

Graduate Employability - Literature Review

Dr Dawn Lees, Employability Co-ordinator, University of Exeter

1.0 Introduction

Employability is a difficult concept to define succinctly and comprehensively. As Hillage and Pollard (1998) state, it is a term used in a variety of contexts with a range of meanings and can lack clarity and precision as an operational concept. This literature review is an attempt to draw together the concepts of employability in relation to Higher Education (HE) in the UK. This is a rapidly growing area for publication and this literature review cannot hope to comprehensively cover all publications, but it aims to put the main issues into context.

The notion of employability challenges traditional concepts of HE and raises the question of what the point of HE is; subject knowledge and understanding, or learning how to learn. Some academics feel that this agenda is too driven by government policy and employers, rather than the academy, and this can lead to unrest amongst academics who are expected to teach employability skills and attributes in the classroom. De la Harpe *et al.* (2000) suggest that there is concern world-wide that existing undergraduate programmes are not producing graduates with the kind of life long learning skills and professional skills which they need in order to be successful in their careers.

The employability debate is not a new one for HE. The Robbins Report (Robbins, 1963) highlighted the objectives of providing 'instruction in skills suitable to play a part in the general division of labour'. More recently, the Dearing Report into Higher Education (1997) emphasised the importance of education for employability – focussing on the development of key skills and the importance of work experience.

This literature review will look in turn at first, the employability agenda, second, curriculum developments and academic perspectives, third, employability attributes – reflective learning, work experience, team work, and forth, Employability Performance Indicators and Employers needs.

2.0 The employability agenda

Employability is central to the strategic direction of the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), (now the Department for Education and skills – DfES), (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). Government policy to enhance the employability of graduates is part of a wider strategy to extend the skills base in the UK (Coopers & Lybrand, 1998). This interest in employability is associated with human capital theories of innovation and economic performance. Growth in the stock of human capital is essential for economic growth, and hence the government's agenda is driven by the desire to stem the 'productivity shortfall'. The HE system is therefore being steered to place greater emphasis on the employability of graduates (Jackson, 1999; Knight & Yorke, 2001, 2002a).

Morley (2001) suggests that HEIs both mediate and manage government policy, and that the boundaries between the academy, government and businesses have loosened and been reformed. This raises the question of what the purpose of HE is, whether it is to provide to the workforce of the future or educational stimulus, or both. Jackson (1999) suggests that the recent government agenda for the massification of HE, widening participation, the key skills/employability agenda, lifelong learning etc., are leading to the unification of HE and by implication, the curtailing of academic freedoms.

Innovation in education is complex although government, and others, persist in treating it as something simple, to be planned, delivered and evaluated (Knight, 2001). Change is slow as the culture of an institution has to change and adapt. 'Top down' approaches are unlikely to be met warmly, 'bottom-up' approaches are more likely to stick. However, very often no sooner than have academics got to grips with TQA/TQSA/QAA than these are abolished and replaced by new auditing processes. It is difficult to compare institutional development and progress, internally and externally, if the criteria for assessment are changed on a regular basis. Given the rapid nature of change it is hardly surprising that new initiatives can be met with scepticism and resistance by academics.

The Level H (First degree with honours) descriptor in the National Qualifications Framework (QAA, 2001a) refers *inter alia* to qualities and skills necessary for employment, thus giving institutions a LTSN Generic Centre

fairly firm steer in that direction. This agenda is picked up in a broad sense in the QAA subject benchmark statements (QAA, 2000). The university-wide Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Career Education, Information and Guidance (CEIG) gives a further steer in the direction of employability initiatives. The QA for CEIG is intended to ensure that HEIs are meeting students' expectations for their preparedness for their future careers and that they are producing graduates who are equipped to meet the demands of the employment market today (QAA, 2001b). This code emphasises the importance of HEIs in promoting the development of skills in relation to employment and lifelong learning. The QAA suggests that HEIs should consider integrating CEIG within the curriculum for all HE programmes of study e.g. through incorporating CEIG into the institution's Teaching and Learning Strategy. The institution should ensure that its CEIG provision is designed to prepare its students for a successful transition to employment or further study and for effective management of their career thereafter. Careers Services are increasingly becoming more fully part of the mainstream academic businesses of universities (Coopers & Lybrand, 1998).

2.1 Widening Participation

With over half of each generation now having the opportunity to enter HE, preparation for the world of work has to encompass a much broader spectrum of skills and competencies than it used to (Skilbeck & Connell, 1996). This is because with a greater number of graduates, they will be expected to take up employment in a wider range of areas than previously. Also, more account will need to be taken of the previous experiences that students bring with them when they enter university if they have already spent time in the workplace.

3.0 What is 'employability'?

Hillage and Pollard (1998) of the Institute for Employment Studies carried out a report on developing a framework for policy analysis on employability for the DfEE (now DfES). Their main findings were:

- Employability is about having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required.
- For the individual, employability depends upon:
 1. assets in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes,
 2. the way these assets are used and deployed,
 3. presentation of assets to potential employers,
 4. the context within which the individual works, e.g. labour market, personal circumstances.

Government policy is aimed:

- more at the development and accreditation of knowledge and vocational skills than the 'softer' skills and attitudes
- more on the demonstration of assets than their deployment
- more at individuals looking to enter the labour market, from education or unemployment, than those already within the labour market
- more on the individual and supply side than the employers and demand side.

Being in possession of employer-relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes is not enough for an individual to move within the labour market, and to realise their potential. People need to be capable of exploiting their assets, of marketing them and selling them (Hillage & Pollard, 1998).

Employability is a difficult concept to define – it is a multi-dimensional concept, and there is a need to distinguish between factors relevant to obtaining a job and factors relevant to the preparation for work (Little, 2001). Employability is not just about students making deposits in a bank of skills (Morley, 2001). Knight (2001) and Yorke (2001) consider the concept of employability to be a 'synergic combination of personal qualities, skills of various kinds and subject understanding' (Figure 1). It is a concept that is much more complex than the relatively restrictive key skills agenda, as focussed on by Dearing (1997) which has obscured a greater understanding of employability (Yorke, 2001; Knight & Yorke, 2001). Yorke (2001) also suggests that traditionally, little emphasis has been placed upon a student's personal qualities, but that these could have considerable bearing on a particular student's success (Section 4.2).

Therefore, there are two main concepts of employability (Yorke, 2001, Knight & Yorke, 2001), these are:

- 1) the educational conception relating to the ability of graduates to tackle 'graduate' jobs. This is related to the notion of 'capability' whose development was sponsored by the RSA in the late 1980s - 'Higher Education for Capability'. This means that employability of graduates relates to

their being equipped for a job and capable of being employed, rather than job acquisition (Harvey, 2001; van der Heijden, 2001).

2) The ability of the graduate to get a job – any job.

The second concept is used by the Government in the construction of the Employability Performance Indicators (EPIs), (Section 12.0), but it is the first concept that most practitioners in HE are primarily concerned with. Good student learning and the curriculum, teaching and assessment that goes with it, describes 'education for employability' well (Knight & Yorke, 2000). This implies that curricula designed to enhance students' employability are also desirable on purely educational grounds. It is possible to see both the traditional academic education and key skills as being subsets of 'employability'. It is difficult to maintain that academic progress is not enhanced by high standard of literacy and numeracy, by a range of communication skills and the ability to work in groups or teams, and by learning how to learn effectively (Atkins, 1999).

