirements of the unit. Each student submits a separate learning agreement, even if they are working within a team.

Tutorials and Feedback

The relatively small student intake numbers each year (40-45) ensure that tutors are able to closely monitor students' progress on project-based work and placements throughout the course, by holding regular tutorials. These provide crucial guidance and support as students establish the parameters of their partnerships. Below, a tutor explains the process leading up to the start of students' work placement at the end of Level 2:

Over the period from October to March, I hold three rounds of individual tutorials, so I see each student three times, to check on the progress of the development of the placement, to provide suggestions on an individual basis for people who are not quite sure what they want- where they want to go or what they might want to do, and to make sure that as the arrangements begin to be made more concrete we're keeping on top of that – keeping documentary record of things – I do that through means of a – what I call a progress report sheet, so each student, as they begin to make contacts with potential placement host organisations, gives me that detail on a form, and we keep updating it as the liaison develops, so one week it might be that they've made a phone call – the next week they might be sending emails or letters ... The culmination of that process is the student writing a formal work placement learning agreement, in which they have to identify obviously the details of who they'll be working with, the sorts of activities they'll be engaged in. (Tutor)

The ideas prominent in this tutor's description of the processes involved in tutorials resonate with theories of *situated learning* (Lave and Wenger, 1991), whereby learning is contextual, embedded in a social and physical environment. Moreover, student learning takes place within a learning situation whereby the newcomer

(student) to a community of practice (workplace) is gradually initiated by more experienced members (tutors) towards being a full participant in the sociocultural practices of the community. However, tutorials are not simply about sharing expertise but also co-constructing new knowledge in ways that suit individual students' interests and career aims. The Learning Agreements that are developed during tutorials are an important part of this learning process. The learning processes adopted within the course mirror the constructivist model of learning whereby tutors' interventions involve a kind of scaffolding process that enables students to solve a problem or achieve a goal which would be beyond their unassisted efforts (Wood et al, 1976).

An important part of the tutorials was the *feedback* tutors provided:

The tutorials were so useful to our course. Not only did they guide you in the right direction but they also meant that you really got to know your tutors and they knew exactly how you like to work. (Student)

It's a two-way thing and if you took advantage of that then you could really learn. (Student)

Rather than written feedback, the tutors provide a kind of dialogue with students, elsewhere determined to be more effective (Brockbank and McGill, 1998). This 'interactive feedback' (Craft, 2006) serves to both deepen disciplinary understanding and to strengthen students' creative engagement with their WRL activities. Furthermore, in order to effectively support processes of scaffolding student learning, the feedback was tailored (through the Learning Agreements) to students' individual needs (Orsmond et al, 2005).



3. The Development of Creativity, Knowledge and Skills

(a) Situated creativity

As in The Young Design Program Case Study (Triantafyllaki, 2009), we explore the notion of creativity that has emerged as an element of the 'generic skills' and 'graduate attributes' movement both in the U.K. and abroad, that emphasises the importance of creativity to graduates' future careers (cf. Reid and Petocz, 2004), i.e. in that it enables graduates to 'translate' their prior knowledge and understandings to

suit the situations they now find themselves in. However, this 'employability' view of college-workplace transitions is quite problematic in that it rarely takes into account the influence of *contexts* in the development of such skills and the actual transitions involved. Each workplace provides very different (work-related and creative) learning opportunities for students (Guile & Young, 2008). It is now an imperative to ensure that in identifying *where* creativity is positioned, *how* creativity is perceived to be manifest within educational contexts and in *what* forms it is carried out, that definitions of creativity are culturally and socially bound, mediated as part of a situated context in which they emerge (Triantafyllaki & Burnard, 2010).

The socially and culturally situated notion of creativity adopted in this case study views 'creative learning'⁶ as an *apprenticeship into work-related activities*, with a central role being given to the expert adult (tutors, employers, etc.) offering induction to the relative novice (see Craft, 2006). This was particularly evidenced in the emphasis on developing students' creative learning through tutorials and feedback; the Learning Agreement; and the emphasis placed on self-evaluation and reflexivity in the final major report (sections 2c and 4). Students conceptualised the development of creativity on their course within a creative learning as apprenticeship model (Craft, 2006) that emphasised, amongst others, student ownership of their own learning:

The course had creative elements; the assignments *let you use your imagination* for example x's assignment in second year where we used a tape recorder to demonstrate our knowledge of an arts organisation. Another assignment of programming let us to explore the outside industry of a destination of our choice and learn what is on offer. Our essays of culture and society allowed us to do similar and even the dissertation *allows you to use your creative thinking and knowledge and really make it your own*. Of course the projects supported creativity too! (Student)

