

University of the Arts London

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

The Leeds Metropolitan University - Festival Republic Partnership Case Study

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More information on the Leeds Metropolitan University – Festival Republic partnership can be found online at:

http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/as/index_festival_republic.htm

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1. Introduction

This case study explores students' experiences of work-related learning (WRL) during the cultural partnership established between Leeds Metropolitan University (Leeds Met) and Festival Republic,¹ the promoters who run the Reading, Leeds and Latitude music festivals and help run the Glastonbury festival. This creative and dynamic partnership provides exciting opportunities for students and staff to develop experience and skills in a festival setting.²

Students, staff and alumni are involved in a variety of projects that give them a unique behind-the-scenes festival experience that enhances their work experience and CV and for some also contributes towards their course credits.³ During the festivals, students develop their skills in stage management, filming, and performing arts; engage in playwork; run campsite DJ stations; and provide assistance to festival-goers.⁴



Festival Republic 2009: Photos retrieved from volunteers' blog⁵

This case study drew on Leeds Met undergraduate student focus group discussions, in-depth student and tutor interviews and a range of documentary evidence, including institutional documents, media articles, and quotes from the Festival Republic website and the volunteers' blog.

The aim of the case study was to explore the ways in which student participation in these activities provided them with opportunities for *enhancing their professional knowledge and occupational understandings and contributed towards the development of a range of personal qualities and competencies*. All of the student-participants in this case study engaged with the festivals on a 'not-for-profit' basis; the majority were volunteers, with diverse reasons for getting involved; and a smaller number of students were assessed through work-based learning frameworks.⁶

¹ Previously known as Mean Fiddler.

² Accessed January 2010 at : http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/as/index_festival_republic.htm

³ Accessed January 2010 at: http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/news/index_festival_spirits_running_high_170809.htm

⁴ Accessed January 2010 at: http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/news/index_festival_opportunities.htm

⁵ All images in this report are courtesy of Caroline Bonser (2009). The specific photos were retrieved February 2010, from volunteers' blog at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/festvolunteers/sets/72157622170518120/>

⁶ Kill, R. (2008) 'Clubbing together'. Times Higher Education. 9th October.

2. Conceptual and Methodological Framework

In this case study we draw on theories of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) that support the epistemological assumption that learning takes the form of 'participation' in relatively stable formations or 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These workplaces, as 'real-world', authentic and mostly informal learning spaces, provide students with a strong motivational basis (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2008:26); encourage the development of practitioner knowledge or 'know how' (Eraut, 1994); and support the development of collaborative frameworks that impact on students' self-awareness and professional identity (Moran & John-Steiner, 2004).

As in the previous two research-based case studies (Triantafyllaki, 2009; 2010) for the Creative Interventions project,⁷ we take the stand that an 'employability' view of college-to-workplace transitions must take into account the influence of contexts in the development of 'work-related' knowledge, understandings and skills. Each workplace provides very different *learning opportunities* for students (Guile & Young, 2008). Drawing on situated learning theories, this case study views learning as socially situated, focusing on 'the structure of social practice rather than privileging the structure of pedagogy as the source of learning' (Lave & Wenger, 1991:113). For Lave & Wenger the point of focus is newcomers' learning in closely knit social structures (or 'communities of practice') through the process of 'legitimate peripheral participation'. In this case study we explore students' participation in well-structured social practices or work-related learning activities; we pay close attention and attempt to draw out the 'invitational qualities' of the work-related learning contexts, the ways in which they 'afford' opportunities for learner engagement (see Billet, 2004).

Following from this, and due to the nature of the activities, rather than viewing the development of students' 'creative learning' solely as an apprenticeship into work-related activities with a key role given to an 'expert' adult (see Craft, 2008), we focus also on the significance of the individual learner (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004). Billett (2004) proposes that how individuals engage in and learn through work is also shaped by their agencies, which are a product of their values, subjectivities and identities.

In this case study, data collection took place across two stages. In July 2009 a series of three pre-festival focus group discussions with student participants (n=9); and individual interviews were held with one student and a senior tutor who led the establishment of the Festival Republic-Leeds Met partnership. In November 2009 three post-festival focus group discussions with different students (n=7); and individual interviews with students (n=3) and one tutor-festival manager were held.

Student participants in the case study came from diverse creative arts courses, such as Contemporary Art, Arts Event and Performance, Music Technology, Film and Moving Image Production, Film and TV Production and Film and Moving Image.

We were interested in collecting in-depth information on three main areas of inquiry:

- (a) students' backgrounds, motivation for taking part and expectations,
- (b) type of preparation and support, roles and responsibilities during the Festival and
- (c) creative learning, knowledge and skills, creative transfer and employability.

⁷ For CI project aims and objectives, and previous case study reports (Triantafyllaki, 2009; 2010) go to: <http://creativeinterventions.pbworks.com>.

This report presents first the broad characteristics of the work-related learning activities, students' perspectives of the preparation before and roles during the Festival and the support they received; and then investigates the specific knowledge and creative learning that they perceive as having developed throughout this experience.

3. Characteristics of the Work-Related Learning Activities

The University's partnership with Festival Republic (previously known as Mean Fiddler) was established in the spring of 2007. Festival Republic employs approximately 30,000 people in the festival season and runs Leeds and Reading Festivals (approximately 150,000 people attending over the two sites), Glastonbury Festival (177,500 people), Latitude Festival (30,000), and a number of smaller festivals.

