



What employers want:
designing a curriculum with employability in mind,
based on the learner's perspective.

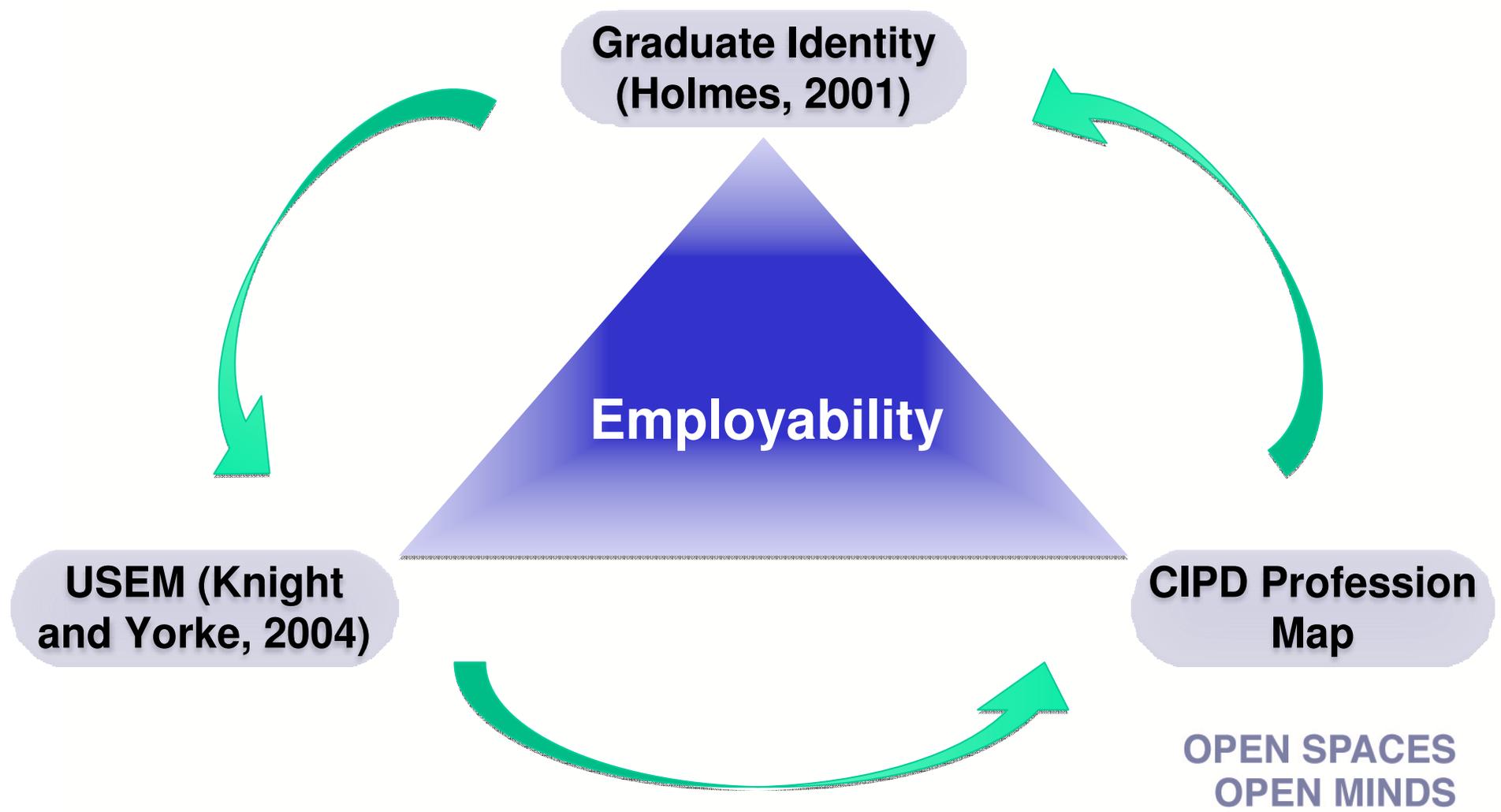
Miral Metawie
Christina Evans

**OPEN SPACES
OPEN MINDS**

Employability: The current discourse/our approach

- A learning environment with a practical focus, framed by the “Graduate-Identity” (Holmes, 2001)
- Curriculum designs and teaching activities with a focus on:
 - Shift in focus from skills to behaviours
 - subject-specific as well as generic competencies (Knight and Yorke, 2003)
 - Role of learners in the learning process – proactive and cooperative learning as a means of increasing both generic and discipline specific skills.
 - Reflective learning and self-awareness
 - Continuous review based on learners’ views

Employability: A practical Model for HRM-HE2



Employability in Context: HRM-HE2

Commercial awareness

Practical insight

Reflective learning

HR Graduate Identity *

Cooperative Learning

CIPD Profession Map

3 clusters – 8 behaviours

Insights and Influence

- Curious
- Decisive thinker
- Skilled Influencer

Operational Excellence

- Driven to deliver
- Collaborative
- Personally credible

Stewardship

- Courage to challenge
- Role model

Generic Competencies

- Commercial awareness
- Communication
- Leadership
- Ability to work in teams
- Problem solving

Top 5 skills shortage among graduates
(Association of graduate recruiters, 2010)

Embedding employability into the HRM curriculum

	Theme	Key aspects
Year 1	Recruitment of GamesMakers for 2012 Olympics	Partnered with LOCOG to train Year 2 students to become Selection Event Volunteers. Students trained in competency based interviewing.
Year 2	Recruiting graduates	Students researched organizations graduate recruitment schemes. Competency based interviewing 'role plays'. Approach complemented 'Career Masterclasses' on another module.
Year 3	Diversity and recruitment and selection	Focused case - based on approach adopted within Metropolitan Police. Guest lectures from former practitioner within the Met. Recruitment planning; interviewing 'role plays'; career mind mapping.

Embedding employability into the HRM curriculum (Year 1)