From the employers' point of view, employability is the propensity of the graduate to exhibit attributes that employers anticipate will be necessary for the future effective functioning of their organisation (Harvey, 1997). Increasingly, graduates need to be more flexible in response to the growing number of career changes experienced through life for many people, because of the increase in short term contracts, part-time work, outsourcing and home-working (Harvey, 2000a). Van der Heijden (1996) has called this new cohort of flexible experts 'flexperts'.

Employment and employability are not the same thing. Being employed means having a job, being employable means having the qualities needed to maintain employment and progress in the workplace. Employability from the perspective of HEIs is therefore about producing graduates who are capable and able, and this impacts upon all areas of university life, in terms of the delivery of academic programmes and extra curricula activities.

4.0 Employability Skills

Coopers and Lybrand (1998) define 'employability skills' in terms of four key areas: 1). traditional intellectual skills – e.g. critical evaluation, logical argument; 2). Key skills – communication, IT, etc., 3). Personal attributes – motivation, self-reliance and 4). Knowledge of organisations and how they work. There are several synonyms - core, key, generic, personal transferable skills, common, work or employment related skills – this is another of the reasons why it is difficult to conceptualise what is meant by employability skills. Added to that, 'skills' are often referred to as capabilities, competencies or attributes, levels or learning outcomes, thus compounding the sense of confusion.

Whilst Dearing (1997) explicitly refrained from producing a list of skills, because of the nature of individual programmes of study and their learning objectives, it is probably useful for students to see the sort of skills that the programme is aiming to develop so that they are more aware of their own personal development. It is also useful for students to see the type of skills which employers are typically seeking from graduates (Tables 1a-d). This means that students can be aware of any gaps in their own personal development well in advance of getting to the stage of applying for jobs (Section 7.0). Table 2 sets out a list of skills which Knight and Yorke (2001) and Bennett *et al.* (1999) also consider to be important.

It is possible that employers' criticisms of the shortcomings of graduate recruits are not so much the result of failure in the HE curriculum, rather of failure in the transfer process. Atkins (1999) questions how transferable key skills are into employment contexts. Eraut (1994) sees transfer as a learning process in its own right, although this may be easier for skills in relation to objects such as using particular computer packages, rather than the 'softer' skills of interacting with and managing people effectively. Brown (1999) believes that learning, and the transfer of that learning, is most likely to be effective if the learning situation closely resembles the work place. Knight and Yorke (2000) believe that if there is any hope of transferring the learning from one context to another, the learner needs to use that learning in a variety of different situations. From these comments, it would seem that practice in a number of contexts is fundamental for the development of employability skills and attributes.

Brennan *et al.* (1996) in a survey of graduates across Europe and the UK found that UK graduates rated teamwork, working under pressure, oral communication skills and problem solving in the top ten skills competencies they viewed as important. In contrast, none of these appeared in the list of competencies rated highly by European graduates, instead they highlighted learning abilities, working independently and written communication skills.

4.1 Key Skills

Dearing (1997) regarded key skills to consist of four components:

- 1). communication;
- 2). numeracy;
- 3). information technology;
- 4). learning how to learn

and proposed that it was essential that these were developed at undergraduate level. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) adds teamwork and problem solving to this list. There are many different lists of key skills, although there is general agreement about the importance of communication, numeracy, teamwork, IT and problem solving (Dunne *et al.*, 2000). These are considered to be generic skills as they represent skills that can be used to support study in any discipline. The possession of some key skills – IT, numeracy, for example, will facilitate the acquisition of subject understanding (Yorke, 2001), as using IT for research will enable students to learn more about their discipline.

4.2 Personal Qualities/ self-efficacy beliefs

The inclusion of 'personal qualities' into the concept of employability is considered to be of great importance to the 'Skills *plus* Project' (Knight & Yorke, 2000, 2001, 2002a; Yorke, 2001) as these can have a considerable bearing on a student's success. Drawing upon the work of Dweck (1999) and Bandura (1997) the Skills *plus* Project considers there to be two broad categories of self-belief:

- 1) an entity/immutable/fixed belief, that one has a set amount of something – intelligence for example, that cannot be changed
- 2) an incremental/mutable/malleable belief that development is possible and even probable.

Students with a fixed belief about their intelligence are likely to be discouraged by failure because failure is construed in terms of inadequate intelligence. These students may avoid more challenging work for fear of failure. Conversely, students with a malleable self-belief are more likely to attribute failure to a lack of effort, and believe that poor performance can lead to further learning, and it is the learning that becomes a source of self-esteem. These students are more likely to learn from mistakes and apply this learning to future tasks. It is therefore this type of self-belief that should be encouraged and nurtured. In addition to a student's beliefs about their own fixed/malleable self, students who have a belief in *their own ability* to produce, organise and undertake tasks (self-efficacy) will have an effect on their performance. Yorke (2001) considers that it is not enough to have a range of cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural sub-skills, but that these have to be integrated into the challenges that are faced. Therefore, perceived self-efficacy or ability will play an important role in choice of degree programme, career choice and personal development, and is thus significant for an individual's employability. Personal qualities are also important in the acquisition of subject understanding and the development of skills. A willingness to learn – often from mistakes – implies a preparedness to tolerate a degree of stress in order to achieve success (Yorke, 2001; Knight & Yorke, 2001).

The self-efficacious student will probably have a series of sub-goals that can act as milestones of progress. These students will set themselves reasonable targets and gain satisfaction from achieving them, and continue round the virtuous circle (Knight & Yorke, 2001). This breaking down of a complex task into achievable goals is particularly important for independent project work and for research students undertaking a thesis. If there is a real (or perceived) significance of obtaining high grades at the beginning of a programme of study, fixed belief students are unlikely to take risks and, therefore, may try to avoid more challenging tasks. The importance of formative assessment is emphasised here and relates to the section on curriculum design (section 5.1).

Knight and Yorke (2000) and Yorke (2001) believe that HE curricula can make a difference to personal beliefs and approaches. It would seem likely that this is the case even though shaping personal beliefs is not the primary aim of HE. Through learning and different experiences, students may be exposed to a wider range of people and attitudes than they have been previously. This may help them shape their own beliefs and become more confident in their own abilities. Ability is important, but people with high ability may lack persistence (Knight & Yorke, 2000). People who persist in the face of difficulties attribute achievements to effort and strategic thinking, they often believe that they can usually find a way of easing difficult situations.

Yorke (2001) believes that teachers in HE should appreciate how important self theories are for student learning, be able to infer where on the "fixed versus malleable" continuum students are, and should encourage students to move in a "malleable" direction. Dunne *et al.* (2000) also suggests that curriculum change is only possible with a prior change in teachers' attitudes, behaviours and

beliefs. There is the added complication of an institution's need to demonstrate that the programmes of study comply with requirements for benchmarking, professional and statutory bodies, level descriptors and academic review (Knight & Yorke, 2001).

