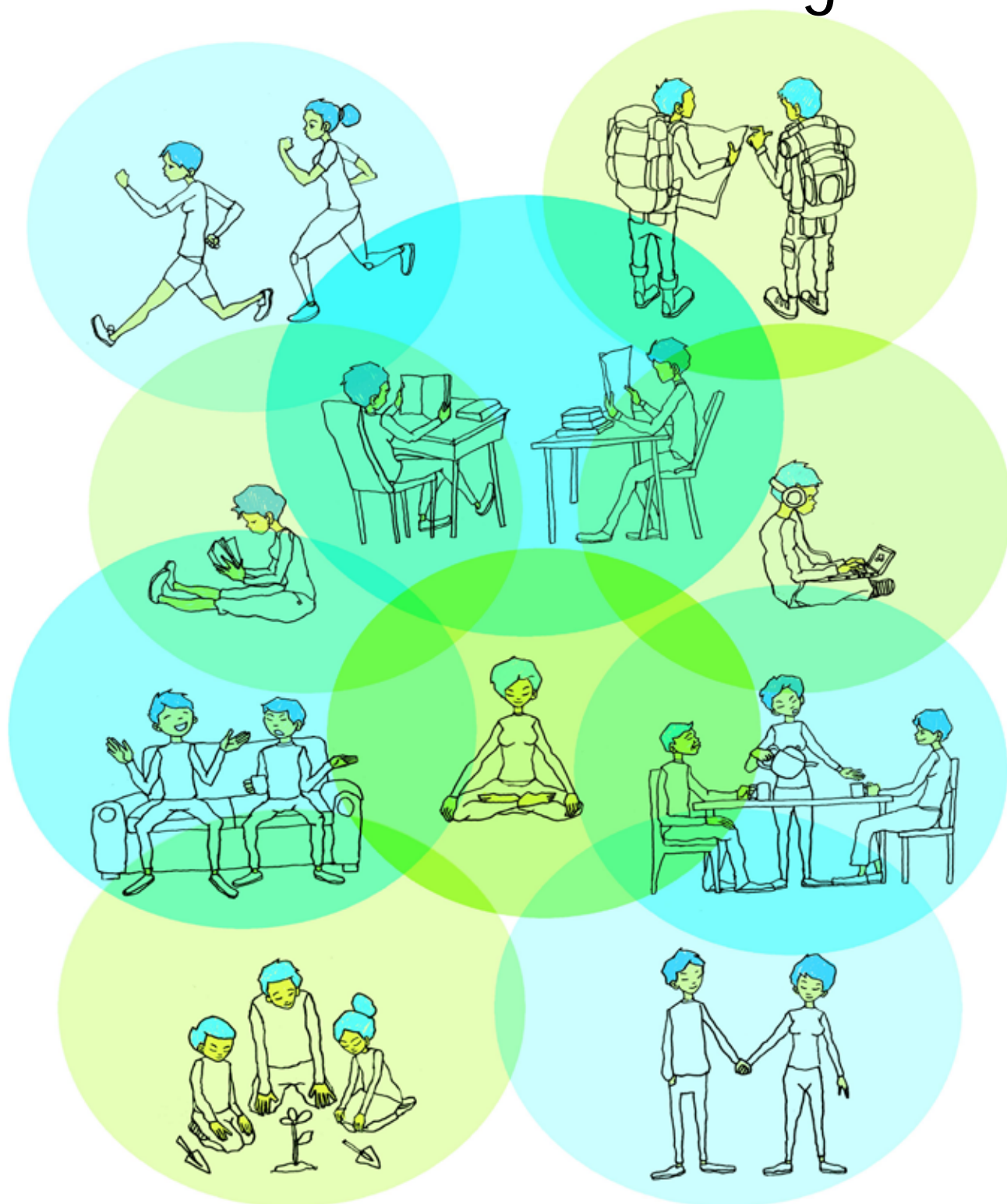


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CHAPTER D3

Insider Perspectives: Students Working Within the University Community

Catherine McConnell

SUMMARY

The work environment is an important space for students to learn and develop and increasingly they need to find part-time employment alongside their studies in order to support themselves while they are studying. This chapter reports the results of an investigation that explored the role the university can play in providing work on campus and the impact of such opportunities on the student experience and engagement with the university community. The enquiry identified a number of paid roles available to students across the university, ranging from library shelvers through to ambassadors, mentors, peer learning facilitators and research assistants. The perspectives of students in these roles were sought, and through these a number of positive aspects to their higher education and their lifewide experience have been identified such as an increased sense of belonging. Challenges relating to student employment are mainly around systems for employment and students' sense of equality and value. The study contributes to understanding the developmental benefits of expanding opportunities for paid work on a university campus.