- **Worked in partnership with LOCOG to train Year 2 HRM students to become Selection Event Volunteers (SEVs) for 2012 Olympics**
- **Training embedded into the module – LOCOG as a ‘live’ case study to develop students’ understanding of Recruitment and Selection**
- **Module enhancements:**
 - **6 seminar activities, culminating in role play sessions to gain experience of using LOCOG’s behavioural interview instrument**
 - **Personal Testimonial – ‘Why I should be chosen as a SEV’ – linked to LOCOG’s values**
 - **Assessment - planning a recruitment campaign**

Student reflections on the learning experience

Employability framed as skills:

“I have learnt a lot within the subject and feel that I have improved on certain skills ... I initially found it hard [role play] and fairly daunting, mostly because this was a new thing for me and so I was not very confident with my abilities but now having done it I realise how useful it is and how much I have learnt from it.” (Female)

Employability – developing a better understanding of a specific occupational field

“Whilst studying HRM this year I have learnt an immense amount about the importance of HR within organizations. If I am honest, I could never fully grasp the concept that HR had such a major impact on the way an organisation runs.” (Female)

Employability – professional identity formation:

“I enjoyed the role-play and I look forward to becoming a SEV, which I feel will no doubt be a fantastic learning opportunity and a memorable experience. I think I’ve found an area of business that interests me, and I will seek to possibly gain a career within HR upon graduation.” (Male)

“The area I struggled with most was definitely the role play. I am by nature a very shy person and being assessed for my interviewing skills put a lot of pressure on me. Surprisingly I thoroughly enjoyed it ... I have developed more confidence ... I have applied what I have learnt and my interviewers have been impressed with my conduct.” (Female)

“I was very much surprised by the speed at which I took to carrying out the face-to-face interviews with such formality and confidence. I was also surprised at my ability to annotate whilst listening and maintaining eye contact with the interviewee.” (Female)