5.0 Academic perspectives

Academics will need to be convinced that an institutions' insistence on their incorporating employability skills into their teaching is not an attack on academic freedom in terms of content, but a request that academics consider *how* they teach their subject (Coopers & Lybrand, 1998; Harvey, 2000a). In relation to the debate concerning core and generic skill provision, Bennett *et al.* (1999) comment that there was little impact because of tutor scepticism of the message, the messenger and its vocabulary. The same is probably true for the employability debate. Harvey (2000a) advocates the view that the primary role of HE is to train students by enhancing their knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities *and* to empower them as lifelong critical and reflective learners. This is similar to the perspective of the Skills *plus* Project who see concern for employability as supportive of good learning rather than in opposition to it. Empowering learners is about giving students control over the educational process and their post-educational lives, and Harvey (2000a), suggests that it is debatable how serious academia is in achieving these ends.

It is essential that any changes to the curriculum are owned by the staff delivering the modules, if they are to be successfully implemented. Atlay and Harris (2000) comment that it is important to work with the culture and values of the institution and of HE itself. A culture that strives to improve the learning environment for the benefit of students and staff is essential for the successful implementation of change. However, de la Harpe *et al.* (2000) conclude that 'in the anarchy of individualism that is academia, the responses of staff varies unpredictably... little can be achieved without staff commitment accompanied by an agreed change process'.

Traditional academic systems at universities may operate against good teaching and teaching innovation since the emphasis for promotion is on research output and quality rather than improvements to the curriculum. De la Harpe *et al.* (2000) have found this to be the case in Australia. However, public acknowledgement of good teaching is beginning to occur in some universities, for example, teaching professorships in US universities and the incorporation of effective teaching into promotion criteria in New Zealand (Skilbeck & Connell, 1996).

Dunne *et al.* (2000) point out that the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) lacked a clear strategy or theoretical orientation for generic skills teaching (or employability for that matter). This is surprising given the policies setting out the importance of the development of these by central government.

5.1 Curriculum developments

One of the purposes of HE is to help students to improve their higher level competencies and skills to enhance their long-term employability (DfES, 2002). Knight & Yorke (2001) argue that the notion of employability can be embedded in any academic subject in HE without compromising core academic freedoms. The methods which are chosen for teaching a subject will, to varying extents, assist students to develop key and other skills. The development of key skills will facilitate learning of the subject through, for example, the use of IT for information retrieval. So it is a two-way dialogue between subject and skills (Yorke, 2001).

Knight & Yorke (2000,) warn against making four common mistakes when it comes to curriculum change for employability:

- 1) rational curriculum planning, which *begins* with statements of goals and learning outcomes.
- 2) scorched earth change, when the old is thrown out for the new.
- 3) fast change.
- 4) paper changes – change without change.

It is only a minority of students who are able to gain employment which directly utilises the academic content of their degree programme (HESA, 1998). Students in the UK appear to choose their degree programme on the basis of intrinsic subject interest, rather than whether it would prepare them for employment (Guardian/Gallup Survey, 1993,1994). However, it seems that this trend is set to change with graduates considering the type of career they may enter when they choose a programme of study. Maharasoa and Hay (2001) found from a study in South Africa that employability, or the prospects of post-graduation employment, is one of the greatest factors influencing a student's choice of the course for study.

Students generally recognise the need to develop communication, problem solving and management skills (Fallows, 1995). However, some students may not wish to see their academic studies 'diluted' by time given to transferable skills sessions (AGCAS-CSU-IER, 1996). It may be more appropriate, therefore, to use the academic sessions as a vehicle for teaching these skills so that the academic content is not lost. This may involve a change in the approach to teaching which academics adopt, but does mean that skill development is fully integrated into the curriculum, rather than being add-ons.

At the core of the employability debate is whether the teaching of employability skills should be embedded or bolt-on. Skills are best developed when they are integrated across the curriculum and students are given the opportunity to develop higher levels of skills as they progress through the programme of study (de la Harpe *et al.*, 2000). By embedding these skills (not just *skills* but also attributes) it gives them the same status as knowledge and obliges lecturers to cover them, however, bolt-on options ensure that skills are covered competently (Tait & Godfrey, 1999). Knight & Yorke (2001) feel that by having separate key skills modules where the skill development is not fully integrated into the curriculum, key skills – and by association, employability, are being trivialised and ghettoised. For the most part then, the development of employability skills and attributes should be integrated within the curriculum.

By outlining the Personal and key skills provision in module accreditation forms, all aspects of the curriculum are seen to be interwoven, with a coherent approach adopted. At the University of Luton (Atlay & Harris, 2000) the module templates set the operational context within which the students are expected to be working, in relation to knowledge and understanding, analysis, creativity and evaluation. This template defines the broad skill areas which the university expects staff to develop in their students; how they define the meaning of the skills in relation to the subject is a matter of individual judgement. The attention of students may need to be drawn to skills, so that they are fully aware of the processes and experiences they are undertaking. Improving employability is concerned with complex learning, involving potentially years of practice and the space to make mistakes and improve judgement. Students need feedback that will prompt strategic thinking and reflection upon the situation.

Atkins (1999) feels however, that if every student emerges with the same repertoire of employability skills, any market advantage would disappear. Indeed, Atkins advocates a change of emphasis, where employability skills are left out of the curriculum altogether and are addressed after graduation when graduates are either looking for work or are in transition to their first jobs. However, this will be too late for many students who are involved in the 'Milkround' – many employers are looking for students in the autumn term prior to graduation, and these students need to be in a position to present themselves effectively. Since the development of skills and attributes requires practice over a long time frame, it would seem impossible to leave the development of these until after graduation.

Table 3 sets out the principles of good teaching that are compatible with improving student employability, from Knight & Yorke (2000). This is not a new or unfamiliar list. It is realistic, respects academic freedom and emphasises the significance of process-based learning. Most programmes are already delivering many of these aspects within existing curricula and so could make claims that what they do is educationally good *and* enhances students' employability. These entitlements need to be clearly mapped through the curriculum to ensure that all students are encountering the full range of experiences and attributes and that these are built on throughout the programme of study so that there is some progression. Curricula may then need to be adjusted to fill any gaps in provision that become evident after the existing provision is mapped. Whilst one module will not encompass all aspects included in the list, Knight and Yorke (2000) believe that an entire programme of study should. All students taking a course should be entitled to messages and encounters that develop understandings, skills, self theories and reflection – good learning and education improves employability. Employability is therefore also about *how we teach what we teach*.

5.2 Assessment and Employability

Assessment affects how students study, encouraging them to take a 'deep' approach to a task rather than a 'surface' approach (Entwhistle, 1996). Assessment criteria also inform students of what they need to improve upon to succeed, and identify what their tutors perceive to be important and what is not.

Formative assessment is important so that students can learn from prior work and from taking risky challenges rather than opting for the 'safer' pieces of work that are less of a challenge (Yorke 2001). Considerate feedback can be emotionally important, particularly when it builds learner confidence and sense of achievement. That is not to say that feedback should not be critical, but it should also offer suggestions of how improvements could be made next time (Knight, 2001).

Biggs and Moore (1993) encourage self-assessment of formative work and skills development. This encourages students to become autonomous learners and learn from their own mistakes: if they can see how they could improve a piece of work they are more likely to implement change with the next assignment. Peer assessment is also important, as students will learn from each other. Peer and self-assessment may need guidance sheets for students to work to, and work may need to be moderated by tutors so that a common standard is maintained, highly critical comments can be moderated and gaps in assessment filled.