BIOGRAPHY



Catherine McConnell is Senior Lecturer in Learning Development in the Centre for Learning and Teaching at the University of Brighton. Her role encompasses a range of research and practice, working directly with students, academic staff and central services to develop students' academic and professional skills, their successful transition into and through university, co-curricular learning opportunities and improving student engagement, employability and retention. The application of a lifewide approach to developing learners has grown out of her interest in professional and situated learning, in particular widening access to these opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes a research study that was funded with a Teaching Development Grant from the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The enquiry aimed to investigate the training and development needs of students making structured, collegiate engagements with the university-community through roles involving university paid employment or volunteering. This aim was broadened to include the perspectives of students that were working for the

university, on their motivations and the benefits, challenges and impacts of this form of employment on their studies and future employability skills. The HEA funding enabled three students to be employed directly to work part-time on the research project, contributing two-fold to both the activity of employing students in roles on-campus, and investigating their experience of being involved. The project website can be accessed at <http://plusexperience.wordpress.com/>.

Alongside focussing on the experiences of students, the study also set out to identify barriers and troublesome factors inhibiting students' engagement with the university-community, and to explore in some way meaningful opportunities to improve engagement.

The chapter describes the underpinning research that has been carried out into identifying valuable extra-curricular learning experiences through working on-campus at the university, and the practices that have been developed to support students in these roles. The chapter is organised into four parts. Following a short contextual introduction drawing upon relevant literature, the first part describes the methods and methodology that was used for gathering informative data. The second part presents the findings, and identifies 15 emergent themes collected from both students and university staff. The third part explains the extra-curricular training programme that has been developed in partnership between the institution and the Students' Union. The final part of the chapter considers some of the opportunities arising from the project, and outlines plans and recommendations for future enquiry and practice. It also draws upon the experiences of the three student project assistants, and how they have benefitted from their involvement with this research.

Background

Across the higher education (HE) sector both nationally and internationally, significant numbers of students work on-campus in a range of roles such as student ambassadors, library and computer helpers, research assistants, sabbatical officers and peer learning tutors. The benefit of part-time employment to students is well documented in existing literature (Curtis 2007, Greenbank et al 2009, Manthei and Gilmore 2005), as well as some of the adverse effects (Hunt et al 2004, Robotham 2009, Curtis and Shani 2002;) raising concerns about the impact of working alongside full-time study. Yet a small number of studies conducted in the United States have found that there are significant advantages to students working on-campus alongside their studies, for example in improved persistence, motivation and student satisfaction (Cermak and Filkins 2004, Tuttle et al 2005).

With increasing pressure to retain students, enhance engagement and experience, and develop skills and employability, creating opportunity for students to engage in extra-curricular activity is a priority at the University of Brighton. Studies by Jackson et al (2011) also show the developmental and achievement benefits of extra-curricular work experience:

organisational work environments provide conditions that expose students to the everyday cultural knowledge that underpins the behaviours and actions of the organisation. This knowledge and other knowledge necessary for learners to be effective in their work role are learnt collaboratively and often informally through performing the role. This experience of developing and using these forms of knowledge is valuable to students' future learning in other work environments and complements more formalised

classroom learning with its strong reliance on transmissive modes of teaching and codified abstract knowledge. (Jackson et al 2011:284)

The work environment is dynamic and because it is full of social interaction, the detail of what happens is unpredictable. In such environments students gain experience of learning how to deal with situations as they emerge. Much of this learning and the personal change/ development that results is both generic and transferable i.e. general insights and skilful practices can be used to inform thinking and support action in other situations. (Jackson et al 2011:285)

Whilst the practice of students in employment is commonplace, the study was focused on the potential impacts of working and studying in the same institution, and the characteristics of students who choose to engage with these roles. Alexander Astin conducted research in the United States into student 'involvement' which has been particularly relevant to our theme of on-campus employment; Astin contextualises this as:

Quite simply, student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Thus, a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students. (Astin, 1999: 518)

Framing the construct of student engagement as 'involvement' rather than 'engagement' enables educational developers to conceptualise tangible activities, such as working in the library, as a research assistant, or volunteering as a mentor or course representative, as engagement opportunities. The responsibility for increased sense of involvement can then be shared between student and institution.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Using a phenomenological approach, the research and data analysis was undertaken inductively by all members of the project team both individually and then collaboratively so that a consensus was reached on the interpretation of emerging themes around the students' experiences.

