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Experiences with authentic assessment on two practitioner- focused business degree programmes

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Learning & Teaching Fest 6th June 2018

“Learning through Assessment”

Outline

- Timeline through the degree programmes
 - Most of what we'll say can relate to BSc Social Enterprise Leadership and to BA Management and Leadership. Also MSc and BSc Accounting & Finance (Nov 2015)
- Intentions and difficulties around authentic assessment
- Employer engagement
- Preparation for apprenticeship validation and the event itself
- Implementation
- Stakeholder feedback
- Concluding remarks

How did we get to where we are? How is it working out in practice?
What needs to be done now? (How do we get this published?)

Authentic Assessment sounds good but does it work easily in practice?

An aerial photograph of a river valley. A large dam is visible in the middle ground, with a reservoir behind it. The surrounding hills are covered in dense green forest. The river flows through the valley, and there are some buildings and roads visible in the distance.

**ALP2: BSc Social
Enterprise Leadership
(2014/15 –
2016/17)**

**ALP1: FdA Professional
Practice for Business**

**MSc and BSc Accounting
& Finance (Nov 2015)**

**CMDA: BA Management
and Leadership**

**ALP3: BSc Social
Enterprise Leadership**

Common thinking across the programmes

- BSc (Hons) Social Enterprise Leadership (SEL)
 - blends experiential, work-based, flipped classroom and conventional face-to-face tuition
 - essentially an unofficial apprenticeship programme for aspiring leaders in the Social Enterprise sector in Cumbria and North Lancashire (Ryder and Greenwood, 2015; Watton, 2013).
- Common thinking
 - CMDA students funded by their employers and the national higher level apprenticeship scheme; SEL students funded by a charitable trust.
 - CMDA and SEL students have full-time jobs in relevant occupations
 - The teaching on both programmes is concentrated into relatively intensive days.
 - Academics on both programmes have ongoing contact with students' employers, several of whom were closely involved in the development of the programmes and, in many cases, face common issues (Mulvey, 2015).

Difference in target populations?

- “In 2011 **ALP** recruited a pilot cohort of 17 young adults **aged between 18 and 31. Nominated by a host [Voluntary and Charity Sector organisation]** that they are currently working or volunteering in Cumbria or North Lancashire. The typical profile of participants on the programme is a young adult, or a parent returning to work, with **little or no qualifications but showing a passion** to support their community. Aims to provide a valuable progression route for those people often identified in communities as having drive and commitment to create change and **little or no opportunity** to realise their ambitions.” (Watton et al, 2013)
- “The **CMDA** is suitable for those who are, or wish to become, professional managers, i.e. **people that take lead responsibility for projects, people, operations and/ or services** to deliver long term organisational success. It is applicable to **professional managers from all sectors - the private, public or third sector** - and all sizes of organisation. The CMDA has been designed for as wide a range of individuals as possible. This includes individuals who are at the **start of their career** – including school leavers – that wish to become professional managers and achieve Chartered Manager status, as well as those **aspiring or existing managers who may already have developed practical experience** but who wish to develop their theoretical understanding of management skills further.” (CMI, 2018)

LTA in ALP1 (Watton et al, 2013)

Reflective Learning



- The opportunity for personal reflection is an important aspect of the programme.
- This helps to develop self awareness through learning from the past to take action in the future.
- Examples are coaching & action learning.



Formal Learning



- Lectures and formal teaching of theory and models are at the core of the course design.
- Peer to peer dialogue is instrumental to the richness of programme content.



Experiential Learning



- Learning by doing is vital for the transfer of knowledge into actions and practice.
- We use real work examples and relevant activities to embed formal learning.
- These activities are delivered through a residential format



Observed Learning



- Inspirational speakers or sector experts help bring a different perspective to the programme.
- Students can then shape new ideas and transfer them into their own situation.