During the 2009 festival season (and out of 430 initial applications) approximately **200 students, staff and alumni** had a behind-the-scenes experience at Latitude and Leeds Festivals. They were involved in stage management, filming, performing arts, playwork, running campsite DJ stations and helping festival-goers. A small number of internships in artist liaison, sound, lighting, press and PR, and environment & sustainability are also available and enable some students to put their course-based learning into practice and gain an in-depth insight into the running of major festival.⁸

(a) Student recruitment, preparation and roles

Below, we present in more detail the different types of projects that Leeds Met students took part in during the festivals:

Table 1: Projects running during the Leeds and Latitude Festivals

Latitude Festival (70 volunteers)	Leeds Festival (130 volunteers)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internships (Artists' Campsite, Media/Press, BBC Runners) • Flamboyant Helpful Arena Teams (HATs) – roaming information points with a performance element • Film Crew – filming Lake Stage, other Leeds Met projects, general festival goings-on (brief for EPK to be provided) • Playworkers – providing play activities in the family campsite • Lake Stage – stage management, artist liaison, crew roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internships (Production Manager's Assistant, Sound, Lighting, Backstage, Environment & Sustainability, Media/Press) • Helpful Arena Teams (HATs) – roaming information points • Film Crew – filming BBC Introducing Stage, other Leeds Met projects, general festival goings-on • Campsite DJs – running DJ parties in 5 campsites, inviting festival-goers to be DJ's • Performance Artists – after hours performances in the campsite • BBC Introducing Stage – stage management, artist liaison, crew roles

Each project has a team leader - in some cases the team leader is a member of staff, in others it is a student who will have shown through the selection interview process (see below) potential for doing management-type activities. At the start of the partnership, students are asked to sign a volunteer contract that states their responsibilities (and rights) during the festivals (see Appendix 1). Students' quotes below reveal the diversity of roles available during the Festival:

⁸ Accessed online at 10 January 2010: http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/as/index_festival_republic.htm

This year I applied to do DJ campsite managing. DJ campsite managing essentially involves running a five DJ booth on all the campsites and accommodating for the guests to come play DJ sets. I've got a team this year of 22 people including an almost understudy, all the sites are separated by about half a mile, widespread different genres of music essentially with the same principles for all our people to carry on partying past the end of the actual live music. (Student)

What we did as a Hat (Helpful Arena Teams). We were just basically information people. If people didn't know what time a band was on or where they were on we would point them in the right direction, but at Latitude they all took on a character. So mine and my mate's we were muscle men and we got them to do press ups and sit ups for answers which was pretty funny, especially with the kids it was hilarious. (Student)

I'm one of four managers, so I've got to contact all the team leaders, put everyone into groups and make sure the team leaders know who's in their group and things like that and make sure everyone's got timetables, they know where they're going and what time they got to be there and things like that. So it's a lot more admin, kind of work at the minute. (Student)

Students learn about the festival volunteering opportunities mostly through internal/institutional promotion (website banner, posters and emails); also through word of mouth from previous student participants (see Appendix 2). For the internships, students are recruited through course leaders who are asked to recommend two people. An application form is used in the initial screening process, where students will outline their previous experience and explain why they would be perfect for the role. This is followed by group interviews where students are asked to present themselves in one minute; during this second stage, students are required to engage in a short activity where they are tested on their social and presentation skills. Students who have volunteered at the Festival in previous years are more likely to be selected for roles that require greater responsibility and experience (i.e. an internship, managing the stage, etc.). A good number of students return year on year.

Not unlike many of the work-related learning activities students experience while at University, the Festival events required from students more of an awareness of their role specifications and responsibilities during the Festival, rather than a significant amount of preparation beforehand.

Well I liased with the actual production manager, the assistant, who's also an intern. She told me what to expect, what needs to be done when I got there, er...Basically what was expected of me, what was done for me, what I needed to do, what to expect. (Student)

It was all written, it was all planned smoothly definitely and then when we arrived we were given what we had to do, what artists were arriving, what times they were arriving, told exactly how the process was running in the festival environment as opposed to what we were told before. (Student)

Once at the festival, students came to rely on their flexibility and swift thinking in dealing with the various situations they found themselves in:

More of it is when you get there, that's when you kind of know what's going on, you can't – you can prepare all you want, but until you get there, then that's when you know what you've got to deal with. (Student)

(b) A 'Real' Experience: Students' Views

This section presents evidence of the Festival events being a 'real' or 'authentic' experience for participating students. The following elements specifically contributed to making the events a very real experience for students. Students value the experience because it is relevant and 'bigger' than previous experiences and sets a new challenge (see also Triantafyllaki, 2009) they are linked with the development of students' professional know-how and creative learning that we explore in-depth in Section 4:

- **The scale of the event**

I mean I've worked for small festivals and I wanted to work in a bigger festival environment. And just to kind of work in an environment that was actually like a real job I suppose and not just feeling like work experience.