An online survey (Table 1) was designed and piloted with a group of five students to ensure it was understandable and demonstrated face validity. The project team took some time to discuss and decide the language to use in the survey to describe the student-institution employment relationship; working 'with' the university was the preferred choice of phrasing where possible, as opposed to working 'for' or 'at', in order to inspire a more partnership approach to the student-employer relationship.

The survey was available online for approximately two months, and in order to attract participants a social media campaign was undertaken through official university social media channels. An Amazon voucher prize draw was offered to incentivise taking part. The survey was completed by 65 students.

Table 1 Survey questions

How were you recruited by the university?
What were your top reasons for choosing to work with the university?
Are there any additional benefits to working with the university?
Have you found there to be any disadvantages to working with the university?
How does working at the university compare to working outside of the university?
Have you found any direct benefits to your course through working with the university?
Have you received any role specific training?
Have you had the opportunity to undertake any general training?
Has working at the university changed or altered your career prospects and ambitions?
What development or support would you like to see from your university towards your employment skills?
Are there any other issues that are important to you around working with the university?

At the end of the survey students were able to express their interest in participating in a follow-up focus group. These students were contacted and offered an Amazon voucher as an incentive to take part. Six students volunteered to participate in the hour-long focus group.

A staff focus group was also conducted mid-way through the project to explore staff views on the project theme. This took place as a small group activity as part of a workshop on student engagement held at the Centre for Learning and Teaching and in partnership with the Students' Union. A total of 27 staff participated in the activity that was based around discussing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) of the current practice of student employment at the university.

Data collected was mainly qualitative, enabling the project team to read and analyse comments pertaining to a range of emerging themes. The prevalence of comments relating to common themes was recorded, to enable the researchers to express the findings in terms of weighting towards particular recurring findings, for example, '78% of survey participants agreed that there are additional benefits to working with the university; 64% have found there to be direct benefits to their course'.

These simple quantitative measures helped the research team make an initial sense of the data, or as Silverman (1993: 204) describes, 'get[ting] some feel for the data as a whole... us[ing] certain quantitative measures, however crude they may be'.

FINDINGS

Students' experience

The group of student employees who took part in the survey and focus group expressed that working at the university has been a positive experience for them, allowing them to earn money alongside their studies in a flexible and understanding environment. Most of the roles have allowed them to develop general transferable skills which they can identify and promote in future job applications, and apply in their lifewide situations. Additional benefits gained include a greater understanding of the university, how it operates and the services available, and a sense of pride in the university.

Survey participants' top reasons for working at the university in order of frequency:

- Financial
- Flexibility or convenience
- CV, employability, career-enhancing
- Social, networking opportunities
- Positive environment, good atmosphere, supportive, fun
- Enjoyable, fun, interesting work
- Engagement (words like: 'being a part of..' 'getting involved..' 'opportunities..' 'insights' 'being a part of..' 'working with/alongside..' 'immerse..')
- Ambassadoring, championing the university
- Skills development
- To gain insider information
- To help others

The following is a thematic analysis of students' responses with 15 themes identified, trying to draw out implicit and explicit ideas within the data. Commentary on the perspectives of students working on-campus is accompanied by supporting quotes:

1. Financial incentive

It is probably not surprising that a large number of survey respondents (67%) mentioned payment for their work as one of the main reasons for seeking employment, at the university. Similar studies into term-time employment recognise the financial pressures on particular groups of students, which lead to engaging in part, or full time employment (Barke et al. 2000. Hunt et al. 2004). For those that worked in the Sports Centre there was the added incentive of free membership to use the facilities. A number of the students commented that the university pay rate was very good compared to pay rates offered outside the university (i.e. well above the minimum wage).

'This wasn't a reason for my application but the wages are very good at Brighton University. I would happily settle for a whole pound less an hour; my current wage is excellent in comparison to my workload.'