Authentic assessment

“require[s] students to emulate task performance at workplace standards in real-world contexts” (Ghosh, 2017)

“[involves] realism, contextualisation and problematisation when teaching and assessing curricular content” (Villarroel et al, 2017)

“calls for assessments to align with the same skills that are needed in ‘real-world’ settings (Hathcoat, 2016)

problematisation invokes a sense that what is learned can be used to solve a problem or meet a need

Potential difficulties (from literature)

- A view that assessment should be objective, reliable/consistent and valid (Ghosh, 2017; Hathcoat, 2016; Villarroel, 2017)
- Rubrics “challenging to write when assessment tasks require complex and divergent responses” (Villarroel, 2017)
- Only assessing what happens to come up (Hathcoat, 2016)
- Assessing in collaboration with practitioners
- Relies on students’ abilities to learn reflectively (McCarthy, 2013; Kondrat, 1999)
- Relies on effective relationships between academics, students and host organisations (Greenwood, 2007)

Employer engagement

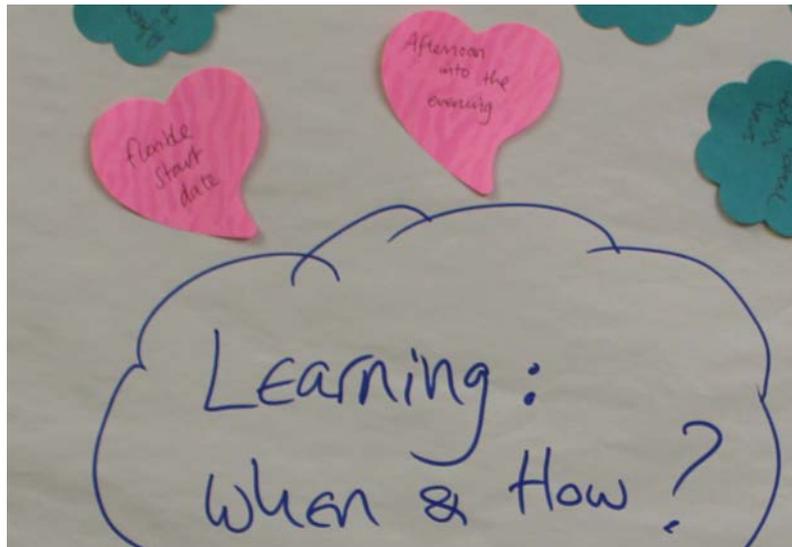
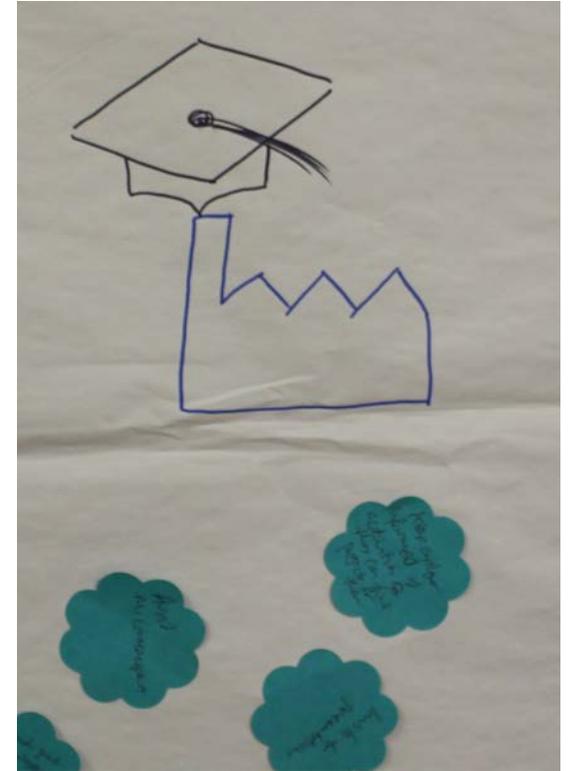
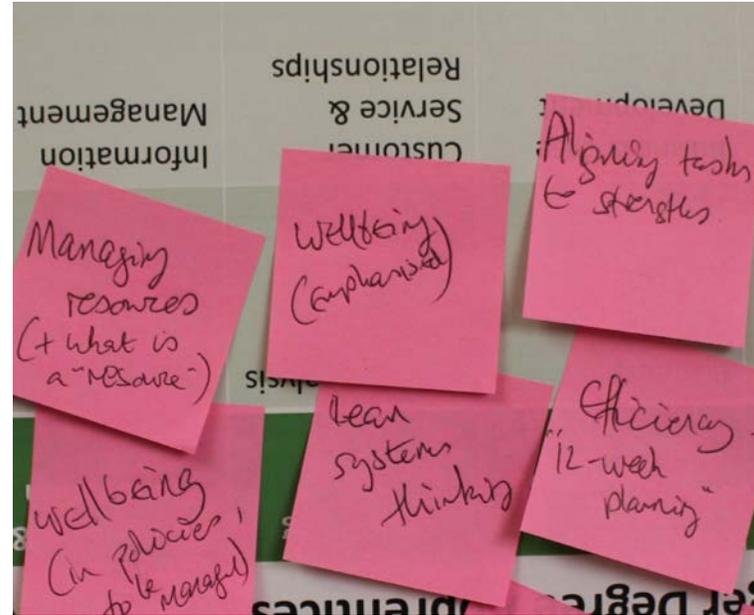
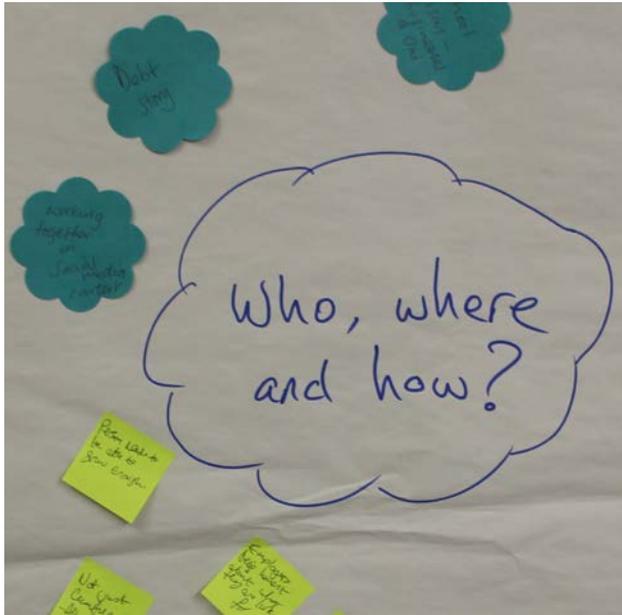
Employer engagement