Well because the rest of the festivals I've worked at none of them have been at that scale. And I wanted to see what it was like working in something of that size with the capacity that it had, and just see behind the scenes. (Student)

- **Taking on specific roles:** Students' sense of responsibility was enhanced through a named set of skills, roles and responsibilities to a common goal,

You literally feel like you're a member of staff with Festival Republic, it's not just you're following someone, like, you've all got responsibilities, even people that aren't in supervisor or manager roles have responsibility, cos if you mess up your role it's like, going to affect someone else. (Student)

Yeah, it was a lot of hard work really ... I'm on my own so I'm in charge of the stage, and the monitors and the front of house and making sure the band are always in the right place at the right time. (Student)

- **The intensity of the experience:** This reflected the high levels of responsibility placed on students and others' high expectations they would meet the requirements of their roles,

But the pace at which you go and the amount of energy that you use, it's serious it really does take it out of you. (Student)

I think probably the main thing that it was staying there for more than a night and preparing and getting there on time every day. So it was more of a job than something we were doing off our own bat. So there was more expectation for you to do the job properly I guess. But really the main difference was just the scale. (Student)

- **Working with 'professionals':** Students benefited from working with 'oldtimers' within communities of practice they would soon become members of,

I would say that there were a lot more people to meet with, liaise with. You've got security, you've got the sound guys, we had the BBC filming and recording there so we'd liaise with them. (Student)

The situated learning aspect of the work-related learning activity is acknowledged as being unique in that it could not be reproduced within universities' formal learning environment,

The experience you gain by working behind the scenes and working in the music industry with professionals and everything, you can't get, the experience in itself is enough. (Student)

- **Engaging with novel spaces, situations and context**

The whole festival things is, there's something very humbling about – you've got two kind of aspects I think with festivals – you've got the outdoor life, which a lot of people associated very strongly, camping and walking and stuff like that. Going to a festival and sleeping in a tent is very, it takes you away from your home comforts. (Student)

Engaging with these 'real' spaces required from these students a transformation of their current practices that entailed re-conceptualization, as well as a deepening of interpretation and understanding (Triantafyllaki & Burnard, 2010).

(c) The Value of the Experience: A Different Type of 'Volunteering'

These work-related learning opportunities are gradually becoming very popular with students at Leeds Met, with many of them being aware of the events even before joining their university course. This itself adds value to the university as an attractive place to study:

It was really well spoken of and when we joined the course it was one of the opportunities that we knew we were going to have. (Student)

Quite simple, if you want to do something that you can look back on in your life and say 'Yeah I did that, and it was unbelievable.' I was a part of Leeds Festival 2009; there's not many people who can turn around and say that, in a sense and you can always look back. (Student)

The specific work-related learning opportunities provided by Festival Republic, although still being developed, are highly thought of within the prominent 'volunteering culture' (Tutor) at Leeds Met:

The other thing about Festival Republic is that it's 'cool' so it's an opportunity for people to volunteer on something but it's something that's actually cool. And a lot of our students, that's like their ideal job isn't it. Leaving university and doing something like that. And the fact that when you talk to other people about it they know what it is. Because a lot of volunteering things that people do it's quite low level or low key. Whereas if you say to somebody, 'I worked at Leeds Festival this year.' People are like 'Wow!' (Tutor)

Similarly, being a 'volunteer' in this type of activity is perceived differently to engaging in other types of volunteering, where the 'value' for students' development as professionals in their chosen career path is perhaps not as obvious:

I find it different to volunteering, for me it was for experience and to meet people to try and further my career. I don't see it as on the same scale as doing voluntary work for the world, it wasn't a charity thing, it was more like me thinking 'yeah, this will give me some valuable experience.' I guess it was volunteering but it was still to further my career you know. (Student)

Although it was voluntary and unpaid - I think you sometimes get detoured away from doing work experience to think that you'd go there and work a stupid amount of hours for nothing. But you get so much out of it with the

experience and we worked with some awesome people. So that motivated me - just kind of opportunities and like future contacts. (Student)

A lot of people have asked me why am I doing this if I'm not being assessed for it, you know if I've got a job here in Leeds and stuff like that then I'm missing out on x amount of being paid and I think the real benefit towards your CV and stuff like that is absolutely priceless. (Student)

The Leeds Met-Festival Republic partnership affords students opportunities for 'near transfer' – that is closely related to their university courses – yet it requires also 'creative transfer' as students build on and adapt their previous knowledge and skills:

I mean there's benefits from volunteering anywhere in terms of confidence and sort of personal development, but there's very few opportunities that give you that and also tie in aspects of the learning on your course. And basically this gives them a perfect opportunity to try it out and see what works and what doesn't. (Tutor)

As these findings show, students value this work-related learning opportunity for different reasons. Some value the enhanced networking opportunities their participation in the Festival events offer them and the added value to their cv; others value the perceived 'prestige' of the activities within their peer groups. The 'valuing' of this experience in the form of academic credit is also important if the perceived value to students is to be sustainable.

(d) 'Valuing' the Experience: Accreditation and Feedback

As mentioned, the majority of students were volunteers, with diverse reasons for getting involved; and a smaller number of students (i.e. Film, Events Management) were assessed through work-based learning frameworks.⁹

While the importance of participating in the activities regardless of whether students are assessed or not is clearly recognised by tutors:

You can tell when you have a group of people and some of them have had work experience, you look at their work and think, 'That's a very real situation.' (Tutor)

They nevertheless also acknowledge the benefits of this type of work-related learning expanding beyond the boundaries of space and time of the festival events. Two tutors talk about the *value of accreditation* in that students continue to learn by creating a dialogic space on their courses for reflecting on and sharing the experience with peers:

And I think that's a lot of ways we do group work and assessing, it's really useful to have a mixture of people there who have actually gone out and done something like this, who are able to say to the group, 'Well actually in a practical situation this would happen and that would happen ... you can only take so many students to something like this. But actually if those students then come back and share aspects of that learning with them then you are sort of helping the other students along to gain deeper knowledge and understanding as well. It's quite a difficult thing to quantify but it does sort of work. (Tutor)

⁹ Kill, R. (2008) 'Clubbing together'. Times Higher Education. 9th October.