6.0 Implications for Postgraduates -

Postgraduates are rarely mentioned in the literature concerning the development of employability skills and attributes. They seem to be a forgotten group who are not explicitly encouraged to think about either their skill or career development. This is beginning to change. Cryer (1997) stated that very few PhD students do themselves justice in the job market, often underselling themselves to prospective employers because they fail to appreciate the value of the skills they have developed during their research. Students who are aware of the additional skills that they have attained during the course of their research should have the competitive edge in the job market.

Orchard *et al.* (2000) in a report for the DfEE note a number of inhibiting factors in the training of research students for employability, these include:

1. a lack of time, with priority given to research progress rather than personal development
2. a lack of interest from supervisors
3. negative experiences of previous profiling systems.
4. a lack of relevance of documentation to specific research topics.

They recommend personal profiles for research students that can be used for; monitoring and appraising skills development and competence; regular recording of information; facilitating the description, analysis, reflection upon and evaluation of experiences. Skills workshops are also recommended to develop team working skills, enable postgraduates to gain a better understanding of their own personal working style, address the challenges posed by the changing nature of work and enhance career management skills, e.g. CV writing, job-searching and interview skills. Cryer (1997) believes that these initiatives should be mainstream rather than peripheral or else they will become sidelined to the perhaps more pressing research commitments. By raising a research student's awareness of their own employability it should help to increase their self-esteem and enable them to fulfil their potential.

7.0 Personal development Planning

A significant outcome of the Dearing Report (1997) was Recommendation 20, that:

'institutions of higher education, over the medium term, develop a Progress File. The file should consist of two elements;

1. a transcript recording student achievement which should follow a common format devised by institutions collectively through their representative bodies.
2. A means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development.'

The QAA expects students graduating in 2005/06 to have progress files or Personal Development Plans (PDP), documenting their achievements. The primary objective of PDP is to improve the capacity of individuals to understand what and how they are learning, and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning. Students need to be able to reflect on their achievements and present evidence for them and to be aware of how their own employability is being developed both through the curriculum and extra-curricula activities. If a student is unaware that s/he possesses certain qualities, s/he is unlikely to apply them (Yorke, 2001).

PDPs are most likely to be effective in practice if they are integrated into mainstream academic activities, are linked to the learning outcomes of programmes of study and are supported and endorsed by academic staff (LTSN Guide for busy academics no.1). Some students have given this idea a lukewarm reception and staff claim that they have more important things to do than wade through complex documentation (Wright & Knight, 2000). But, PDPs are important for the development of an individual's employability.

Employers are primarily interested in the process of PDP rather than the outcomes. At recruitment stage, the value of PDP is in helping applicants to explain and demonstrate what they know, what they can do and what they have done (LTSN guide for Busy Academics No. 3). Application forms are not focused on academic subjects that have been studied, but instead require reflection and description of both academic and non-academic activities. PDP can be useful in this context as it encourages students to recognise their learning in ways that employers are interested in. PDP can also help to prepare students for Assessment Centres by increasing their understanding of how their competencies are transferable between situations. Students may also be more prepared for the type of competency frameworks they may encounter within organisations by being more self-aware and reflective. PDP is useful for career management and lifelong employability, as increasingly, individuals are being given responsibility for their own CPD early in their careers (LTSN guide for Busy Academics No. 3). Getting students into the habit of reflecting upon their activities and achievements and planning the action that they need to take to move on will have long term positive benefits for most graduates.

8.0 Lifelong Learning

Educational policy in Britain is currently putting great emphasis on lifelong learning (DfEE, 1998). This is in response to the recognition that the typical patterns of everyday working life are changing, which makes more varied demands on an individual's skills (Harvey, 1997). Harvey (2000a) regards employability to be a subset of and fundamentally contingent on transformative lifelong learning.

Atkins (1999) suggests that Dearing (1997) sees the undergraduate experience as a one-stop shop for the development of employability skills, terminating in graduation. Yet in the role of HE, improving the performance of employees, the concept of lifelong learning offers more scope, by enabling students to develop skills which will give them a foundation and basis for future learning and development. The recent approach to lifelong learning is more than a second-chance at education – it sees a well educated and trained population as essential for future economic prosperity, innovation, social and political cohesion (Harvey, 2000a). The view of education as preparatory is being challenged by the concept of lifelong learning, which sees education as an activity each individual engages with throughout life and under conditions which favour motivation and success (Skilbeck & Connell, 1996). However, there is still ambiguity about what lifelong learning means for HE in practice, so that lifelong learning tends to be associated with the employability agenda. The wider democratic agenda does not appear to be at the forefront of development (Harvey, 2000a), and also it is not philosophically integrated into the mainstream concept of HE.

Coffield (1997) suggests that Government plans to create a new culture of lifelong learning without developing a theory of learning, or even recognising that one is required. Dunne *et al.* (2000) concur, suggesting that without a theoretical understanding of how students and graduate employees learn, of how the setting or context mediates what and how they learn, or of institutional and organisational change, the Dearing prescriptions for the role of HE in economic development and in lifelong learning will not be realised.

According to Skilbeck and Connell (1996), a vital determinant as to whether or not graduates choose to become lifelong learners is the climate of intellectual inquiry in their institution. Lifelong learning perspectives are leading to a view of the first cycle of education as an enabling device for future learning – with an emphasis on generic achievements – rather than a vocational passport. Individual, self-directed learning is an important element of this agenda – and relates to PDP (section 7.0).

9.0 Reflection

Reflective thinking refers to the capacity to develop critical consideration of one's own world-view and the relationship to the world view of others. It is the ability to transcend preconceptions, prejudices and frames of reference and it underlies the capacity to learn from others and from experience (Warn & Tranter, 2001). The learning cycle based on Kolb (1984) is often used as the

basis for explaining experiential learning to students. However, Kolb overlooks the social, historical and cultural aspects of *self*, *thinking* and *action* (Davies, 2000). Memory is also omitted from the learning cycle. The Kolb learning cycle is however, a helpful analytical tool for an individual to use as a basis for analysing their experiences. Moon (1999) states that reflection lies somewhere around the notion of learning and thinking. We reflect in order to learn, or learn as a result of reflecting.

Reflective writing is central to many employability initiatives, for example PDP (Section 7.0), as a representation of the process of thinking reflectively (Moon, 1999). It will often involve a student (for example) describing an experience and evaluating and analysing their feelings and experiences. It may also involve the student thinking about how they would tackle a similar situation in the light of these experiences and analyses.

Warn and Tranter (2001) suggest that one of the implications of their study conducted in Australia is that universities should make more explicit the importance of reflective thinking in terms of its potential importance in the workplace, rather than simply its more esoteric value within a degree. However, a Pilot Study carried out at Leeds Metropolitan University came across potential barriers due to student perceptions that reflection is a 'girly thing' (Davies, 2000). This can only be overcome by making reflective learning something that is central to curricula and introduced at an early stage of the degree programme so that it is an activity that is seen as 'normal'.