2. Working Environment

A theme highlighted by 56% of respondents relates to the working environment, such as the flexibility that their job offered around their studies. Employers were said to be very understanding of students' changing workloads and allowed changes to shift patterns to accommodate this. Students also commented on the convenience of working on campus, it meant that they were close to lectures and their home.

'The hours are flexible and my manager understands my academic position and makes appropriate room for me on the roster.'

The positive working environment was cited as a benefit of working at the university, some of the students regarded the environment as relaxed and informal. The supportive team environment was also praised.

'I love the atmosphere when I work and I'm treated as an equal when I work which is a lot

better than I have experienced at previous jobs.'

'...better working environment, [the] university cares for staff/students more'

3. Skills Development

Two distinct themes emerged under skill development: the desire to develop general skills and to gain specific work experience. From an employability perspective, some students felt that their job would look good on their CV although they did not go further to explain in particular which aspects would enhance their profile.

'To enhance my skills and hence my CV, but also to understand what it is like to be a Student Ambassador.'

4. Career ideas

In responding to the question about their career ambitions a smaller number of students (38%) mentioned that their experience of working at the university has opened their eyes to new careers and some stated that they were now considering working in education.

'Since being a social media ambassador I've realised that I'd like a career in marketing/ advertising or in widening participation.'

'I would like to become involved in Information Services after graduating. I had this aspiration before taking up my post however, I now feel I am in better stead for a possible career in this area.'

'I never considered doing research or being a lecturer until working here. I will now consider these roles.'

5. Awareness of policy and educational practices

The opportunity to learn about the higher education context, and some of the associated policies and governmental drivers was mentioned by three survey participants as significant to their experience.

'To gain new experience, to make the most of the opportunities available within the university, and because I was motivated to contribute to the goals of widening educational participation.'

'Expanding knowledge on the university policies [and] get involved in the university more actively.'

'Helps to keep me informed about higher education.'

6. Academic benefit

The links with and benefits to academic studies were cited within some survey responses, and notably that students are relating their work and the experience this affords with improvements to their study skills.

'I am in my final year and I wanted to fully immerse myself into an educational community. Working at the university both vocationally and academically, I have felt a massive improvement in my focus and concentration.'

7. Insider knowledge and sense of belonging

A theme that emerged in a number of responses (20%) was the opportunity their job offered

to engage more with the university; students felt that by working at the university they were more in touch with what was happening and what services were available for them. A small number of respondents (6%) commented that they had a better understanding of how the university works now.

'I feel more up to date with the running of my school (through being a student ambassador and course rep).'

'...because I get to work on all the various campuses I feel more involved in the university as an institution.'

'it allows you develop a better understanding of the university, it provides opportunities another student wouldn't have access to and it allows acceptance into university society.'

Students also felt that they were not just engaging more with the university as a whole but also with their lecturers and other university staff which had an added benefit to their academic course. Encouraging contact between student and faculty (teaching staff) is cited by Chickering and Gamson (1987) as one of the 'seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education', therefore potentially enhancing the student experience.

'It's a great way to network with other members of staff and develop new ideas and work on exciting projects. It is also a great way to develop confidence and interpersonal skills working with so many different people.'

'Additional contacts with the gallery employees and technicians, who have helped with the exhibition for my course.'

'Through working with my lecturers on Open Days I have built up a friendship with them which I think is very beneficial to my course.'

14 per cent of respondents commented that they liked representing their university and it gave them a sense of pride.

'It makes me far more proud of my University.'

'Being able to show the uni to prospective students and share great things about my course.'

8. Social Aspects

The social aspect of the job was highlighted by some students (22%) who stated that they enjoyed working with friends or meeting new people from across the university. A number of students listed the social aspect of the job as being one of their top reasons for working at the university.

'Another way to make friends through working together.'

'Helps to build relationships between yourself and your fellow cohort of students.'

9. Disadvantages

In response to the question as to whether there were any disadvantages to working at the university there were concerns raised over the payment system. Completing timesheets with payment a month in arrears means that students wait a significant period of time before receiving pay, and receive even later payment if they miss the deadline for timesheet submission.

Contrary to the flexibility of casual contracts, uncertainty and no guaranteed hours was indicated as a source of anxiety, and the students would like more work to be available. There were also a couple of students who mentioned that they had experienced some disorganisation and poor communication between university departments.

Challenges and issues identified by the students were mainly around internal practices: the focus group highlighted that recruitment practices differ across the university and some of the questionnaire respondents were concerned that the timesheet system meant their pay was often delayed.