As Anna Craft notes, 'creativity leads us to the edge of our current knowledge, and amongst other things produces new problems and new solutions' (Craft, 2006: 28). In the supportive, collaborative environment of the course, students were able to build on previously acquired knowledge in creating new knowledge and more advanced understandings:

I think the concept bit is often the most exciting and challenging bit because it goes – for us our thing certainly went round full circle – we had the idea that we just told you, maybe not so far developed, but we - through meeting with tutors and through meetings with ourselves, we were like 'well there needs to be more to this – what can we add to this – we need to be a bit more creative with our ideas', and we added a whole eco element, and we were like – 'no that's really, really hard – we can't be eco-friendly' and kept

⁶ 'Creative learning' involves learners in using their imagination and experience to develop learning; in strategically collaborating over tasks, contributing to the classroom pedagogy and to the curriculum; and in critically evaluating their own learning practices and teachers' performance (Jeffrey, 2004).

coming up with adding elements and take it away and make sure there's enough for us all to do and that there was enough for the audiences that would be coming – I think it's really creative. (Student)

Again, as in The Young Design Programme Case Study (Triantafyllaki, 2009), for some students, creativity was linked to being in a structured environment where more abstract ideas could be put into practice:

It did give me a chance to channel my creativity. In saying that I think my problem solving skills became more creative. (Student)

These sorts of tools allow you to, again use your creativity and put it into a structure to allow things to happen and actually be implemented. (Student)

(b) Personal qualities

Drawing again on the apprenticeship model of creativity and creative learning (Craft, 2006), students' ownership of their own learning facilitated also the development of several personal qualities: confidence (cf. Eraut, 2007) and risk-taking (Craft, 2004) and self-awareness or reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2004) – qualities that are interrelated with students' experiences of creativity (Oliver et al, 2006; Jackson, 2006).

Confidence and risk-taking

The practice-based elements of the course seemed to provide students with opportunities to build their *self-confidence*. In art and design education, for example, building students' self-confidence, giving them empowerment, ownership of their learning and building their independence are key aims in developing their creative potential (see Dineen, 2006; Shreeve, 2006):

I was just excited about my placement and I hoped I could do it, but I had so many people saying 'of course you can do it – I believe in you' and for that to actually come through, and then I realised that I was doing it and I saw it all the way through and thought well 'I have done it'. (Student)

Students return from their work placements re-energised, confident of the direction they are going in, confident that the skills they have developed are actually applicable having tested it in a placement context. (Tutor)

I think that having the work related experience has help me with my confidence, and I feel much more prepared for what the events world can though at me. (Student)

As Eraut (2007) notes, confidence is dependent on feeling supported in that endeavour by colleagues or supervisors. This element – particularly important to

early-career professionals – strongly relates to the relationships (or collaborations) developed during the work placements and ‘live’ events, with other students, with their tutors, with their audiences and with their employers/other professionals.

Closely related to the development of student confidence is being afforded opportunities for *genuine risk-taking* within a protective and structured environment:

I think that it's that value that, being able to experiment having that freedom to do something that might go wrong without really having any blame is the important, the most valuable bit that they can experiment with the arts and events. (Tutor 2)

It shows that being out of the comfort zone, it pays dividends if you are in a structured atmosphere and support network, you really learn, you have to learn about going out of the comfort zone, you have to take that risk. You are sort of in a good atmosphere to do that here. (Student)

It's just we can do these projects because we've got the safety net of the course behind us, and it's really good to be able to try and - just try things out that you wouldn't perhaps have the guts to do. (Student)

Genuine risk-taking (Craft, 2006) was linked with being afforded opportunities for experimentation during work-related learning activities. Students stress the importance of the context of the creative activity being supportive, collaborative and well-structured towards engaging with motivation in their own creative journey (p.24). Moving from the periphery of being an ‘apprentice’ to making their own

Reflexivity / identity

Key concepts linked to creativity are self-awareness, reflexivity and self-identity (Jackson, 2006). Participating students' self-awareness and reflexive capacity was developed through the ways in which the course enabled them to reflect on their work experienced. Students expressed the development of their creative capacity in relation to the (1) opportunities provided for reflection and personal input on the course, i.e. as having the time and space to test and experiment with their own practice (student 1); and in relation to (2) the quality of learning developed through experimentation and by expanding and adapting their practice to suit different needs, contexts and audiences (students 2,3).