10.0 Work Experience

Dearing (1997) and the TEC National Council (Times Higher, 1997) strongly suggested that work experience should be made available to a greater number of students. Work experience could mean: structured summer placements – tasters or a year out; summer internships; short term project placements; casual work – temping, bar work etc.; work shadowing or voluntary work. DfES (2002) suggest that students of all ages can learn from their experiences in the world of work to develop their key competencies and skills and enhance their employability. Employers value people who have undertaken work experience and reflected on it and can articulate and apply what they have learnt (Knight & Yorke, 2002a). Partnerships between HEIs and employers are valuable in promoting work-related learning and improving the quantity and quality of those experiences. Tables 1b&c show that employers also value graduates who have an awareness of how businesses work and this can be gained through work experience. There has not to date been a study of the impact of the option of work experience modules on the recruitment of student numbers. However, since parents are increasingly concerned with the employability of their children when they graduate, especially in the light of incurring large debts while studying, it would seem that graduate employability will increasingly become a consideration.

Work experience opportunities need to be well managed to be educationally valuable, but *good* work experience can enhance learning and employability (Knight & Yorke, 2000). Work-based learning requires the learner to manage their own learning, create learning opportunities to enable outcomes to be achieved and provide satisfactory evidence (Jackson, 1999). Davies (2000) noted that from his experience and from talking to academics in his institution, accreditation was felt to be the most likely way of persuading students to undertake work experience modules. However, some students entering HE at 18 or 19 years of age may not be mature enough to reflect effectively on work experience and employability skills, although in general, Bibby *et al.* (2000) found that students understand the relationship between work experience, reflection and skills development.

Holmes (2001) suggested that if work experience is not a formal part of the degree programme, tasks should be set that explicitly and intentionally relate to the work place. For example, students may be asked to write a report from the stance of an employee of a particular position within a particular organisation. This will enable students to focus upon practices relevant to the occupations that are typically entered into. This enables students to develop more than just 'skills' but can be viewed as a rehearsal for 'the real thing'.

Increasingly, students are working more than the 15 hours maximum recommended to support themselves whilst they are studying at university (Bibby *et al.*, 2000). There needs to be a progress of employment as students go through their degree programme, as they increasingly need to minimise hours of work and at the same time increase their income (Bibby, *et al.*, 2000). A large percentage of students are having to work in order to support themselves whilst they are studying at university, because of tuition fees, the lack of grants and an increase in the expectations of the standard of living that students have (Shabi, 2002). Academia has to accept that most students will be spending some time each week working to earn money rather than studying. These experiences

are therefore best utilised to increase students' understanding of both themselves and the workplace.

11.0 Teamwork

The need for graduates prepared for employment and skilled in teamwork has been advocated over the last decade internationally (Dunne & Rawlins, 2000). With increasing numbers of students entering HE and reductions in staff contact time, the ability of students to work together efficiently is likely to become increasingly important (Dunne & Rawlins, 2000). Groups of students often work together during the course of their degree studies, for example seminar groups in Law, groups on Geography, Biology or Archaeology field classes, or in laboratory classes. Teamwork is used for enhancing the learning process, and enhancing the learning knowledge, not just skills development (Nichol, 1997). It is not often however, that students are trained explicitly to understand the processes, roles, tensions and means of resolving them that stem from team work (Dunne & Rawlins, 2000). Mutch (1998) suggests that the 'softer skills' of negotiation and compromise can be honed from working in teams where the primary aim is knowledge based and these are important attributes in the workplace. Training students in team work skills would seem to have a broader impact than just enabling them to work in teams more effectively, although obviously this is a primary objective.

12.0 Performance indicators – measuring employability

University performance is already measured against research and teaching quality and Smith *et al.* (2000) predicted that it would also include employment of graduates, since this was highlighted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his 1999 pre-budget report. HEFCE (2001) measures employability in terms of graduates getting jobs, any jobs. AGCAS now defines a graduate job as any job that a graduate does – this reflects the diversity of graduate employment and also raises the question as to whether all graduates are employed in suitably demanding jobs, or whether a percentage of them are underemployed. Little (2001) suggests that one of the measures of 'output' from HE is the quality of graduates, and from this has come the notion of graduate employability. If getting 'any job' is used as a measure of success, it calls into question the notion of 'quality'. Little (2001) questions whether graduate employability figures are trustworthy indicators of the quality of higher education.

An Employability Performance Indicator (EPI) is thought by many to be too crude and that it could be used inappropriately (Harvey, 2000b). An EPI will probably be used as a management tool for the allocation of funding against performance criteria and also to produce information to inform students about potential career routes that might follow a particular university course (Smith *et al.*, 2000). Concern has also been expressed that an EPI backed by the Treasury would be primarily economically-driven, rather than related to the education mission of HEIs and the broader purposes of HE. There are two main purposes of EPI; 1) accountability and improvement, accountability through benchmarking and league tables, accompanying press coverage and through additional student numbers, and 2) improvement through internal institutional development and continuous quality improvement. Harvey (2000b) states that an EPI must have greater emphasis on improvement than on accountability, but that any EPI must be seen as part of the development of the learning process, not detached from it. Harvey (2001) concludes that any evaluation of employability needs to clearly indicate areas for internal improvement, rather than simply ranking institutions. There is a danger that institutions will focus too much on their place in the league tables as they seek to improve their scores. This may be at the expense of fulfilling the educational aims that students should leave with a rich variety of employment orientated skills, understandings and attributes (Knight & Yorke, 2001).

An EPI based upon the First Destinations Returns survey (FDR) can result in employability being construed as an institutional achievement, rather than the ability of individual students to gain employment (Harvey, 2001), and as such is a pseudo-measure of success. FDR is logged 6 months after graduation, and this is probably an unrealistic timeframe on which to base a survey of graduate employability. Many students will be travelling, undertaking further study, or still looking for work, or may be underemployed temporarily until a more appropriate and fulfilling job opportunity arises. It may be the case that graduates will take any job so that they can pay off debts (Mason, 1995). However, there is considerable pressure from the government and funding agencies to 'keep employability simple', so employability is being *de facto* equated to the gaining and retaining of fulfilling work (Hillage and Pollard, 1998).

First Destinations Returns Survey (FDR) is divided into four categories:

1. Entering employment (E)
2. Proceeding to further education or training (FS)
3. Unemployed or seeking work or further study (U)
4. Inactive – unavailable for work or further study (OLF)

Further information is gathered on graduates in employment. Harvey (2000b) expressed concern about the accuracy, categories and breakdown of FDRs. For example, HESA makes no distinction in statistics between those who are unemployed and seeking work and those who are unemployed and not seeking work. Smith *et al.* (2000) proposed a method for the construction of a set of employment-related university performance measures. They distinguish between the positive outcomes (E & FS) and the negative outcomes (U & OLF) on the basis that some return is expected of students given the investments made in their education. They rank universities on the criterion of the probability of graduates being U or OLF. They also distinguish between E and FS and construct a performance measure for each category. They have also constructed a performance measure on the basis of the *quality* of the employment to account for those that may be under-employed. Labour market patterns, economic cycles on hiring patterns and regional variations also need to be taken into account when measuring employability as a PI. Harvey (2000b) took the view that salary should not be included as an indicator of a 'graduate' job, given that many graduates do not begin their working life in graduate jobs, six months after graduation when the FDR is conducted. However, as the Dearing Report (1997) stated, graduates should be able to earn a premium over non-graduates, and so salary should not be ignored altogether.