On the issue of equality, one student in the focus group felt she was being treated as a student by staff and differently to non-students in the same role. Although the rest of the group didn't feel this way about the staff, two of the participants felt that other students treated them differently when they were working, preferring to address their queries to permanent staff.

None of the students felt that working had a negative impact on their studies.

10. Relevance of role to future employment

When asked their reasons for applying for their current jobs three of the focus group participants were motivated by needing to find work while three talked about being interested in the role and thinking that it would add to their experience.

There was some disagreement between the participants about how useful their current jobs at the university are in relation to their future career prospects; however they all agreed they would include it in their CV. The two participants who are student teachers and working as student ambassadors in widening participation felt strongly that the role was relevant to their future careers and talked at length about the applicability of the skills they are developing. However, they were surprised that at a recent job interview the interviewing panel weren't particularly interested in their job at the university.

When I got the job you know, I needed to find a job and this looks like a good job. But then now I look back and I think that it has given me a lot of experience in what I want to do... (Student ambassador/telephone surveyor)

It reinforced my ambition, my priority to work in education because in my role we work a lot with young people and a lot of children and things, so that's great. (Student ambassador)

So everything else, on the other side of it [extra-curricular] that's non-engineering helps me to, you know, show that I can do time management and so on. So I'll be trying to sell it as much as I can. (Computer helper)

11. Differing recruitment practices

Bringing a group together that worked in a variety of jobs across the university allowed them to identify differences in their roles and experiences. One of the key issues which emerged from the focus group discussion was how different the recruitment processes had been, and not necessarily in line with the demands of the job being advertised. The library shelver in particular experienced a rigorous interview process which involved a detailed application form, two interviews and a timed shelving test compared to one of the student ambassadors

who had been recommended for the post and so only had to complete the application form but was told this was only a formality. The two computer helpers who worked in the same role on different campuses also experienced differences in recruitment practice with one having to take a test while the other did not.

12. Trust

There were mixed feelings within the focus group about whether they were trusted by the university. The topic was brought up by the participant who works as a library shelver and who feels that she is treated differently to staff that do the same job but aren't students:

I'm 22, so I'm, you know, an adult. And, you know, I've always been treated as such in jobs. But here, because I work with people that aren't students, I feel there is definitely a difference between them and us, and they treat us like that. So for example the "adults" that...well, the adults that aren't students, they come in, do their job; whereas I have to come in, I have to sign in, I have to get someone to countersign to say that what I'm...I'm being honest...all this kind of stuff they need. I get people coming to have a look, just to check I'm doing my job, just coming, like, you know, wandering around, checking that I'm shelving; I'm not just sitting around. So I feel that there isn't as much trust as I would expect. (Library shelver)

One other participant who worked as a computer helper also commented that he wasn't given access to certain IT systems which would have been useful to his role, possibly so that he couldn't cause any damage. The computer helpers both discussed the idea that student service users treat the student helpers differently and prefer to go to the permanent staff members for advice.

The group discussed the reasons why the university would check up on them and decided that it could be that previous student workers had taken advantage of the situation and not done the work. They also compared it to previous jobs outside the university where they were expected to clock in and complete timesheets.

13. Work-study balance

The focus group participants all agreed that their job at the university was flexible so that they were able to fit it in around their studies. They commented that this helped them to develop their time management skills because they had to make decisions about how much work they could take on and how they could fit it around their studies. A couple of the participants stated that working actually made them more focused on their assignments and not on wasting time.

They felt that their employer was very understanding about their other commitments and they could reschedule shifts if they needed to. The library shelver in particular felt that the university cared about her schedule and how she would fit work in.

...it's quite nice to know that you can turn around and say, someone swap with me, or I can't do this; and they're not going to say no to it. (Computer helper)

...it's good because *you* work out the balance, and it's quite useful. It hasn't affected my studies in a negative way. (Student ambassador)

I've actually found, since I've been working, I think I'm getting on with [academic] work

much better... (Student ambassador/telephone surveyor)

14. Preparation for work

Two of the participants agreed that on-campus working is helping them to prepare for working full-time, or life outside of their studies. This is supported by Greenbank et al., (2009: 49) who point out that 'working, [whether on or off campus], can provide an additional learning environment helping students to increase their knowledge of organisational life'.