You do things, and then you think about what you've done and why you did it – because that's what this course is about – is doing it, and then *thinking about it and then developing on the next year and doing it again and then thinking about it again, so it all sort of spirals* – when you sort of think about what you've done, and you actually get a chance to think about the way you've done it,

then you can put your own creative input into making it better. (Student 1)

You can develop better to a better degree through reflecting in the right way, because I mean, I was just looking at doing my CV now – looking at the experience you've got, and then looking at experience that other people might have going for a similar role – I think experience is an indication, but I think the quality of the experience is more of an indication, and the experience that we've had on this course is not just doing it – but then *thinking about what we've done deeply*, and then *doing it differently*, and then *thinking about that again* – and it's a top experience compared to just doing it and learning – not necessarily reflecting on it. (Student 2)

You don't develop as intellectually, I don't think - you might develop your practice, but *you won't have thought about it as much, or been probed to think about it in different ways and things*. (Student 3)

For some students, reflecting on their experience enabled them to develop their self-awareness and *professional identity*:

Well it has taught me the typed of events or organisations I would consider or not joining. For instance I now know I do not wish to work within a festival environment but rather an educational one – I do not want to organise gigs in club but rather cultural happenings. I will stay far away from the hotel management side and stay close to the creative industries. I am also now considering working within a Council although I'd also like to be able to travel for my job. (Student)

I think each activity made me even more open-minded about what I wanted to do in the future – however, I do not think my creativity was altered – just the options I had/hadn't considered in the past. (Student)

For others, it developed their reflexivity, i.e. their capacity to develop their professional identity through reflecting on their selves, their skills and attributes:

I think what you do reflects who you are. And I think in this course it's really well balanced in theory and practice and that's quite how I am as a person, I think about things but I do them as well. So I am much more of an implementer sort of, so doing this course has allowed me to be thinking about what I am doing and do it again and then refine it and think again and you know so I am really refining my practice. (Student)

As Wenger (1998) suggests, we define who we are through our lived experience of engagement in practice and of participation in specific communities (p.151). Students' quotes above reveal that the process of identity construction is a learning trajectory; an experience that is ongoing as students engage with their course and the WRL activities, familiarise themselves with and cross boundaries between new professional communities of practice.

Communication

Students developed their ability to *communicate* with a variety of people in ways appropriate to the professional partnerships that were established during the work placement and live events:

It heavily relied on other people – because it was from people from around the world, so it was 150 people around the world coming, there was no jargon as such, or specific way to do something because it's a particular sector, because people were from so different cultures, different ways of communicating, different ways of doing things. (Student)

One of the biggest things that they have to learn I think it's that they have to work with a whole range of people. (Course leader)

You see all styles of people working throughout the three years – the type of people they are and the amount of work they put into their projects and how much commitment there is and their ideas as well, because I guess you want to work on a project that – everyone wants to be slightly passionate for – so by the third year you know, like 'I can definitely pick out some people that I really want to put this project on with because I know that together we can do something big - successful. (Student)

Being given the chance to work with a number of people is also a benefit, in the real world of work you would always be working with people you like, learning how to overcome problems and compromise is a very important skill. (Student)

If 'knowledge' is 'the intentional activity of individuals who, as members of a community, make use of and produce representations in the *collaborative* attempt to better understand and *transform* their shared world' (Wells, 1999:76), then providing opportunities for interactive ways of working is a key condition for students' creative learning in WRL activities.

(b) Professional Qualities

During the last decade there has been a shift in the creativity literature from emphasising the individual as producer, to characterising creative processes as dynamic, fundamentally social and necessarily collective and collaborative (Sawyer, 2006; Littleton, Rojas-Drummond & Miell, 2008). Situated forms of creativity correspond most prominently with sociocultural approaches to learning whereby knowledge is constructed and negotiated in collaboration with others (Triantafyllaki & Burnard, 2010). Students' professional understandings and ways of working on the course were strongly linked with the development of their personal qualities.