- Presenting themes and ideas for modules
- Valuing feedback
- Support and branding from CMI



Themes

	From Operations to Strategy	Business Development	Marketing	Technology & Innovation	Personal Development	Work Based Learning
1 st Year	Business Operations UCBS4201	Business Finance UCBS4202	Data & Analysis UCBS4203	Digital Literacy UCBS4204	Managing Self UCBS4205	Evidencing Work Based Learning I UCBS4206
2 nd Year	Dynamic Business Contexts UCBS5201	Business Case Development UCBS5202	Customer Service & Relationships UCBS5203	Information Management UCBS5204	Managing Others UCBS5205	Evidencing Work Based Learning II UCBS5206
3 rd Year	Operational Strategy UCBS6201	Project Management UCBS6202	Strategic Marketing UCBS6203	Managing Innovation UCBS6204	Leadership UCBS6205	Negotiated Work Based Project UCBS6206



Skills Matrix: Developed by Industry Forum

	Technical (T)	Personal (P)	Interpersonal (IP)	Communication (C)	Business Management (B)	Intellectual (I)
Level 7	Professional Standard of technical competency (which includes digital literacy) & judgement at a strategic level.	Professional identity, accountability & responsibility.	Collaboration & Partnering skills.	Professional communication and emotional intelligence.	Strategic commercial awareness.	Critical evaluation of arguments & evidence set in a wider or more strategic context.
Level 6	Professional Standard of technical competency (which includes digital literacy) & judgement.	Professional identity development.	Influencing / challenging skills.	Communicating in different contexts / environments, including external business settings.	Commercial awareness.	Critical evaluation of arguments & evidence.
Level 5	Knowledge & application of complex accounting & finance techniques in a practical and digital context.	Continuous improvement of self.	Developing teams and supporting others.	Oral and written presentation competency in internal business settings.	Understanding of the regulatory environment.	Innovative thinking and evaluation skills.
Level 4	Knowledge & application of fundamental accounting techniques in a practical and digital context.	Self-managed learning.	Working in teams.	Oral and written presentation skill development.	Understanding of the context in which accounting & finance operates.	Ethical / regulatory / legal thought processes and considerations.
Level 3	Numerical competency illustrated in digital and non-digital contexts	Self awareness.	Working with others.	Confidence building.	Awareness of the business environment, external and internal.	Developing analytical thinking & questioning skills.

Getting ready for validation

Learning, teaching and assessment principles

“The principles underpinning this programme’s LTA strategy are that the work you do will:

- Be authentic and realistic to the workplace.
- Fulfil the needs of the Chartered Manager skills dimensions.
- Capture your hard and soft skills development
- Contextualise your assessment in the workplace
- Contribute to your personal and professional development portfolio
- Be achievable given that you are able to start the course at any sensible point during the year” (CMDA Programme Spec)

Examples of programme aims

- To develop a range of transferable skills such as ethical awareness, critical evaluation, communication and self-management skills in a vocational setting (ALP1)
- Identify, critically analyse and apply appropriate entrepreneurial skills, change agent characteristics and leadership attributes within a social enterprise setting (ALP2)
- To encourage students to see the links between theory and practice in the workplace (CMDA)

Examples of intended learning outcomes

- successful application in the workplace of the range of knowledge and skills learnt throughout the programme (ALP1, from Fd benchmark statement)
- develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding [of] communication across a range of stakeholders (ALP2)
- the ability to share skills and experience through coaching and mentoring (ALP2)
- construct a robust business case appropriate to the business context and environment (CMDA)

Calendar (CMDA)

	First Year	Second Year	Third Year
Month	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
September	Managing Self	Information Management	Strategic Marketing
November	Business Operations	Managing Others	Managing Innovation
February	Business Finance	Dynamic Business Contexts	Leadership
April	Data & Analysis	Business Case Development	Operational Strategy
June	Digital Literacy	Customer Service & Relationships	Project Management
Year Long	Evidencing Work Based Learning 1	Evidencing Work Based Learning 2	Evidencing Work Based Learning 3

		First Year	Second Year	Third Year
Semester	Teaching Week	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
1	1	Managing Self	Managing Others	Leadership
	2			
	3	Business Operations & Digital Literacy	Business Case Development & Customer Service & Relationships	Operational Strategy & Project Management
	4			
	5			
	6			
	7			
	8			
	9			
	10			
	11			
	12			
2	1	Managing Self	Managing Others	Leadership
	2			
	3			

Validation

- Mapping to existing programmes
- The degree (BSc, BA) and the wider qualification (ALP, CMDA)
- Staff qualifications and business experience
- Entry qualifications
- Contact hours
- Direct entrants to levels 5 and 6
- Equating authenticity with “naturally occurring” paperwork
- Students not employed (in social enterprise / on an apprenticeship)