I think one of the things about accrediting it means the students don't instantly forget about the whole thing as soon as they go - they continue working on it, which is really interesting, and if it's experiential they tend to take it with them as an experience, but they probably don't do anything else with it after. (Tutor)

The involvement of other students within the framework of their particular course specialisations besides those who attend the Festival is the following tutor's concern:

But I also think that something like the Festival Republic partnership, it's important - and that's what I'm focusing on now - to actually say, 'Right that's the centre of it - the bit when the students go to the festival. But what can we do before and afterwards that can involve more students and be more curriculum based?' ... I think that we need to stop seeing that as the be all, that as the learning experience and start looking at what we tag onto that, so that all of our students are getting a learning experience from it without going to the festival. (Tutor)

Work-based learning students are assessed in different ways. Film students are assessed by (1) an on-site lecturer who takes note of how they react to the crew, their behaviour, time management and general degree of professionalism and (2) the film they produce as a group during the Festival. Events Management students are assessed on an 'events passport', a type of reflective journal that requires they document and reflect on their experience. Similarly, PR/Marketing students are assessed on a reflective piece of work that takes the form of a portfolio. Below, one student describes her preparation for reflecting on the festival at a later date:

It taught me a little lesson about documentation I think because whilst I was at the event I wrote notes because I knew I was going to have some sort of critical diary to reflect on during my work experience module. But when I got home I really pulled it apart and ended up writing up quite a lot. And I've carried that over with me onto the course this year, trying to prepare I suppose and realising that what you do in the real time you're going to have to reflect on and pull to pieces in six months time. You've got to be prepared, you've got to try and document everything - even the smallest little things that might feel trivial at the time. (Student)

During the Festival all students will receive immediate feedback on their role performance from their peers, from their team leader and on-site university tutors. Only one student below suggests that perhaps a more structured path of learning goals would have been more beneficial to her:

I just think that there should definitely be a more structured learning plan with a record of what you've done and perhaps more reviews with an opportunity to say, 'I'd quite like to get this out of it.' (Student)

In this particular WRL activity, it is important for students to be afforded opportunities for both self- and peer- evaluation. Tutors above involved in the development of this scheme are keen to provide accreditation for these WRL opportunities that will add towards the sustainability of the experience beyond students' participation in the events.

4. The Development of Creativity, Professional Knowledge and Personal Qualities

As in other case studies of the Creative Interventions project,¹⁰ the development of students' creativity seemed to be reliant on the particular contexts they engaged in, i.e. socially and culturally bound.

(a) Creativity

In this case study, the development of students' creativity was less acknowledged by participating students and tutors as being of central importance to this particular WRL activity in terms of 'making' or 'creating' something new or linked to entrepreneurship and learning transfer (see Creative Interventions Case Studies 1 and 2¹¹); rather, creativity was linked to the development of particular qualities, such as flexibility and adaptability, confidence and interpersonal skills. One tutor recognises the interrelationships between key personal qualities such as student confidence, flexibility and interpersonal skills, and creativity:

So I think the actual environment is kind of a creative environment and you'll find that the people are knitted together because they are camping together and there's all that aspect of it. Everyone's kind of brought down to the same level. We make them wear t-shirts and things, so it's a uniform, everyone's living in a tent so there's no sort of hierarchy and **I think that kind of environment does foster creativity** and people who may have been a bit more quiet or not voiced their opinions feel a **bit more confident** about voicing their opinions and perhaps trying things out. And so in general, a prime example is the Hats at Latitude are creative performers, they come with an idea and a costume, the Hats at Leeds aren't, they are just information givers. But always by the final session when they're working they will have **adapted** what they're wearing, they'll have done a bit of different make up or there'll be some sort of theme that they're doing or they'll be giving out some piece of wrong information that's a joke or something. And it's just something that happens naturally and I do think it's the environment. **The kind of situatedness of it.** But it's because it's all around you at the festival. So even if you were volunteering at something different then you might not get that same level because the environment around you is not full of that kind of thing. (Tutor)

Again, as in the previous two case studies of the Creative Interventions project, creativity is linked with particular social and cultural spaces (Fernández-Cárdenas, 2008; Eteläpelto & Lahti, 2008) – specifically, the ways in which they 'afford' (Greeno et al, 1993) students particular opportunities for learning. Within these spaces the context of the creative activity is emphasized in providing students with opportunities towards engaging with motivation in their own creative journey (Craft, 2006:24).

One student's quote below suggests that a key factor in developing creativity is being flexible, adapting to new situations and trying out new things:

Creative wise, I've been here two years in a row. From the first year I did it and I didn't know what to expect, second year I did try new things and to get new things going on. So like with the actual bands going on stage we had a ten minute turn around so I would try new things to get the musicians like up

¹⁰ See <http://creativeinterventions.pbworks.com>.

¹¹ Same as above. The particular case studies refer to the Young Design Programme case study (1) and the BA(Hons) Art and Events Management case study (2).

and the instruments set up and ready to go on stage well, well before they were due on so the turnarounds could be closer. (Student)

In several cases, however, students were less inclined to suggest that this type of WRL activity involved being creative in the sense that they felt there was not much scope for their own input:

In terms of creativity I actually thought that there perhaps could have been a little bit more of it maybe in terms of volunteers and people like me on internships having more of a say in what was going on in the project, perhaps having a few more ideas.

I don't know if I've become more creative but I think I've learnt how to work in an environment better, I think I've become more professional. Because there wasn't so much room to express yourself really.

