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Paper 43 – Poster

Creative Degrees and Creative Employability

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Abstract

There is little published research about the place of Employability in Higher Education (HE) and the Creative Industries (CI). CI was coined by Labour in 1998 to represent a collective of creative sectors and identified for having future UK economic growth (LGA: 2009). Research has been increasing in some CI subjects within HE, particularly around entrepreneurship, enterprise, work aspirations and the labour market (Brown: 2007, Triantafyllaki and Smith: 2009, Walker: 2009, Evans: 2010, Ball et al: 2010) but the contested area of employability and its place in creative undergraduate degrees remains underdeveloped.

This research interrogates the concept of employability in CI degrees, unpacks the multiplicity of meanings and investigates the place of employability in undergraduate degree programmes. It asks the research questions: What is employability in the creative industries? Can this employability be “acquired” in the undergraduate experience?

A guest blog for “The Guardian” (2010) and “Facebook” were utilised to engage with graduates from UK universities. Grounded Theory was used to analyse the data of 68 graduate experiences while at university and their thoughts about the place of employability within CI undergraduate degrees.

The preliminary findings of this stage can be summarised as follows. To increase the likelihood of a graduate gaining potential work in the creative industries a graduate needs to have had meaningful engagement with the industry they aspire to work within, coupled with opportunities to gain an understanding of their own worth within it. This understanding gained through reflection on their identity, attributes and agency for potential work in that area.

The next stage will investigate current undergraduates’ experiences in their creative degrees. The outcome will be a contemporary student voice currently lacking in CI and employability research and an increased understanding of the creative ways to facilitate learning and engage with future undergraduate students.

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