- **Cooperative learning**
 - **Competency-based role play interviews**
 - **Building a training and development programme for the lecturer**
 - **Creating a disciplinary procedure for a case scenario**
 - **Reflective Learning**
 - **Personal Development Self-Assessment**
 - **Career Mind-Maps**
 - **Reflective Statements**
 - **Workplace Awareness**
 - **Case study – the Metropolitan Police Service**
 - **Diversity recruitment and selection**
 - **Employee relations**
 - **Case study analysis, Pret-A-Manger, M&S, KCC**

Student reflections on the learning experience

Employability - an identity-practice:

- “A very good practice was using case studies of companies which are commonly known, for example: Prêt-A-Manger. That allows for some comparison to my own experiences with that company....” (Male, 2013)
- “... the role play interviews gave me a taste of what might occur once I enter the working environment. Also, they gave me an understanding of the interviewer’s mind, which will play to my advantage in the future” (Female, 2013).
- “The role play interviews enabled me to see what exactly is expected of me when I am attending an interview and how I should answer questions. This particular experience was a learning curve for me and has given me the confidence to do the best I can at the interview stage when I am seeking employment”.

Student reflections on the learning experience (Cont'd)

Employability – transferable skills and identity diversification/adaptability

“ The skills I have acquired (being able to carry out an interview, competency framework, designing a recruitment and selection campaign) will help me in the future if I do pursue a career in HR, or if I decide to venture and start my own business; as I would have a understanding on how to manage staff within an organisation”.

Student reflections on the learning experience (Cont'd)

Opening up the ‘unconscious incompetent’ space: the way to Employability

“I envisage I need to develop skills acquired in order to utilise them for maximum advantage in applying for jobs and also in interaction with work colleagues. Consequently, this will better enable me to place myself in a position where I become a more valuable asset for a company, whether I work in recruiting and selecting individuals or work as a Human Resource advisor (Male, 2013) .

“Before HRM lessons began I expected myself to grow up and end up owning my own business, but never thought about what the advantages and disadvantages of that could be. But most importantly now I believe there are other fields I could work in, to get more experience before I decide to open up my own business” (Female, 2013)

“Reflective tasks such as career/self mind-mapping, helped me gain some useful insight, to myself and the course” (Female, 2013).

Student reflections on the learning experience

Employability – developing a better understanding of a specific occupational field

“Very useful because it really gave a huge help towards my work because before that I did not know how HRM plays an important role in recruitment and selection. ” (Female, 2013)

“It helped when the Metropolitan Police officer did lectures on how recruitment and selection are applied in such a big organisation; it not only helped to understand equality and diversity but it brought the topic to life whereby I could relate and understand” (Male, 2013).

“I have a broader understanding of how HRM practices impacts the day-to-day running of an organisation and how they can enhance organisational performance, especially with regard to diversity” (Female, 2013).

Employability – professional identity formation:

**Student reflections on the learning
experience contd.**

“The role-play interviews prepared me for what job interviews will be like and made me think about how I can sell myself to the best of my ability and reach and apply to certain jobs while also remembering that everyone will not be like myself... I came to decision that this could possibly be the career path I would like to take.” (Female, 2013)

“Although I have been a store manager for one year and gained some experience in both interviewing and training staff, I have actually very little experience with being interviewed myself. So the role play interviews provided me with a new experience which is helpful later in life. I found it quite interesting how surprisingly nervous I was, even though it was just my classmates interviewing me, and this helped me understand how people are affected (nervous, anxious) by the interview situation alone and the pressure it brings, set aside from the fact that the interviewers normally are strangers. The role plays provided me with valuable knowledge for the future, both in terms of being a potential employee and/or employer myself (Female, 2013)

Conclusions

- Helping students develop their employability is complex and fraught with difficulties – especially those seeking a career in HR (Maxwell *et al*, 2009)

- Adopting different learning strategies/situations can help students
 - discover what employability means for them (Tomlinson, 2007; Frigerio, 2011)
 - form and start to claim a ‘graduate identity’ (Holmes, 2001; Reid et al, 2008; Frigerio, 2011)

Developing employability requires a partnership approach to be effective: academics, career specialists, professional bodies, employers and students

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