

CREATIVE INTERVENTIONS – LITERATURE REVIEW

The scope of this project is immense, and covers a range of sectors, institutions and practices. Studying the work related experiences of creative arts students has involved research on aspects of creativity, the world of work, and career development, but it has also taken us into core aspects of the economy and public life. The economic and social impact of the public and third sectors, and the informal and semi-formal customs and mechanisms of taking on as yet unqualified people to give them work experience (whether as volunteers or interns) has complex transactional implications for both parties, as well as for higher education. Our research therefore needed to be situated in this broader context.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN THE PUBLIC AND THIRD SECTOR

Scholarly interest in the public and third sectors has been vast over the years. In the economic literature on nonprofit organization Weisbrod's theory has been one of the most influential (Weisbrod, 1977). He was responsible for defining a 'third sector, the nongovernmental, not-for-profit sector – which we term "voluntary nonprofit"'. As 'a major provider of collective-consumption goods' this sector, according to Weisbrod, played a substantial part in the economy (Weisbrod, 1977, p. 1). For the last three decades this model has been developed further, and has become even more complex (see for example Ackerman, 1996). Kingma argues that 'any economic theory of non-profit organisations must be able to answer the question "Why not the other sectors?" Why is it necessary for these goods and services to be produced in the non-profit sector and not in the public or private sectors?' (Kingma, 1997, p. 145). However, recent research has shown that 'analytical efforts that preserve sharp distinctions between the for-profit, nonprofit, and public sectors looks increasingly problematic...many for-profit entrepreneurs have a deep commitment to the goods and

services they produce; and some nonprofits are run on profit-maximizing principles' (Ackerman, 1996, p. 701). Research into different service sectors bears this out, and this is particularly true in the creative and performing arts.

Research on volunteering has been a fast-growing area in recent years (see for example Cnaan, Handy and Wadsworth, 1996; Wilson, 1999 and 2000; Wilson and Musick, 1997). From the economic perspective much has been written about the understanding of the volunteer labour market. It has been argued that the supply of volunteers varies substantially in different sectors. Segal and Weisbrod analysed inter-industry diversity by comparing volunteering in health, education and religious organizations; their evidence indicated that the opportunity to gain 'work experience appears to be more valuable to volunteers in the education industry than in health or religion industries' (Segal and Weisbrod, 2002, p. 441). They proposed a model by which volunteering is perceived as a heterogeneous rather than a homogeneous activity, responding to industrial variations.

The question of motivation among volunteers has also been discussed by psychologists in functional theories of beliefs and behaviours, according to which 'people engage in volunteer work to satisfy important social and psychological goals; and different individuals may be involved in similar volunteer activities but do so to achieve different goals' (Clary et al., 1996, p. 487). In the national survey that investigated volunteers' motivations and operationalization in the nonprofit sector in the United States, Clary et al. applied a functional approach and identified a six-factor model of motivations: values, understanding, career, social, enhancement and protective functions. As expected, the career function is reported to be of more significance to younger respondents. 'Those who are more established and advantaged may have already satisfied or assured themselves of continued satisfaction of work-related (and income-related) needs and hence find this goal as a motivation to volunteer less important; those who are less established and advantaged, however, may not have

satisfied these same needs and thus they remain salient' (Clary, Snyder and Stukas, 1996, p. 500). The overall findings suggested the importance of multiple motivations of volunteers, which is often discussed in the context of the older 'altruism-egoism debate' associated with 'helping' (Fitch, 1987). One view is that 'all helpfulness is motivated by a selfish desire to benefit oneself'; the other is 'the argument that helpfulness is sometimes based on a selfless concern for other' (Clary and Snyder, 1999, p. 157). The authors of the survey argue that motives for volunteering are far more complex than is allowed for by this binary classification scheme, especially as 'some specific motives combine other-interested and self-interested considerations and because many people indicate that they have both kinds of reasons for volunteering' (Clary and Snyder, 1999, p. 157). In addition, it is pointed out that 'volunteer behaviours do not depend solely on the person or on the situation, but rather depend on the interaction of person-based dynamics and situational opportunities' (Clary and Snyder, 1999, p. 159). Participation and commitment to volunteering are related to the match between an individual's experience of volunteering and their motivation. Studies in America have shown that university students who gained positive experience and benefits from being involved in community services displayed greater willingness to volunteer, either in the short or long term, than those who received irrelevant benefits or were forced rather than inspired by their university to take part in 'mandatory volunteerism', as part of the curriculum, in order to graduate (Clary and Snyder, 1999; Stukas, Snyder and Clary, 1999). Moreover, research has demonstrated that once these external pressures are removed for students their interest in volunteering decreases even further. Nonetheless, Stukas, Snyder and Clary argue that 'allowing participants to design the focus and specific details of their service may effectively solve this problem; students themselves may be able to come up with the most creative ways to serve within the frameworks of their existing personal agendas' (Stukas, Snyder and Clary, 1999, p. 64).