Collaboration and teamworking

A professional quality that featured strongly in the data was learning to *work in a team*. For one student this was related to self-confidence:

Working with others was the best part of the course, we were a close-knit group and our year was a lot smaller than the other courses which was brilliant (something they should keep). Working within a team allows you to become more confident in yourself. This industry is all about teamwork and other people might struggle with this but we have learnt to bite our tongues, talk through problems, create a fantastic idea together and collaborative skills (Student)

For others, it developed from self-reflection and their evolving professional identity:

I learned a lot about how I work within a team and what skills I best add to a team. (Student)

I learnt how to fit into a team a lot better ... they were different personalities as well, and they didn't necessarily agree on a lot of things. (Student)

Leadership-organisation

For several participants, the development of self-confidence and self-awareness was related to their enhanced capacity for decision-making, autonomy and leadership:

I learned quite a lot of – did lots of human resources recruitment things – we employed 40 invigilators and recruited and trained them, and then coordinated through the 3 months of the project run and that was something we hadn't really done much on the course, or in any of our live projects so that was a completely new experience for me. (Student)

Our input was kind of coming in with some ideas, and then taking over and working with the marketing people – working with the band programming, and then the sort of development on the project. (Student)

Through the WRL activities students identified and improved their capacity for time-management and organization:

I learnt I could get a lot more done in a day than I actually do – if I used every day like my work placement. (Student)

Time management and multi tasking to a much higher degree than I have had to do before. This is not something you can be thought on a course you have to experience it. (Student)

The data presented so far reflects on the one hand, the ways in which the WRL activities were integrated within the course –their organization, structure, and the interplay between theoretical and practice-based elements. And on the other, it reveals how these WRL activities – the experiential components of the course – developed students’ personal and professional qualities.



4. Exemplars of Student Experience

The final section will focus more specifically on **one student’s experiences of the course and its WRL components**. Through interview data collected during his 3rd year and again after his graduation, it will attempt to explore further the kinds of skills he developed specifically through the organization of a large scale ‘live’ event and explore how the course enabled him to ‘translate’ such knowledge into workplace settings. It will then look at the concept of transfer more specifically; particularly the ways it was understood by participating students.

(a) Andy and the Radar project

Initially, Andy was unsure which University course to apply to and was worried about doing something he wouldn’t enjoy. He visited the BA(Hons) course taster days where older students talked about their projects, what they were doing and what the job opportunities were and was hooked as ‘you couldn’t tell they were students!’. And continues:

They were so confident, they were very articulate, they could really express their thinking. What they’d achieved was I thought amazing in some of the projects. And I thought if I could be anywhere near that when I leave, I would be in a good position to get a good job.

His *motivation* for applying for the course is explained below:

It was the attraction of doing things different every time, not fully academic. I was quite academic anyway but I wanted to do something, which was a bit more vocational in a sense and hands on and a good balance between the two. And because of that making different opportunities for when I graduate.

The Radar Project

Andy worked with a group of four other students on the Radar project. Radar was a Guildford based music project that aimed to unearth and showcase high quality young bands alongside the breakthrough acts of the year. Radar consisted of three warm up shows raising the profile and reputation in and around Guildford and a large-scale final show for the target audience of 14-25 year olds. The final show showcased eight bands in total ranging from unsigned local acts to national profile bands signed to worldwide agencies for £8 in advanced and £10 on the door at the Princes Hall (PH) in Aldershot, a venue which aims completely for the 25+ and family audience. From the success of this event, they have officially included this notion in their programming strategy, displaying clearly how Radar has changed their cultural agenda (Andy, Final major project report, p.1, 11)



In his Report, Andy notes the key things he took from this experience:

- I have learnt the importance of making sure all communication with external stakeholders in a project is in writing as well as verbal to ensure there is a paper trail to support any problems.
- I have become more appreciative of other working styles and approaches to activities.
- I have learnt a great deal about music technology, the setting up of stages and running of performances.
- I have learnt how essential it is to balance the friendship vs professional dualism in live projects. Too friendly makes the project suffer, and too professional makes the friendship suffer. (Andy, Final major project report, p.16)

Creative transfer, knowledge and skills

Earlier in this report the interplay between structured/unstructured elements was linked by some students to creativity. The interplay that runs throughout this report between novice/expert, structured/unstructured, theoretical/experiential and college-tutorials/workplace, allowed students to

develop their own initiative and autonomy in further developing and creating new knowledge during their WRL activities.