Harvey (2000b) and Smith *et al.* (2000) propose the construction of university performance measures based on individual-level data – from FDR survey data matched to administrative data on individual student records, e.g. subject of study, gender, age, ethnicity, occupation of parents, entry qualification. This is because the class of the degree obtained, degree subject studies, prior qualifications and social class background strongly affect the likelihood of U or OLF. It is naïve to assume that the employability of an individual necessarily correlates with them obtaining a graduate job, especially in the first six months after graduation (Knight & Yorke, 2002a). Harvey (2000b) also suggests that the FDR data be collected at least one year after graduation rather than the current six months, or as time series data for each cohort. One problem with this is the movement of graduates for taking up work, the diminishing probability that graduates would keep their alumni office informed of all relocations and the probability that after the first survey, the rate of returns would drop off sharply.

Prospective students are advised by Smith *et al.* (2000) not to follow the performance rankings of an institution slavishly, since rankings based on one year's data may be misleading. Relevant characteristics of the institution's intake need to be taken into account and any performance measure can only be regarded as being indicative of outcomes for the average student. Their results also suggest that students from poorer backgrounds have a lower probability of being employed in graduate occupations after graduation.

Careers Advice is important to help students to find suitable employment after graduation. This is especially important since FDR is the measure of employability used. The main problem is that CAS usually do not have input into programme design and may find themselves advising students who cannot make strong claims to employability (Knight & Yorke, 2002a). *All modules need to be accredited with personal and key skill components & also SPQR requirements.*

12.1 Employability Audit & Student Satisfaction Surveys

When employability is defined in terms of the attributes of the graduate, institutional effectiveness *might* be indicated by an audit of the developmental opportunities of the institution (Harvey, 1999; 2000b; 2001). Such an audit would identify work-experience opportunities and attribute-development opportunities available within the curriculum – this would provide an indication of process and an indication of where and how that process could be improved. An audit such as this needs to cover all 'employability fostering' activities in the learning and teaching process and this may result in duplication or overlap with the subject reviews undertaken by the QAA (Harvey, 2000b). League tables do not offer any guides to making improvements: an audit would. It would show where there were gaps in provision and where progress had been made within an institution and would therefore be more useful as internal monitoring data than the FDR.

It is more difficult to measure graduates' abilities than it is to measure those who are employed, against those who are unemployed or continuing to study. A more satisfactory measure of institutional effectiveness may be a survey of graduates' satisfaction with their programme of study

and reflection on the skills they developed (Harvey & Knight, 1996; Harvey, *et al.* 1997). Satisfaction Surveys could provide information on current activity and also the satisfaction of the graduate with their educational experience (Harvey, 2000b). Geall *et al.* (1997) describes three levels of Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) that are undertaken at the University of Central England. This includes module feedback, teacher assessment questionnaires and institution-wide SSS. The SSS focuses on the total learning experience of students covering the complete range of student activities across all aspects of the institution, rather than just satisfaction with teaching. SSS is characterised by combining student-determined questions, satisfaction and importance ratings and management information for action (Geall *et al.*, 1997). SSS could also include self-evaluations of employability and an assessment of the aspirations of the student compared to the job achieved.

12.2 Quality

Quality in HE is a complex concept that has eluded clear definition. If 'Quality' is deemed to mean 'fit for purpose', then de la Harpe *et al.* (2000) suggest that the first thing required is that universities are able to determine what society expects from its graduates. Warn and Tranter (2001) suggest that HE adds value by the development of generic competencies which prepare students for the workplace. They also suggest that HE is a transformative experience, and that by developing these generic competencies students become adaptive and adaptable.

13.0 Employers' needs/requirements

There is a lack of a common language of skills between HEIs and employers (Dunne *et al.*, 2000). Part of the problem with the skills agenda and initiatives in HE is the assumption that 'skills' has the same meaning in the education context as the employment context (Holmes, 2001). This is not necessarily true. The relationship between the employability-development opportunities provided by the HEI and the employment of the graduate is complicated by the role played by employers who convert employability into graduate employment (Harvey, 2001).

Increasingly, 'graduate attributes' are more important than the degree subject studied (Harvey, 2000). For some employers, the degree subject studied is not as important as the graduates' ability to handle complex information and communicate it effectively (Knight & Yorke, 2000). Graduate recruiters want a variety of other skills, personal and intellectual attributes, rather than specialist subject knowledge. Oral communication, teamwork, self-management, problem solving, leadership (Warn & Tranter, 2001) – employability skills are all-important (Table 1a-d, Table 2).

Employers increasingly want graduates who have self-theories that are marked by confidence, optimism, and a belief that they can make a difference. Employers want graduates who can adapt to the workplace culture, who can use their abilities and skills to evolve the organisation and who can participate in innovative teamwork (Harvey *et al.*, 1997; Little, 2001). Employers also value critical thinking (reflection) as this is required for innovation and anticipating and leading change (Harvey *et al.*, 1997).

There is not necessarily agreement over whether there is a 'skills gap' or how big it is if it exists (Dearing, 1997). Atkins (1999) suggests that there is no reason why employers should have a common set of skills that they require graduates to develop as this may vary with region, size of business and type of business-market orientations. CVCP (1998) (cited in Little, 2001) noted that it was difficult to find any hard evidence that employers actually preferred graduates who had received employability skills training over those who had not. Holmes (2001) suggests that employers do not want to recruit graduates with skills *per se*, rather that they require competency and effectiveness.

Morley, (2001) suggests that the concept of 'employer-ability' needs to be developed to balance out the power-relations embedded in the employability discourse of recruitment and retention. She implies that the education process should also encompass employers so that they are more sensitive towards issues of difference such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation and disability. It is only then, she suggests that employability attributes will have similar economic and professional values for different social-economic groups.

14.0 Conclusions

The general consensus then is that training for employability is important, both in terms of general education and more specifically for future employment. One of the major problems facing the employability agenda is the discrepancy between what academics view HE to be for, and what the

government views HE to be for. Curricula designed to enhance employability are also of benefit on purely educational grounds too, and can be divided into four areas:

- 1) knowledge and understanding of the subject that has been chosen to study,
- 2) developing skills, both subject specific and generic (key) skills,
- 3) self-efficacy beliefs,
- 4) strategic thinking or reflection – thinking about what you have done and how it has helped you develop as a person, not just doing it (*c.f.* Knight & Yorke, 2001).

These dimensions will be developed through the programme of study, the methods of learning, teaching and assessment that the student experiences, through any paid work that is undertaken whilst at university and through their social life and involvement with Guild activities. Employability is about much more than just key skills. We need to take care that we do not focus on key skills development at the expense of other important areas – developing the self more generally –for good citizenship and lifelong learning.

We should be aware of the contradiction that in many cases we are aiming to develop personal attributes and skills to increase a student's employability, but are measuring the gaining of employment as the criterion of the success of our performance as an institution. We cannot logically develop the individual and use the institution as a measure of success.

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What employers look for, in rank order:		
1. Willingness to learn	11. Motivation	21. Ability to cope with pressure
2. Commitment	12. Problem solving ability	22. Time management
3. Dependability/reliability	13. Analytic ability	23. Rapid conceptualisation of issues
4. Self-motivation	14. Flexibility	24. Research skills
5. Team work	15. Initiative	25. Self-confidence
6. Communication skills - oral	16. Ability to précis	
7. Co-operation	17. Logical argument	
8. Communication skills - written	18. Adaptability (intellectual)	
9. Drive/energy	19. Numeracy	
10. Self-management	20. Adaptability (organisational)	

Table 1a: Employer Satisfaction: Summary. Harvey & Green (1994)

Intellectual Skills	Interpersonal Skills	Operational Skills
1. Assimilate/abstract information	1. Communicate effectively	1. Problem-solving on own & in groups
2. Identify key issues	2. Present ideas persuasively	2. Self-reliance
3. Evaluate evidence	3. Work with others	3. Common sense
4. Synthesise argument	4. Self-confidence	4. Interpret information – numerical, written, verbal
5. Argue logically	5. Compromise	5. IT skills
6. Put theory into practice	6. Flexibility	6. Awareness of how businesses work

Table 1b: Developing workplace skills (Reuters, 1999).