Further integration of these types of WRL activities within the curriculum could promote student creativity by affording opportunities for critical reflection before and after the activity; student input into the roles they take on and their development during the activities; and, leading from this, greater ownership of their own learning (see Triantafyllaki, 2009; 2010).

(b) Personal Qualities

As Eraut (2007) notes, **confidence** is dependent on two factors: (i) being able to meet successfully the challenges in one's work and (ii) feeling supported in that endeavour by colleagues or superiors. During the Festival students received a significant amount of support from their tutors, who also took part in the events; from professionals working at the Festival; and their peers. One tutor nicely sums up these two elements of student confidence-building:

You can only build people's confidence if you are quite careful about it – you've got to get that balance of support from us, but then self-efficacy from them. It is a crazy environment to be in – although we do staff camping and feed them – but we have to trust them to go out and do these various different projects. We can't be in all places all the time, but we need to make sure that we support them as well. It's just getting that balance right I think is what builds the confidence. (Tutor)

One student links confidence specifically with meeting the challenges of his specific role – it further highlights the finding that success in unfamiliar and particularly challenging work-related learning opportunities are important for enhancing students' self-confidence:

It comes to the sort of social aspect, it's kind of just confidence – it's confidence in knowing that your actions are working and paying off in the right direction. (Student)

On the other hand, tutors provided crucial guidance and emotional support during the Festival as students established the parameters of their roles and responsibilities.

Every day I had someone come and visit me from Leeds Met to make sure I was happy with everything so there was someone liaising and checking in on me which was nice, to know that support was there if I needed it. And I had phone numbers for people as well if I needed them because it was twelve-hour shifts, which was quite a long time to be with people you didn't know. (Student)

If there were any problems they would quickly sort them. Like any problems we might have like technical problems, moral support like, everything was sorted by (tutors), they were there, they were present and they went round to make sure everything was going grand. They were there to support the students, 'You're doing a good job, everything's grand' and giving us feedback from Leeds Met. Yes they were there to give encouragement and support. (Student)

Taking their roles seriously and being treated as professionals in the various roles they took on was significant for students and positively acknowledged by tutors. During the events, students reinforce their professional identities as aspiring practitioners in their respective fields:

Basically we didn't want to look like a bunch of students who didn't know what we were doing. And I basically said that we all had had experience of stage management so not to worry that we were going to mess it up in any way, we would be fine and they didn't need to worry and all that sort of thing ... three days later they were treating us as if we were staff really, so that was good.

A Leeds Met tutor and film crew manager confirms this finding on the volunteers' blog:

It's the end of the first full day of filming and the festival is in full swing. Lots of planning has paid off and the film crew are on form; when interviewing Post War Years – hot from their set on the Lake Stage – the band commented on how professional our Leeds Met students were. Brilliant. This is something that has been mentioned many times before in relation to the Festival Republic partnership; something that makes this project interesting for me as a Work Based Learning advocate ... there's such a sense of trust and respect for our students, a real belief that they will deliver within their various roles. We're all working very hard and the learning curve is sometimes steep, but the rewards are clear to see. (Tutor)

Students take on a great deal of **responsibility** during the Festival events and their autonomy and independence increase, in accordance with the roles they take on:

I was the stage manager so it's a lot of things. If anything went wrong with the stage, if it's someone below or higher and they're telling you off or someone's asking 'What's going on here?' You've got to sort it out. But you take it in your stride and you get on with it. (Student)

We got used to it really quickly and the fact that we were left to fend for ourselves was really good because we weren't having our hands held which I think was really valuable. (Student)

I think for me it's the pressure to sort of come up with the goods, especially as being *the director* a lot of the weight is sort of carried on your shoulders. (Student)

In their majority, students often encounter unfamiliar contexts and situations during the Festival events. For many, this was an opportunity to increase their **resilience and perseverance**:

Just sticking it out, don't run at the first hurdle and don't be too quick to judge basically. (Student)

And I kind of learnt that there's a lot more pressure with larger scale I think, especially with artists because the more that you have, the more things that can go wrong basically, so it wasn't like a normal seven to eleven gig, it was all day all night kind of thing and there were constantly things you had to work on. (Student)

Working at a festival you are doing a job and you have to be on the ball constantly. And that required starting at like eleven and going to midnight and it was long hours and you had to be on the ball constantly from when the first artist arrived to when the last artist left. So you had to make sure everything was ready and if they needed something they would come to you and say 'I need this'. And it was a lot more demanding I guess because the acts were bigger. (Student)

As a result of engaging in the Festival, students were able to develop their **self-awareness and reflexivity**, 'open-up' their career prospects, as well as strengthen their developing **professional identity**. For some students, engaging in the events developed their reflexivity, i.e. their capacity to develop their professional identity through reflecting on their selves, their skills and attributes

Because of the festival I have become more open minded and excited about other opportunities that are similar to that. (Student)

In terms of direction it has confirmed for me where I want to go with my career and it has given me more of an insight into the line that I want to take. (Student)

For others, participating in the events provided them with the opportunity to make more informed decisions about their future career paths:

It was an interesting experience but it kind of cleared up for me that that's not what I want to do. I still like my small venues and I still like working in studios. That's where I am and I think that's where I want to continue going. But yeah, it was great and I got to see major bands at close proximity. I definitely thought that it was a valuable thing and same as my friend recommended the whole thing to me I would recommend it to anyone who's looking to go into that field.