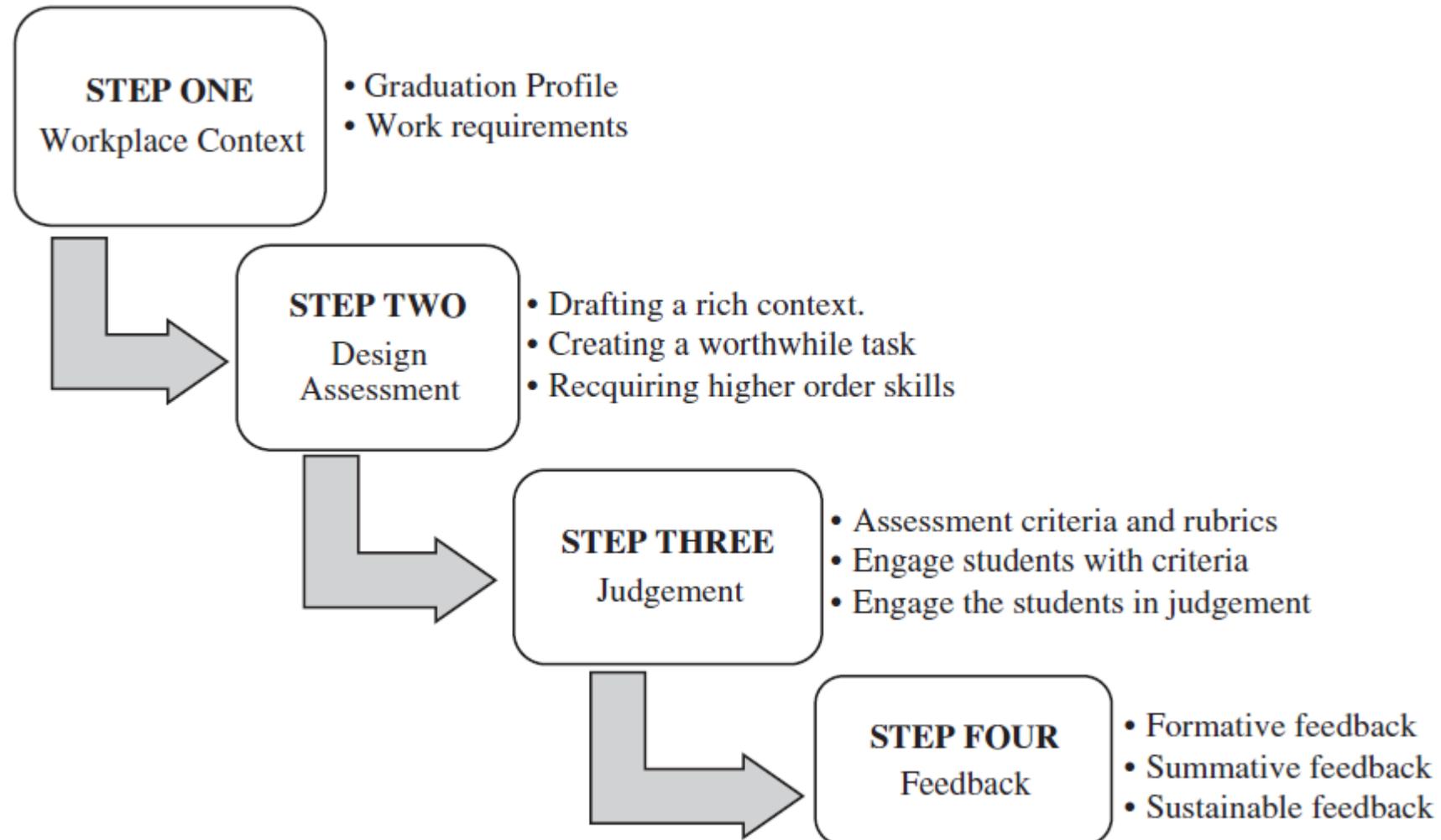
Implementation

Implementation

- Cohort-building
- Authentic examples in teaching
- Authentic tasks for assessment (next slides)
- Apprenticeship portfolio
- Workplace visits
- ‘Capacity building’ so that employers can get the best from the programme
- Sustainable feedback: “students learn how to gather, recognise and use feedback in the absence of a teacher” (Villarroel, 2017)



Designing authentic assessment (Villarroel, 2017:8)