It's nice to get out of the...to... meet some of the staff, and get out of the sort of student mindset... (Student ambassador/telephone surveyor)

I think it also helps to transition from being a full-time student to full-time employment, because you work in between, you know you've got the best of both worlds. So I think towards that, I'll try and take more and more hours so I'm used to working full-time, or being at full-time work... (Computer helper)

15. Development Workshops

Participants' opinions on development workshops being run at the university were sought, along with any particular workshops they would like to see the university offer. The focus group participants were unsure about what workshops were available, they had vague awareness of seeing them advertised on the university's virtual learning environment, but felt that there was information overload with emails and posters around campus. Two of the participants had the impression that they were for people that needed extra help rather than development opportunities for all students.

I always thought it [development workshops] was for people who were struggling...I mean maybe it's the wrong idea, I kind of thought people that are struggling in...communication with people, you know, find that they're in the back of a lecture theatre, not really putting themselves forward. (Library shelver)

One of the students had attended some of the workshops in his first year but felt frustrated that they were general and couldn't give him advice on his particular course, for example on referencing styles. There was a feeling from the group that they would be more interested if the workshops were tailored to their schools, and they all liked the idea of specific job interview advice. One participant commented that attending workshops would be an additional time commitment on top of working and studying. When asked if they would like to receive a certificate for workshops they had undertaken there were mixed feelings. One participant in particular felt that the practical experience gained was more beneficial than having a certificate for it. The group discussed positively the idea of having a certificate for completing a certain number of hours of volunteering or working. Some of the group were more positive about receiving a certificate for attending workshops but the group decided this may depend on the area you want to work in.

Staff perspectives

The 'SWOT' analysis activity conducted with 27 university staff, asked for their perspectives on, and practices in student employment at Brighton, and their experiences. There were many themes and comments that concur with the findings from the student research, such as the flexibility, sense of community, pride, students' 'buy-in' to the university; and

weaknesses mainly around the practical issues mentioned such as paperwork, payment, and personnel processes. It is insightful to draw attention to the additional perspectives this group of staff highlighted.

Opportunities that student employment offers

- Students can market university services to other students - this has the potential to remove a remedial image of support services, and talk from experience (peer support and endorsement; supported by Boud et al [1999] as learning from and with others).
- Could there be a newsletter for students highlighting vacancies, workshops, events? This links to the potential centralisation of development opportunities which is currently devolved.
- Could there be scope to develop scales of responsibility, for example progression opportunities from ambassador to senior ambassador, or postgraduate level roles?
- Involvement and recognition could also link to the Higher Education Achievement Record?

Threats to, or from, student employment

- Territorial staff and the perception of exploiting students. Are we giving students roles that take work away from staff, and what would the Union perspective be of student employees into the main business and culture? (In an Australian study conducted by O'Neil and Comley [2010] into student employment within libraries, initially the staff, especially paraprofessionals, were concerned that the students were a threat to their job security but over time they have started to appreciate them).
- No unified approach to employing students (at this institution). This could be confusing to students, such as why does one student get paid at one rate, but others on a different rate?
- Confidentiality and data protection. Employed students may have access to student records systems, student assessments or coursework.
- Threat to the take up of volunteering; the lure of payment versus gaining experience.
- Limits students to a local internal viewpoint only, particularly if it is their first or only job, they will only experience the Brighton context.

The data collected from staff and students, and issues identified emerging from the analysis allowed the project team to reflect on both internal practices that are working well and developing students, and those which need review and enhancement. One of the emergent themes that we aimed to address in the project outcomes was that of student development outside of the curriculum. The next section describes the programme of skills development workshops that students can opt to participate in.

SUPPORTING STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

To create something meaningful across the university, we worked in collaboration with other central departments including Student Services, Information Services and the Registry to create a programme of workshops entitled 'Training for Success'. This programme consisted of workshops ranging from IT skills and employability, through to powerful communication and negotiation skills.

As well as to address the need for Course Representative training and enhancement, the workshops were also in response to our findings to address the development needs of students employed or volunteering on campus. The programme of workshops was designed and delivered by a range of professional services and academic staff across the university, across a range of topics such as:

- Developing powerful communications and interpersonal skills
- The Graduate Toolkit (accessible here: <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/careers/develop-your-skills/graduate-toolkit/>) - How the university is helping students improve their employability and get jobs
- Equality and diversity
- A rough guide to getting the best out of committees
- Be the Change. Getting to grips with social and environmental responsibility - and how to spread the word

The sessions give students the opportunity to develop skills in ways that will positively impact on their extra-curricular roles and potentially enhance their future employability. We recognise that there is further scope to work alongside curriculum developers and academics to help staff and students recognise and make links between their course, work and other lifewide activities, in order that students can identify the relevance and learning opportunities these present.