I wanted to go for the top of what I could do in terms of going to a really big festival and seeing what it was like in that atmosphere. And I don't think it actually suits me. I want to work with smaller groups of people and smaller events ... I did a lot of work with volunteers, and mentoring and things like that and although a lot of them were my age or a little bit younger it was still really worthwhile and it made me definitely want to work in a people-facing role as well ... Yeah, it's headed me in the right direction.

Students' quotes above reveal that the process of identity construction is a learning trajectory (Wenger, 1998) – in this case study, based on trial and error and risk-taking (in trying out new things); it is an experience that is ongoing as students cross the boundaries between their course and new professional communities of practice.

(c) Professional knowledge and skills

A key professional skill students developed was their ability to communicate by **networking** with a range of professionals, as well as student peers:

What I did learn was interacting with people, I built a lot of confidence up you know like having to work with people from everywhere. (Student)

Meeting people. The contacts that I've got are priceless. (Student)

To work at a major festival on your CV is gold dust. You can get a first at university and not get a job but if you've got the experience, especially the contacts that you make and the networking that you do, it's second to none. You couldn't buy a better experience for a career in a way. Seriously, it's absolutely amazing, the people you meet and the offers you get afterwards, you know the contacts you make. (Student)

A tutor confirms the networking opportunities available to students during the Festival events:

Many of our students that have done this over the last few years have gone on to have opportunities that we haven't worked out for them. So this year at the festival walking around I must have seen four or five of our students that were there but not through us. And when you go and chat to them they met someone last year who works for a lighting company and got work for them. So it's really good for networking for them as well. (Tutor)

The same tutor links these networking opportunities with the connections students develop with their peers on a variety of different courses throughout the University. Students are able to expand their knowledge of different specialisations through interacting with diverse individuals within a specific situation:

And a lot of things about networks that they've built up, and that's networks amongst themselves as well, not just sort of with Festival Republic. Because that's really important I think. The way that our university is built we have lots of faculties and they're disjointed not just in terms of the courses they do but actually in terms of locality ... so a Marketing student and an Events Management student are on completely separate campuses and probably would never come into contact. And taking them away to something like this the little networks they build up and like I say the peer learning, the benefits they get from understanding what other courses are about and how someone on another course might attack that kind of assignment, is really useful as well. (Tutor)

In accordance with the role students take on during the Festival events, some are required to take on **leadership** responsibilities:

I'm trying to organise people that have worked last year to have more of a leading role on each of the DJ booths because they've been there, they've done that, they've dealt with the stress of it, so that's essentially what I've got to do and then, it's just getting to know the people. I want people to have a level of trust in me and if they did have a problem that I am going to turn up at the booth and I am happy to do things for them. It's, I don't know, there's not a massive amount of work on my part, but getting it right is quite important. (Student)

(They) were organised by some students and they wouldn't have done that before they went but they've become quite comfortable about being able to organise things and other people. (Tutor)

As mentioned in the description of this WRL activity, students take part in various projects running throughout the two Festival events at Latitude and Leeds. All project require a great deal of teamworking that is explored through the prism of

peer collaboration in the following section; here, we present two quotes from a student and tutor that reflect the importance of being able to work in a team:

There's a lot of group work so you've got to kind of be able to work in a team with other people which is really important like, like from a professional stand point you've got to be able to get on with people, you've got to be able to compromise. (Student)

I think they learn best from each other, so there's a lot of peer learning. Particularly, to take an example, the film crew, they learn about an end product and everything. A lot of the course work that they do they really struggle with group work, they feel that not everyone's pulling their weight and all that sort of thing. But that kind of thing never comes up. And essentially, it work-based learning, they are getting accredited for it and all the usual things they get about group work they don't notice when it's practical work. When you try to explain to students that group work is a fact of life and you always work in groups, they don't see it, they just see it as coursework. But this, it's still group work but they see it as a real life situation, so it's different in that way. (Tutor)

Within higher education and workplace learning discourse, artists' knowledge has been characterised as 'practitioner knowledge' or 'know how' (Eraut, 1994) in that it is experiential (i.e. developed and revealed through practice). Through their engagement in the Festival events, students **their professional 'know-how'**:

It's just given me more insider knowledge, which is what you need. (Student)

I expected to learn how a festival worked. I've done promoting at home, and I'd done artist liaison and stuff like that but I'd never worked in festival environment before so I expected to learn a lot more about getting everyone around and how big on a large scale things work. (Student)

I think one thing they learn is that although festivals are fun to go to, they're actually very professional the way they're run and a lot of the things that go into making it work. They learn how skilled some of the jobs are and actually where they're at in terms of where those jobs can be. And I think just a deeper understanding of the subject that they're doing and how it works in real life. (Tutor)

The data presented so far reflects on the one hand, the ways in which the WRL opportunities offered through the Leeds Met-Festival Republic partnership were organized and structured. And on the other, it reveals how student experience of the Festival events activities developed their personal qualities and professional knowledge and 'know-how'.



Photos accessed from Leeds Met website¹²

5. Student Perspectives of Learning Transfer

(a) Revisiting Our Knowledge of 'Transfer' Through Work-Related Learning Activity

In other Creative Interventions case studies,¹³ transfer was conceptualised and, therefore, explored in different ways. In the Young Design Programme case study (1) transfer was triggered but also facilitated by students' working collaboratively in an 'authentic' work situation for an extended time period. The elements that students perceived to have 'transferred' to the work-related activity were twofold: their subject specific knowledge and their life experiences. In this case study, transfer was linked with working collaboratively and it was through this collaboration that students' knowledge and understandings re-surfaced and were re-conceptualised in adapting to the new situations they found themselves in.