Drive	Determined, committed, resilient, focused. Able to plan and implement, desire to make a difference
Agenda setting	Proactive, showing initiative. Willing to challenge and take risks. Innovative, visionary. Comfortable with ambiguity.
Influencing	Personal presence. Assertive, self-assured, quietly confident. Able to lead groups, good communicator. Articulate, persuasive. Charismatic.
Relationship building	Enjoys people contact. Forms effective relationships, networks proactively. Good teamworker, listener. Empathetic
Intellectual ability	Numerate. Intellectual bite, quick learner. Able to cope with competing demands. Analytical but pragmatic. Able to deal with complexity and identify key issues. Broad thinker.
Grounded	Mature and balanced. Professional, sense of integrity. Disciplined, responsible. Receptive to feedback.
Commercial	Strong interest in the business world. Passion for driving profit. Financially aware. Streetwise. Customer focused, interested in trends.
External orientation	Interested in the wider environment. Broad range of interests. Internationally aware

Table 1c: Barclays PLC Recruitment Brochure 2001

Communication Skills	Ability to communicate at all levels, develop a logical argument, write effectively, accurately & concisely taking into account the needs of the audience and the ability to listen.
Teamwork	Ability to co-operate with others, be aware of one's own performance, negotiate & persuade, motivate others, to mediate, reconcile & compromise & bring ideas together.
Organisational Skills	Time management, project management & prioritising tasks.
Analytical & Problem Solving Skills	Ability to ascertain facts, sought out what is relevant, learn from experience, use resources effectively.
Flexibility & Adaptability	Ability to adapt to change, be versatile & take on new ideas.

Table 1d: Key Skills and Qualities sought by employers – synthesis.

A. PERSONAL QUALITIES

- 1 Malleable self-theory:** (belief that attributes [e.g. intelligence] are not fixed and can be developed)
- 2 Self-awareness:** (awareness of own strengths and weaknesses, aims and values)
- 3 Self-confidence:** (confidence in dealing with the challenges that employment and life throw up)
- 4 Independence:** (ability to work without supervision)
- 5 Emotional intelligence:** (sensitivity to others' emotions and the effects that they can have)
- 6 Adaptability:** (ability to respond positively to changing circumstances and new challenges, flexibility)
- 7 Stress tolerance:** (ability to retain effectiveness under pressure)
- 8 Initiative:** (ability to take action unprompted and to lead others)
- 9 Willingness to learn:** (commitment to ongoing learning to meet the needs of employment and life, and to develop and adapt learning strategies)
- 10 Reflectiveness:** (the disposition to reflect on & evaluate the performance of oneself and others)

B. CORE SKILLS

- 11 Reading effectiveness:** (the recognition and retention of key points)
- 12 Numeracy:** (ability to use numbers at an appropriate level of accuracy)
- 13 Information retrieval:** (ability to access different sources, technologies and media)
- 14 Language skills:** (possession of more than a single language)
- 15 Self-management:** (ability to work in an efficient and structured manner, to deadlines)
- 16 Critical analysis:** (ability to 'deconstruct' a problem or situation)
- 17 Creativity:** (ability to be original or inventive and to apply lateral thinking)
- 18 Listening:** (focused attention in which key points are recognised)
- 19 Written communication:** (clear reports, letters etc. written specifically for the reader, respond to different audiences & contexts)
- 20 Oral presentations:** (clear and confident presentation of information to a group [also 21&35])
- 21 Explaining:** (orally and in writing [see also 20&35])
- 22 Global awareness:** (in terms of both cultures and economics)

C. PROCESS SKILLS

- 23 Computer literacy:** (ability to use a range of software)
- 24 Commercial awareness:** (understanding of business issues and priorities)
- 25 Political sensitivity:** (appreciates how organisations actually work and acts accordingly)
- 26 Ability to work cross-culturally:** (both within and beyond the UK)
- 27 Ethical sensitivity:** (appreciates ethical aspects of employment and acts accordingly)
- 28 Prioritising:** (ability to rank tasks according to importance)
- 29 Planning:** (setting of achievable goals and structuring action, organise sub-tasks)
- 30 Applying subject understanding:** (use of disciplinary understanding from the HE programme)
- 31 Acting morally:** (has a moral code and acts accordingly)
- 32 Coping with ambiguity and complexity:** (ability to handle ambiguous and complex situations)
- 33 Problem solving:** (selection and use of appropriate methods to find solutions)
- 34 Influencing:** (convincing others of the validity of one's point of view, take role of chairperson)
- 35 Arguing for and/or justifying a point of view or a course of action** (see also 20, 21)
- 36 Resolving conflict:** (both intra-personally and in relationships with others)
- 37 Decision making:** (choice of the best option from a range of alternatives, delegating)

38 Negotiating: (discussion to achieve mutually satisfactory resolution of contentious issues)

39 Team work: (can work constructively with others on a common task, adapting to the needs of the group)

Table 2 Dimensions of employability, with elaborative comments. The acquisition of subject/disciplinary understanding and skills is assumed.

Based on Knight & Yorke (2001), with additional material from Bennett *et al.* (1999).

Students' teaching encounters across a programme and in any one year of it should...

- Alert them to the 'rules of the game' - make them aware of what is valued and how it may be produced, both in general and in each case.
- Use the requisite variety of media (face-to-face, audio-visual, on-line conferencing, asynchronous information and communications technology).
- Use the requisite variety of methods (presentations, Action Learning Sets, work experience, seminars, proctoring, tutorials, Computer-assisted Instruction, independent study projects).
- Be in a variety of styles (coaching, instructing, facilitating, clarifying).
- Meet the standard indicators of good teaching, namely, interest, clarity, enthusiasm.
- Be structured across the programme as a whole so that they get progressively less help and guidance from teachers as they encounter more complex situations, concepts, arrangements, etc.
- This entitlement should be explicit in a programme-wide teaching summary.

Student's learning activities across a programme and in any one year of it will be largely determined by their teaching entitlement. In addition:

- There should be opportunities for depth study.
- Curriculum should not be so crowded that 'surface' learning is encouraged at the expense of understanding.
- Information and communications technology should be treated as a normal learning tool.
- They should expect to work collaboratively, whether learning tasks require it or not.
- Time for strategic thinking, reflection, planning and portfolio-making should be written into the programme; students should know that; and they should know that they are expected to engage with these learning activities involving peers, friends and tutors.
- There should be plentiful feedback that is intended to help future performance (rather than identify informational lapses), especially by encouraging self-theories that value effort and mindfulness.
- This entitlement should be explicit in a programme-wide learning summary.