Table 2 Example of a workshop description for the Training for Success Programme

<p><i>Developing powerful communications and interpersonal skills</i></p> <p>This two-hour workshop will introduce students to four key areas of interpersonal communication that are essential to their roles, and are highly sought after by employers: leadership, negotiation, facilitation and presentation skills. Students will learn the principles of effective leadership in order to bring out the best in other people, as well as how to plan for and facilitate groups to gain feedback. There are complex factors when dealing with lots of people with varying viewpoints, however this workshop will introduce some simple strategies that will help students to plan and structure feedback and negotiation processes. This workshop will appeal to anyone wishing to improve the effectiveness of their communication and interpersonal skills not only in formal situations such as board meetings, but those who are keen to develop effective working relationships with peers and university staff.</p>
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An evaluation of the Training for Success (TFS) programme reported:

Students rated the TFS sessions highly (81% of respondents felt they were very or extremely useful) and believed they had developed new skills and enhanced their employability by attending. The TFS programme provided learning opportunities that aren't available at a course level and an opportunity for students and staff (who may otherwise not have met) to engage with each other. Feedback from trainers highlighted the high level of interaction and enthusiasm among the students who attended.

LEARNING AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The main areas of learning that this project has raised in our institutional context are for professional and central services staff to address and establish equity in the offering of

student employment positions on campus, such as pay, training, and scales of responsibility. As a small qualitative study the results are not generalisable to the wider community. However, the findings can be used to raise awareness of the types of issues which are faced when employing students on campus.

The project findings mainly draw attention to the significant benefits of on-campus employment both to students and institutions, suggesting it provides a sense of engagement with the university community and, according to the students does not negatively impact their studies and in some cases positively impacts the academic experience, especially if the students can make connections between their work, studies and career aspirations (see Greenbank et al. 2009: 51 for similar recommendations).

Other areas that might be explored include:

- Exploring students' engagement with the extra-curricular development opportunities on campus. Whether awards like certificates or course-credits could be offered for employment, or for having attending transferable skills workshops.
- Further exploration of the views of staff working alongside students on campus.
- Conducting a similar study with student campus volunteers, such as PASS leaders (peer learning facilitators) to also investigate motivational factors. For example, are the students with higher "personal capital" (Brown and Hesketh, 2004) the ones taking up these roles?
- Using institutional data to draw out possible impacts of employing students, such as on retention or achievement.

This project had a direct impact on the three University of Brighton students who were employed as research assistants, both personally, academically, and professionally:

This job has provided me with an on-campus opportunity to test out certain professional skills and helped me develop my ambitions and ideas towards my career prospects. Coming from the field of illustration I often work alone, so having the chance to work with a team has been very beneficial for me. (Nele Anders, MA Sequential Design and Illustration postgraduate)

Working on the project has given me an insight into the services and opportunities within the university that I wouldn't have known about otherwise. I have also found the research experience invaluable to my studies as a postgraduate student. (Susan Dowdle, MSc Rehabilitation Science postgraduate)

As an undergraduate student, I didn't have a lot of experience in research. Although research methods are taught at undergraduate level, there aren't many opportunities to experience the research process in action. I found working as a student project assistant has provided that opportunity and inspired me to consider a research career. (Thanaporn Tunprasert, BSc Physiotherapy undergraduate)

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored and highlighted a number of key findings that relate to the experiences of students who are working on-campus with the University of Brighton. Our experience and the range of positive comments contained within the data from the online survey and focus group provides us with evidence that students significantly benefit from employment within the institution. Benefits include - skill development, increased engagement and an improved sense of belonging, and improved study skills and habits. There are of course challenges associated with student employment, mainly practical issues such as timely payment processes and equitable recruitment practices, and also the treatment of students in these roles to ensure they feel trusted and valued. The project team are in agreement that we would recommend the practice of employing students in meaningful and relevant roles to other educational institutions. We would also encourage employing staff to help students make connections between their work, studies and lifewide experiences, and be able to articulate the skills they have developed to build their personal capital and career profile.

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