Similarly, in the BA(Hons) Arts and Event Management case study (2), transfer seemed to be triggered through a rigorous support system offering extensive opportunities for reflexivity. The majority of students perceived to have 'transferred' their subject-specific knowledge to the work-related activities they engaged in; but the ways in which they went about this were twofold: for the most part, students' subject-specific knowledge was conceptualised as a set of 'tools' that were applied to the new situations they found themselves in. Yet, there was also evidence of students developing and expanding their knowledge and skills in adapting to new circumstances and needs in their work.

In both of these previous case studies it was clearly the social environment – the support system (case study 2) and the collaboration students experienced (case study 1) – that allowed them to 'translate' but also expand their existing knowledge in creative ways.

(b) Students' Views

In this case study, the types of knowledge that were perceived to have 'transferred' to this work-related activity were twofold:

- subject-specific knowledge, such as the basics of sound for example, which they have learned through their course and previous education, i.e. within formal education settings, and

¹² Accessed 10.02.2010 at:

http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/the_news/slideshow/images/08/080729_festivalrepublic.htm

¹³ See <http://creativeinterventions.pbworks.com> for Young Design Programme case study and BA(Hons) Art and Events case study.

- general experiential knowledge, or situational understandings, that they gained through informal learning, for example previous work experience/ volunteering/ festival work, etc.

The transfer of subject-specific knowledge and the role of personal skills

Where transfer involved the translation of formal learning into work-related activity, it was conceptualised as linked with the development of personal qualities, such as resilience (Student 1) and interpersonal skills (Student 2):

I learn like the basics of sound, so, sort of like, you put it in different environments and see how it reacts and this is the first time I've actually done it within a festival kind of environment with, so it's kind of just seeing how that actually does react, there's a lot of what we do on the course. It's the only way you can actually understand it better by putting it into practice and this festival gives us the opportunity as well as **working under pressure**, I kind of like that too. (Student 1)

In theory I suppose yeah. I mean you study the general principles of using the microphone and stuff like that. But going to university doesn't really compare to working on a festival like that because it's such a big operation, there's so many people. Nothing can really prepare you for that. The same with the studio, you can do a recording module but they can't teach you how to **work with people**. So my university has been useful but I don't think it's possible for them to actually give you that experience until you get out in that environment and do it yourself. (Student 2)

For one student, this process was dependent on being able to reflect on previous knowledge and then translating this knowledge in a practice-based situation:

I didn't get experience on my course, because all of it was from a theoretical point of view, which to me was quite strange because x is a very hands on industry, it's about communication and things like that and if you're sat in a classroom there's only so far you can go with it ... I felt that I was working at a higher level and so you have to **think about everything you've learnt** before and actually **put it into practice**. (Student)

The processes described by students above involved 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) and novel situations.

Transfer of 'know-how' / situational understandings

Eraut and Hirsch (2007) report that where the new situation is very similar to some of those previously encountered the transfer process is simplified. In the case of some student-participants their prior situational understandings or 'know how' was key to facilitating their work-related experience:

I'm from a festival background, my family have been in the festival, I've always been in that sort of thing and I just think they're the best environment to put people in to just make you feel better. (Student)

I did a lot of volunteering through that, I did stuff with the Uni. I've helped out on things like campaigns. I'm very hands on and I'll have a go at anything. I think it always looks good on your CV and it's the kind of thing that builds you as a person. (Student)

The first two quotes link students' personal experiences or personal qualities with their Festival experience. The following quotes draw on students' previously developed social skills that determined the quality of their interpersonal relations and communication skills during the Festival events:

When I was a senior plumber I trained apprentices. So I would train people. So you have to learn a certain way, you have to learn that not everyone's the same, you can't teach everyone the same way. So you learn quickly how to adapt to peoples' needs, if they're not getting your point the first way you have to try a different angle. (Student)

With the boating work that I've done sometimes you could be in a place for two or three days and it's like, 'Look, we have to get this done and then get out.' And make sure it's done with a group of people you've never worked with before. So I was kind of used to that the pace of that and thought it wouldn't be too bad, but here it was exactly the same like with the Leeds Festival technicians like I expected how they wanted things done. There was nothing that shocked me it was pretty much standard practice, so it was. (Student)

Students' engagement in the Festival events not only encouraged them to revisit their disciplinary knowledge and understandings developed on their course, but also triggered reflection on prior life- and work-related experiences, in order to adapt to the social situations they found themselves in.

6. Summary of the Findings - Conclusion

The Leeds Met-Festival Republic partnership offers an excellent opportunity for students to use their professional knowledge in work-related activities; reflect on their developing professional identity; and develop their social and interpersonal skills while at the same time increasing their levels of confidence. More specifically,

As 'learning environments' the Festival events provided:

- **'Real-world'** or 'authentic' work-related experience for students due to students' engagement with novel spaces, beyond their university; the scale of the event that made it feel like a 'real job'; the taking on of specific roles and responsibilities created by Leeds Met university within the partnership framework; and opportunities to work side-by-side with professionals in their relative field on interest.
- A unique setting for **volunteering**, with strong links to students' formal educational experiences and opportunities to build their CV, thus strengthening students' motivation to participate.
- A small number of students were offered accreditation. Tutors are quick to acknowledge the benefits of this type of work-related learning expanding beyond the boundaries of space and time of the festival events and stress the **value of accreditation** in that students continue to learn by creating a dialogic space on their courses for reflecting on and sharing the experience with peers. This was something that students themselves felt was necessary in strengthening their learning experiences during the Festival.