Examples of coursework tasks

- “A set of presentation slides and notes which compare the current legal status, governance and management models and structures of two organisations and how these might change in the future. One of these organisations should be your host organisation. Show how these arrangements help the organisations achieve their social aims and financial sustainability.” (UCBS4038 Governance and Management of Social Enterprise Organisations)
- “Critically evaluate the need for change in one voluntary sector organisation of your choice. The need for change must arise from an external factor (a contemporary challenge) in the strategic environment. To guard against strategic drift, provide stakeholders with a number of strategic options for future sustainability, justified with reference to appropriate strategic models.” (UCBS6026 Contemporary Challenges in the Voluntary Sector)
- Pitching for funding

Apprenticeship portfolio

- “...the apprentice will create a portfolio of evidence, which will demonstrate how learning has been applied, their achievements and capabilities. It is a collection of evidence which demonstrates evidence of the skills, knowledge and behaviours an apprentice has acquired against the standard, and supports application for professional recognition on achievement of the apprenticeship once the apprentice has passed their end-point assessment.” (CMDA Assessment Standard)
- Supported by ten-weekly workplace visits and quarterly reviews. Early ones tend to be about day-to-day basics so the challenge is to raise the level and develop reflection skills

Examples of rubric statements

Criteria

1. Demonstrate your successful engagement with an agreed programme of work / activity
2. Demonstrate progress with an agreed programme of work / activity
3. Link to previously identified research
4. Develop enhanced work based communication and negotiation skills
5. Analyse feedback from the host organisation concerning your communication and negotiation
6. Evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the agreed research