Andy nicely sums up the interplay between the more structured elements of the course, and those that are less structured, i.e. the project work, and the benefits involved:

With this, it's been really balanced in a way that some of it it's been structured, a lot of units are free, and you need the handbook at the start and it maps out your journey out, these are the lessons you are gonna have and what subjects, this is the reading you can do supplement that, this is the end result. And then some of the more practical little projects there is a lot less structure which it's good because all the structured Units that you've learnt on, you draw upon the skills you've learnt in a structured way to use in a more creative way. So, I would say some of the other Units, maybe the work placement, the work experience was less structured I would say because you are more put into a job role structured by the course, maybe structured by the employer who you were working ... *we need structure to learn but then to actually flourish we need to draw on what we learned through the structure, to bring it in to it's own.* And that's what happens in the projects which were really conceptual and then *using all the tools you've learnt to create something*'.

Andy initially talks about his work placement at the end of his 2nd year, where he assisted in the organization of an animation conference in Bournemouth: the *personal and professional qualities* he developed:

And then I met some of the industry professionals so they were very different people. And I managed to learn how to deal with such different types of people in the same place...how to adapt to their needs.

I was quite used to work in teams in that respect, so bringing it into a context where I had a boss and then someone else who was looking after the programme very carefully and someone who was looking at the logistics quite carefully, it was quite good to be able to flutter between each role learn a little bit about the role, and find my own position within them.

Crossing boundaries between the college and WRL activities (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2008) allowed Andy to negotiate a place for himself within his career trajectory and develop his professional identity.

Andy's employer on his work placement at the end of his 2nd year emphasized his growth of confidence as a major benefit of the work placement:

From an employer's point of view, for that 6 week project I was really impressed with the quality, of me being able to just sit back and say 'just do it – I haven't got time to think about it – this is why I wanted you here', and

once I think (Andy) had grasped that – that was it! He was very confident about the decisions he was making and what was going to happen, and I was very confident in those decisions that were being made, and it probably took about two weeks or three weeks for that level of confidence to grow ... you could see the transformation in - its this six weeks placement I think that really – it makes a visible change that I have seen. (Employer)

The quotes above reveal how Andy gradually develops his professional identity and restructures his knowledge in developing a growing repertoire of expertise.

Our third and final interview found Andy, now a graduate of the course, working in a newly-established company – a post that he says was offered to him through a very successful 2nd year work placement. In his interview excerpts below we follow his line of thought of how he utilizes the tools from the course in expanding his knowledge and professional capacity and *creating new knowledge* through establishing *links between seemingly different contexts* (NFP and commercial contexts):

My arts perspective has been very people based non-commercial and I am taking it all into totally commercial now. What business I am doing is going to be profitable and sustainable ... But more importantly I want to create something myself. So the business is sort of creative for me because it started from nothing developing something. So I am going to a different area but using the same skill but using them slightly differently and to the better ... I am sort of connecting things ...I am just linking together.

For Andy, interviewed in November 2008, and again, as a graduate in September 2009, being creative meant being enterprising in finding new opportunities to channel his creativity. In the following excerpts from his interviews he tells us:

Personally I've also found another creative outlet, I mean I've learnt through using all the different tools and principles and values from marketing theory to business theory to *put them into practice on the work placement*, coming into the course now with the different projects, I've started to become *creative in finding opportunities and making opportunities* in a creative way rather than maybe as they were before – you sort of expect them or find them – you *start to create them yourself* through these different tools you've come with.

I've been really creative in *getting things done in different ways*, whether it – because there's so many different ways to do things, and there are some ways that people just do things, and they might not be the best way to do it – it's not the most effective, not the most efficient way to do something - doesn't necessarily mean that's the way you have to do it- so go your own way to do it – yeah, so that sort of taking the boundary away from sticking to the norms of what people do in some senses, so I don't know if you could call that creativity, or *entrepreneurialism*.

Andy talks here about the concept of creativity as being socially situated on the one hand and as initiating the creation of new knowledge on the other (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006; Grossen, 2008).

Till now, we saw how in Andy's case the tools gained from the course were not simply 'transferred' into and put to use in a new situation; their cases reveal how they utilized these tools in order to expand their prior knowledge and understandings and to create new knowledge. His case exemplified *entrepreneurial ways of working* that involved organizing and implementing change, new ideas, new ways of doing things, while responding proactively to the wider environment – situations often involving risk, uncertainty and complexity (Gibb, 1998:33; quoted in Brown, 2004).

(b) Student Perspectives of Creative Transfer

Conceptions and understandings of 'transfer' differed among participating students, yet two broad conceptions could be identified in the data. The first involves what Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström (2008) characterise as 'horizontal expertise', created when individuals move from formal education to workplace settings. As such, the majority of participating students talk to us about 'transfer' as a set of *tools* that are taken from one situation and applied to a new one:

I got a chance to put to use the tools from the course, booking the acts and programming and press coverage and things like that and organised that day.