The decline of young people interested in volunteering was also reported in the UK. The findings of the survey commissioned by the Institute for Volunteering Research in 1998 suggested that ‘volunteers aged 18-24 gave the highest dissatisfaction rating in six of the categories, with young people particularly critical of the way their volunteering was organized, the lack of appreciation and recognition afforded to them, and the type of thing they were asked to do’ (Smith, 1999, p. 373). It is argued that there is a perceived negative image associated with volunteering among young people; when respondents were asked how to improve this situation ‘17 per cent...felt that more emphasis should be placed on volunteering as work experience, with greater attention paid to showing how volunteering can help in future job searching...’ (Smith, 1999, p. 376). Moreover, work-related benefits were especially pronounced among the age group 17 to 19, among those from ‘higher socio-economic groups’ and ‘higher educational attainments’ (loc. cit.).

More positive aspects of student volunteering are reported from the pedagogical standpoint; studies in higher education evaluating the long-term effect of volunteering in the USA demonstrate the lasting and positive effects after students leave college (Astin, Sax and Avalos, 1999; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Astin et al. examined the impact of student volunteering measured nine years after they entered college, and claimed that ‘volunteering during college is...associated with higher degree aspirations...and with the student’s perception that his or her undergraduate college provided good preparation for work. This...is consistent with the notion that participating in service work gives the student important practical experience in the “real world”’ (Astin, Sax and Avalos, 1999, pp. 197-198). Markus et al. see the integration of volunteering or ‘service learning’ activities into a course curriculum as a form of experiential learning that ‘is more of a “bottom-up” method, in which general lessons and principles are drawn inductively from direct personal experiences and observations’ and which thus enables students to enhance their learning through

understanding the relationship between academic theory and ‘the problems of real life’ (Markus, Howard and King, 1993, p. 416). Their findings show that students who engaged in this type of learning ‘got higher course grades, were more emphatic in their judgments that they were performing up to their potential in the course, and were more likely to affirm that they had learned to apply principles from the course to new situations’ (loc. cit.). However, the incorporation of voluntary activities into a curriculum requires systematic planning, time and resources in order to be successful.

Like volunteering, internship is a type of work related activity that empowers students in their future careers. In the educational context internships are perceived as ‘a way of blending traditional classroom training with on-the-job experience, bridging the gap between the worlds of the university and industry’ (Sheldon, 1986, p.9). According to Howery the main aim of internship is ‘to provide students with an opportunity to test abilities and attitudes towards particular material or career possibilities for the future’ (Howery, 1983, p. 336). Generally, internship is supposed to manage students’ expectation of their careers, ease the transition from the academic to the workplace environment, improve their ability to explore their career potential, and allow them to gain experience in the context of employment (Paulins, 2008). Neapolitan agrees with ‘the idea that helping students in career choice is a primary goal of internship programs’, but he stresses that ‘the effect of participation in an internship on clarification of career goals has not been the subject of sufficient rigorous research’ (Neapolitan, 1992, p. 222); notably, it fails to ‘address small-scale, large-scale, undergraduate and graduate internship programs both separately and comparatively’ (op. cit, p. 223). His research focuses on the impact of a small-scale internship program on students’ clarification of their career goals, and his findings support the perception that there is a relationship between the two. Neapolitan reported that ‘even in cases where the internship experience did not contribute to increased certainty of career choice, it provided information

valuable to making a sound career choice. It made some interns aware of career options they had not considered previously. Other interns became aware of obstacles to entry of which they had not been aware, and awareness is a prerequisite to overcoming obstacles' (op. cit, p. 229).

Internship satisfaction has been discussed in the literature as an essential part of successful student work related experience. Paulins studied the factors associated with satisfying internship in retail merchandising, and concludes that 'students should seek internships where they will engage in a variety of activities, received consistent and helpful feedback from their supervisors, and where they are given responsibility to begin and complete tasks that are seen as important contributions in the company' (Paulins, 2008, p. 105). Closure with tasks, dealing with others, and friendship were highlighted as main contributors to students' satisfaction with their internships (op. cit, p. 116). Furthermore, the study points to the importance and value of feedback in relation to internship satisfaction. Paulins argues that 'academic advisors and internship directors should guide students to seek internships where they will form relationships with on-site supervisors resulting in feedback and information related to their performance...Retailers can do their part towards offering satisfying retail internships by ensuring that interns are placed with supervisors who excel in communication skills – particularly those who are able to offer meaningful feedback with respect to job performance, and who can offer encouragement and advice' (op. cit, p. 117). Sheldon points out that if internship in fashion retail is to be successful, communication between students, educators and retailers is of vital importance. 'Merchandising educators must work to close the gap in attitudes towards internships that exists between educators and retailers for the benefit of students' (Sheldon, 1996, p. 15).

In the recent economic crisis internship has come under intense scrutiny. The exploitative nature of internships, particularly in creative industries, has been highlighted in the press and

elsewhere (see for example Bowen, 2009; Gardner, 2010; and the Interns Anonymous forum). ‘There is alarming evidence that some firms are replacing graduate recruitment schemes with internships – in other words, the same people doing the same jobs but for no money. Students fill in forms, submit portfolios and go for interviews (travel expenses not reimbursed), all for the privilege of six months or even a year of high-pressure, unpaid dogsbodying, where every day is a test of commitment’ Binns, 2009). Such internships exacerbate social difference, in that relatively few can afford to take unpaid work on that time-scale. This is clearly an issue which needs to be taken seriously.

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