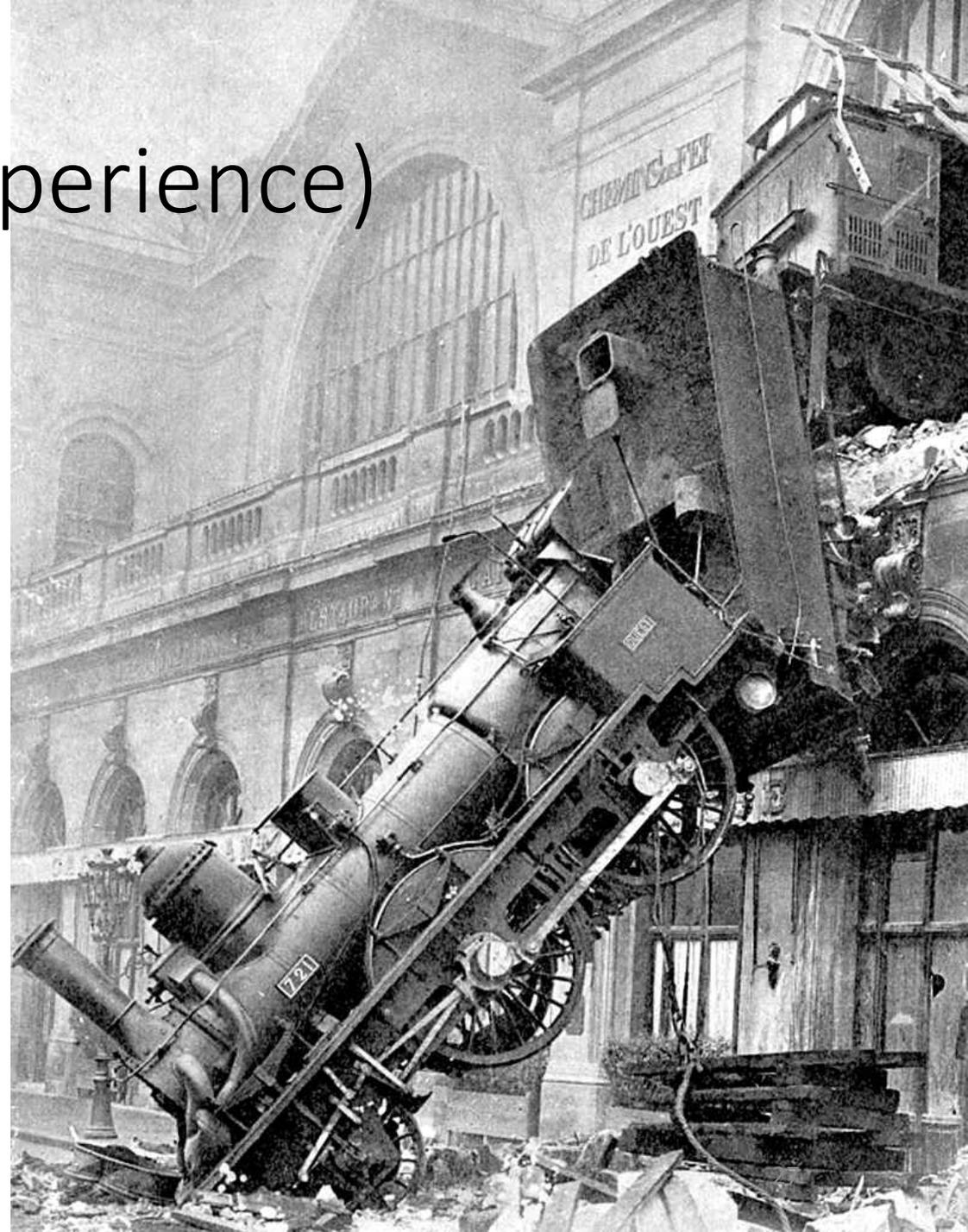
2i statements

1. Present convincing evidence that you were fully involved in the process
2. Detailed account of how the project progressed
3. Critically reflect on how your proposal worked out in practice.
4. Critically reflect on how your communication and negotiation skills have developed by doing this project