I worked with the marketing department there once again putting in all the tools we learnt within the marketing and communications units.

We were running all the arts events and helping artists do their own events in the region of Poole – so quite a lot of the events that we did, all the proposals, all the health and safety stuff that we learnt, contracts, negotiation skills and things like that I put to practice.

I think probably mainly definitely for me, was to put to use the tools on the course ... I think the way we work on the course and our learning environment, the way we work in teams, we do try and keep it quite professional and it didn't feel as different as I thought it would.

You're taking so much from the course that it's hard to keep it all at the forefront of your mind, but then being in a professional context things will pop up and you're like 'Oh actually I do remember that' and it sort of came flooding back.

This notion of transfer remains at the level of the individual moving between two

different situations or contexts and focuses on the transition of knowledge from one organization or 'community of practice' to another.

Another conception of transfer, as identified in Andy's case, involves students' knowledge expanding from the individual to the (multiple) collective organizations with which they interact:

The tools that we learn on the course – it was adapting them to the situations you were in, in a professional context that brought about a lot of development I think.

I learnt that I think the skills, which we do on the course – we learn we practice – I knew they were transferable but I experienced how transferable they are to a slightly more commercial area rather than just art.

One graduate, interviewed in September 2009, reports how she expanded her knowledge to adapt to her new work environment:

They realised what course I did and I was from the Arts Institute and the experience that I've got with marketing, promotion and my general events experience, I kind of pushed my skills, and even though I am an administrator, I kind of don't just do administration. I've written some marketing strategies, I've organised and run some events for them...

This is akin to what Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström call developmental transfer; or 'individual development transfer' (Beach, 2008) that involves the expansion of knowledge from the individual to the collective organization or activity system (p.35).

The benefits of this latter conception of learning transfer for our work have to do with taking (work-related) learning out of its individualistic prism and studying it as a social, historical and interactional phenomenon, taking place in multiple, shifting activities (Säljö, 2008:318).

5. Conclusion: Valuing Creative Transfer

As exemplified throughout this case study, 'transfer' involves individual change and *transformation*. It is not simply about the individual mind transferring knowledge across relatively stable situations; it is a complex process of employing old tools in novel ways – *re-conceptualising knowledge and skills* to suit new tasks and environments encountered. During this complex process, new *knowledge is created*, individually and *in collaboration* with others. In other words, transfer is about learning – learning about oneself, about others and the world around us.

As a 'social, historical and interactional phenomenon', (Säljö, 2008:318), transfer involves the individual *crossing boundaries* between multiple contexts and situations. In the arts-based WRL activities explored in this case study this involved a personal capacity to take risks, self-confidence, a high degree of self-awareness and reflexivity; also, the professional qualities of team working, leadership and organizational skills. Student had developed such qualities throughout their course as exemplified in both final year and graduate students' views.

Furthermore, transfer in this case study involved (1) moving from the college environment into 'authentic' situations that allowed the integration of knowing *that* with knowing *how*, encouraging learners to find personal relevance and meaning in the novel situations they encountered; (2) high degrees of ownership of learning, allowing learners to map their own paths from dependent novice to independent professional; and (3) genuine risk-taking that involved experimentation and a high degree of self-reflection. Elsewhere, these elements have been discussed as aspects of an apprenticeship model for 'creative learning' that emphasizes the intention for students to engage with motivation in their own creative journey (Craft, 2006). Therefore, transfer in this case study was understood as *an act of 'creative learning'* that 'involves learners in using their imagination and experience to develop learning, in strategically collaborating over tasks, and in critically evaluating their own learning practices' (Jeffrey, 2004).

What this case study aimed to show is that it is *the conditions for transfer* that enable students to use their creative learning. Jackson & Sinclair (2006) support that 'our job as educators is to create challenging situations for learning where learners are able to draw on and balance different abilities and discover for themselves how they can use their creativity in particular learning contexts.' They call for 'learning environments, which encourage students to move from dependency to independency.' (p.124) In this case study, gradual decrease of tutor scaffolding and increased levels of student independence reflected a key goal of 'teaching for creativity', i.e. empowering students, and giving them ownership of their creative potential (Dineen, 2006).

In the words of one student, 'I've started to become creative in finding opportunities and making opportunities in a creative way rather than maybe as they were before – you sort of expect them or find them – you start to create them yourself through these different tools you've come with.'

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