Students' assessment encounters across a programme and in any one year of it should be compatible with their teaching and learning entitlements. That implies, for example, encountering a variety of assessment methods and modes and getting good feedback from a variety of sources. In addition:

- Summative assessment has the important function of providing trustworthy grades for significant learning achievements. However, by no means all achievements can be affordably and reliably graded with validity. This means that some achievements should not be summatively assessed by academic staff.
- Most assessments will be 'low stakes' assessments, which are intended to improve understanding, or skills, or reflection, or the development of self-theories that sustain achievement.
- Learning criteria should be available at programme and module levels. In many cases these will be 'fuzzy' criteria that guide assessment conversations in low stakes assessment.
- There should be plenty of occasions to get feedback on performance, which will tend to be conversational feedback.
- Peers (other students) will often provide feedback.

- As the programme progresses, students will learn how to become adept at self-assessment.
- Opportunities and support should be provided to help students create learning portfolios that document their claims to educational and employability achievements. For some achievements, this is the best alternative to summative assessment.
- These principles should be explicit in a programme-wide assessment plan.

Table 3 Principles of good teaching that are consistent with the development of employability skills and attributes, Knight & Yorke (2000).

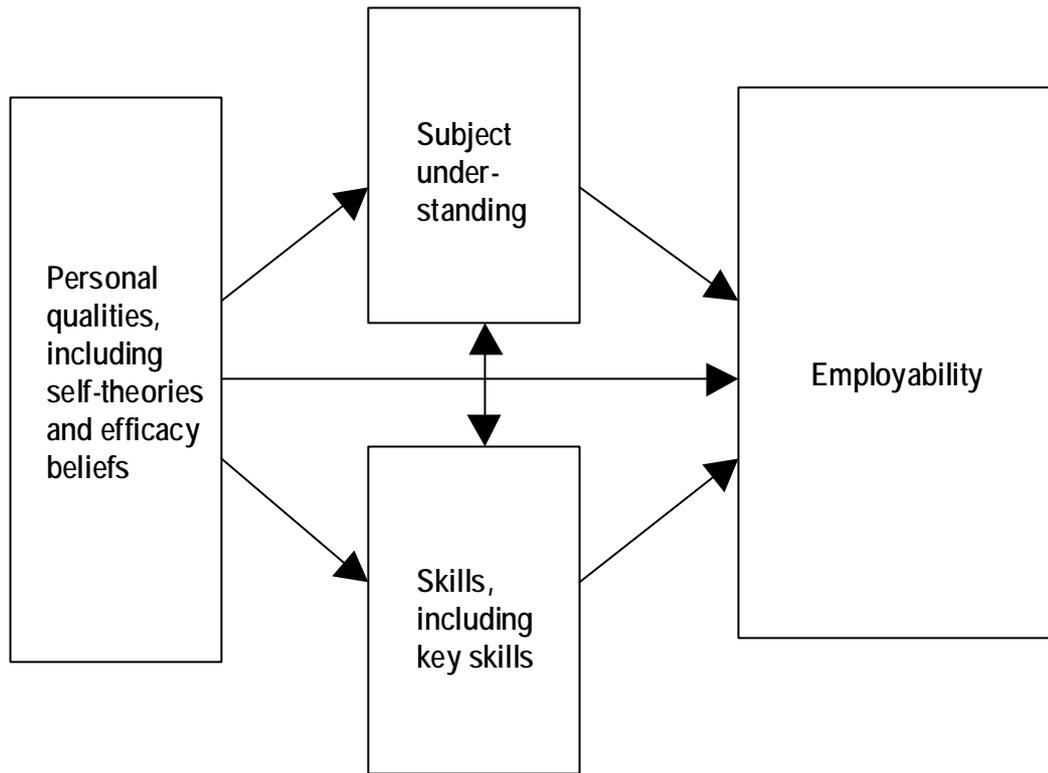
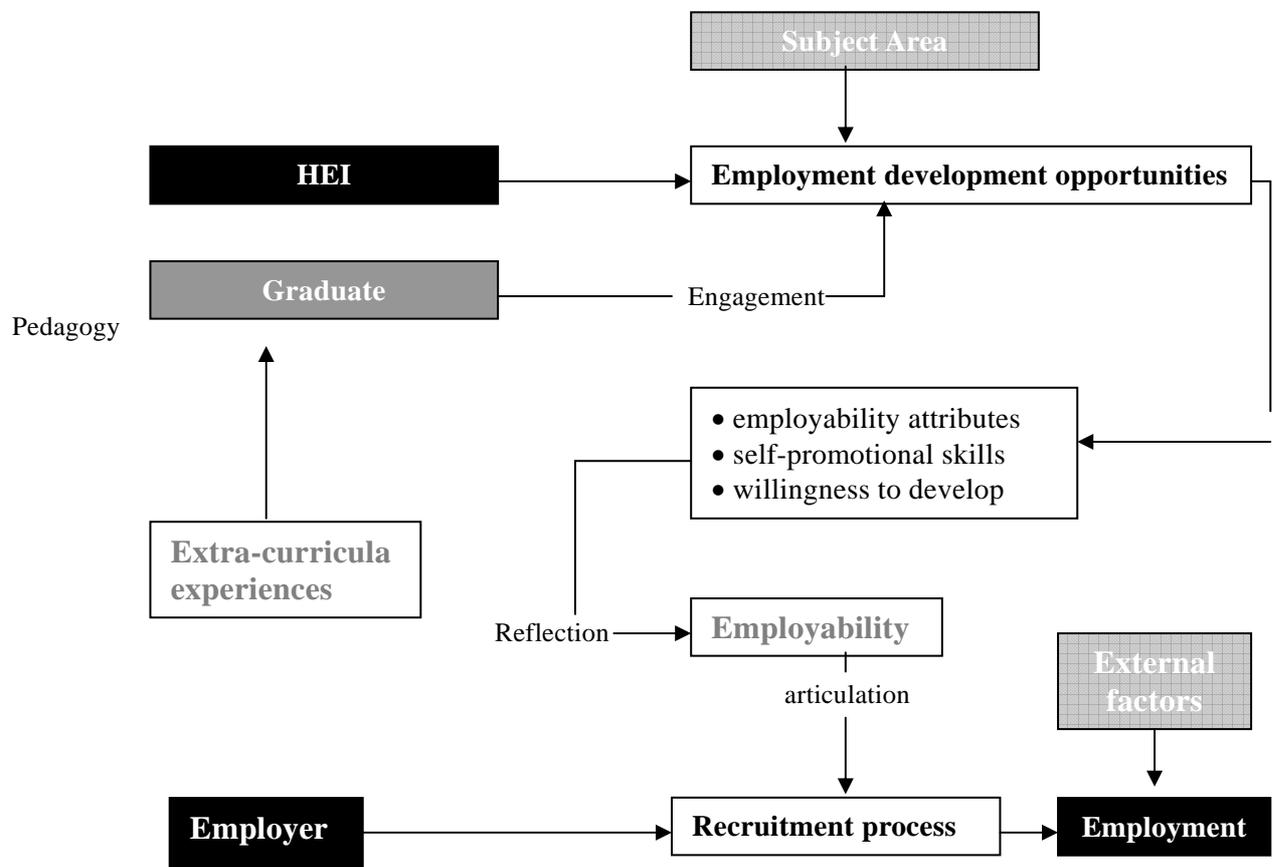


Figure 1: A schematic model of employability, Yorke (2001).



A model of graduate employability development (Harvey *et al.*, 2002)