5. Analysis of what feedback was received and how it was obtained, leading to conclusions about the effectiveness of the process
6. Clear and full explanation of how the research worked out in practice

In practice...

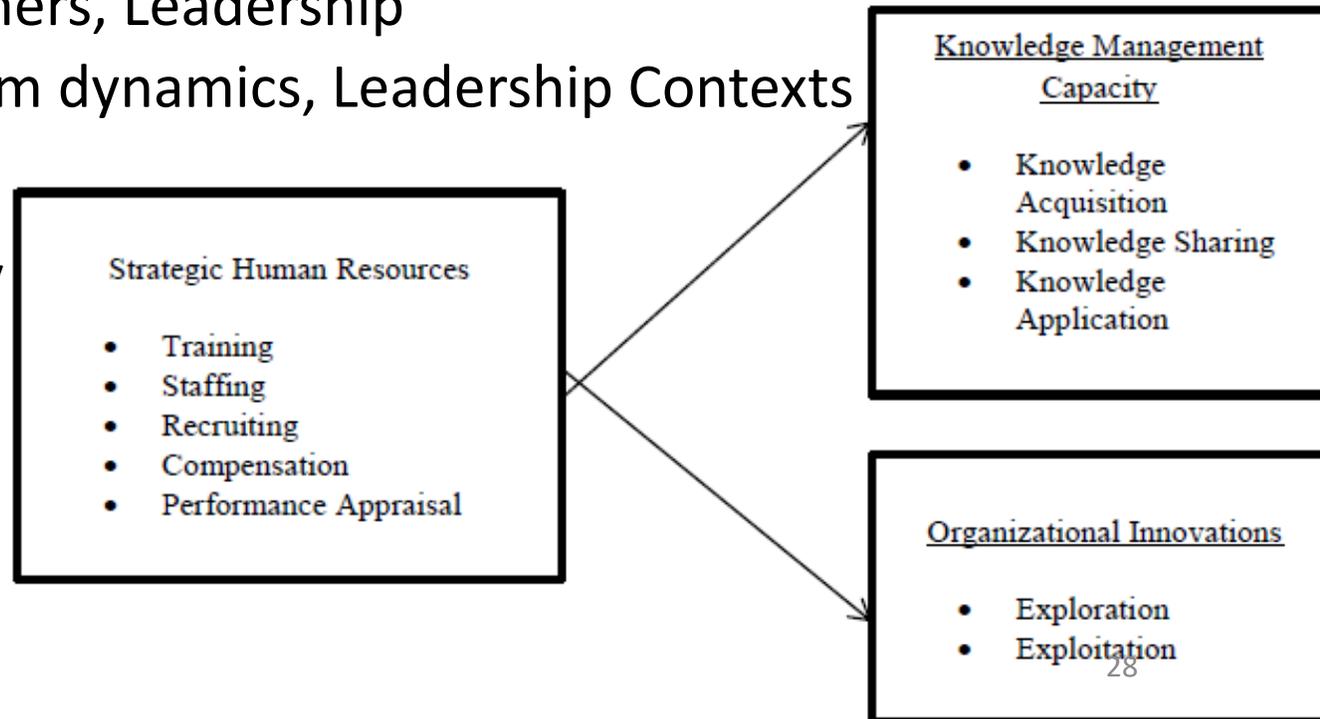
Actual difficulties (from experience)