- Emotional support and informal **feedback** from tutors, managers and peers, which was greatly valued by student participants.

Through their participation in the Festival events, students were able to:

- Develop key personal qualities, such as social and interpersonal skills; resilience and perseverance; and responsibility. Students developed their self-awareness and professional identity through coming into contact with a range of professions within the Festival environment.
- Strengthen their professional knowledge and skills, such as networking skills, leadership skills, and develop their subject-specific knowledge and professional understandings.

Finally, students were keen to translate their formal learning into ‘real-world’ situations: by drawing on their previous subject knowledge, yet re-interpreting it in the light of work-related situations, such as working with others or working under pressure; and by drawing on prior life- and work-related experiences.

This research shed light on students’ experiences of work-related learning during the Leeds Met – Festival Republic Partnership. It was based on qualitative research tools (interviews, focus groups), in order to ‘access’ the kinds of process-focused learning evidenced in this type of activity that are difficult to quantify.

Future developments of the programme

(A) A key element of the partnership is the delineation of specific professional roles offered to students during the Festival. Working within the parameters of these roles often allowed students to take risks and experiment and develop important professional skills. A key challenge for organisers is for students’ ownership of their own learning and levels of creativity to continue to increase (Oliver et al, 2006; Jackson, 2006; Dineen, 2006; Craft, 2006) within the parameters of their roles, which means helping students strike a balance between their self- knowledge and self-awareness as well as the professional responsibilities each role requires.

(B) Students receive feedback from both peers and tutors/professionals: a range of team building activities is in place before and after the Festivals and strong guidance during the Festivals for students in key roles is provided. There is further scope, however, for both self- and peer- evaluation through carefully designed group and individual reflective activities, preferably before the end of the events. This could ensure that the benefits of engaging in such learning experiences are sustained beyond the time / space of the Festival events (Falchikov, 2007; Pulman, 2009).

Student work experience within the Leeds Met-Festival Republic partnership provided an excellent example of an ambitious WRL opportunity situated outside the curriculum, yet organised and administered by university tutors. These novel circumstances offer unique opportunities for the further integration of the partnership in formal curricula, ensuring that the benefits are sustained beyond the time period of students’ engagement in the activity.

Appendix 1 – Volunteer (pre-festival) Agreement

Festival Volunteers 2009 Volunteer Agreement

This is our volunteer agreement; it outlines what you can expect from us and what we expect of you. Please read it carefully, sign below if you accept the agreement and return this sheet to the registration table before you leave.

I agree to (my responsibilities):

- act as an ambassador and represent the University in a positive and professional manner
- conduct my volunteering duties to the best of my ability, turn up on time to all of my shifts and complete them
- act in a responsible manner at all times and inform my team leader/supervisor of any illness or concerns that would stop me from fully participating
- act respectfully with everyone involved including my fellow volunteers, festival-goers, University and Festival Republic staff
- enjoy my festival volunteering experience!

I expect to (my rights):

- be supported in my volunteering experience by the University
- be supported by a responsible team leader and organising team who are approachable and easy to contact
- be treated with respect throughout my volunteering experience
- have the opportunity to give open and honest feedback of the experience to University staff after the festival

I understand that:

- my deposit is fully refundable after the festival once I have fulfilled my responsibilities detailed above
- photos taken by Leeds Met staff or given to Leeds Met by volunteers may be used in publicity materials for volunteering and for general Leeds Met publicity and marketing.

Name

Signed

Date

Appendix 2:
Email sent to prospective student participants by Leeds Met

Festival Volunteering 2009

Work behind the scenes at the UK's award winning festivals...

Leeds Met has a unique partnership with Festival Republic (organisers of Leeds and Reading Festivals, Latitude Festival and operational management of Glastonbury Festival). This enables us to provide brilliant opportunities for our students and staff to experience a festival from behind the scenes.

There are a variety of roles, all requiring different skills – including event management, technical, film, DJ-ing and performing arts.

To apply for a place:

Read the information below and role descriptions for the festival you are interested in.

Fill in an application form and send it to c.bonser@leedsmet.ac.uk.

You may apply for a role at one or both festivals – please fill in an application form for each one.

Apply by Friday 3 April 2009.

All roles are open to Leeds Met students, staff and alumni over 18 years old. Volunteers will be required to pay a refundable deposit of £130 for Latitude Festival or £150 for Leeds Festival (if volunteering at both, one deposit of £150 can be paid)

After the application stage will be volunteer information/recruitment sessions. Invitations to these will be sent by email.

Latitude Festival

www.latitudefestival.co.uk

When: 14–20 July 2009

Where: Henham Park, Suffolk (transport provided)

BBC Introducing Stage Team

Running the BBC Introducing Stage for up-and-coming musicians

Film Crew

Filming the BBC Introducing Stage and other elements of the festival

Flamboyant HATs (Helpful Arena Teams)

An information giving role, with a creative performance element

Leeds Festival

www.leedsfestival.co.uk

When: 26-31 August 2009

Where: Bramham Park, Leeds

BBC Introducing Stage Team

Running the BBC Introducing Stage for up-and-coming musicians

Film Crew

Filming the BBC Introducing Stage and other elements of the festival

HATs (Helpful Arena Teams)
Providing information to festival-goers in the arena

Campsite DJ Station Teams
Running after-hours parties in the campsites

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