- Assessing disparate work
 - EE feedback
 - Student feedback about deadline complexities
 - Assessment-status of evidence gathered from work
- Constraints on authenticity
 - Learning to learn (otherwise it's just homework (*next slide*))
 - Dealing with uncertainty (Villarroel, 2017)
 - Complexities in “live” data vs. pedagogic examples (time-series; geographic data; reports)
- Employer capacity
 - Employer reliance on coursework
 - Repeated use of same evidence, especially in small organisations
 - Evidencing work-based learning against learning outcomes
- Sceptical colleagues
 - (Until they meet the students)



Learning to learn

- Workplace visits as scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1930, cited in Kelsey and Hayes, 2015)
- Scaffolding for the students, e.g. progression through the modules
 - BA – Managing Self, Managing Others, Leadership
 - BSc – Exploring Self, Exploring Team dynamics, Leadership Contexts
- Scaffolding for the employer
 - Knowledge Management Capacity (Findıklı, 2015)
 - Acquisition, sharing, application



Business

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Business

Apprenticeship levy is 'at breaking point'



6



Government wants to improve training by seeing 3m people start apprenticeships by 2020 credit: GETTY



Quality sits easily with employee-owned home outfitter

Anglia Home Furnishings (AHF) aims not to be like other furniture sellers
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By Alan Tovey, INDUSTRY EDITOR

7 JANUARY 2018 • 9:00PM

The controversial apprenticeship levy is facing a growing backlash from businesses, with companies finding a well-meaning policy is being strangled with red tape.



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Firms relabelling low-skilled jobs as apprenticeships, says report

By Hannah Richardson
BBC News education reporter

4 hours ago



GETTY IMAGES

Fast food giants, coffee shops and retailers are relabelling low-skilled jobs as apprenticeships and gaining subsidies for training, a report says.

The study by centre-right think tank Reform says many firms have rebranded existing roles after being obliged to contribute cash to on-the-job training.

It adds that 40% of government-approved apprenticeship standards do not meet a traditional definition of them.

Stakeholder feedback

- ✓ Employers valuing the relationship with the University
- ✗ Challenges of finding time – not just an audit issue!
 - Coursework; Releasing staff; Filling the gap; Timetabling; Meetings
- ✓ Immediate impact on students' skills and attitude to development
- ✓ Immediate usefulness of assignment work to employers
- ✓ Increasing employer's expectations of what employees can do
- ✓ Learning from each other
- ? Evidencing student achievement for the end-point assessment

Concluding remarks

- Learning from common points and contrasts across the programmes
- These developments involved a stable core team
- Employer engagement starting from day 1 of curriculum development
- Authentic assessment inherent in the programmes but
 - Challenges for QA
 - Challenges for students learning to learn
 - Challenges for employers with finite capacity
- Need to achieve
 - Authentic practitioner learning, but also
 - Authentic academic learning

Authentic Assessment sounds good but does it work easily in practice?

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