



Review of good practice in employability and enterprise development by Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning: summary report

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Introduction

This review has been prepared by the Employability and Employee Learning (EEL) team at the Higher Education Academy (HEA) at the request of HEFCE. Focusing on the ways in which higher education institutions (HEIs) in England support their learners in developing skills and attributes associated with readiness for employment, it summarises and celebrates the work carried out by the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) that had as their remit employability, work-related learning and enterprise.

This report is intended as an explanatory guide and aide memoire for anyone who wants to understand more clearly how HEIs have engaged with the employability and enterprise agenda in the teaching and learning context. It highlights exemplars that reflect the wealth of excellent resources that both staff and learners in our universities can draw on to ensure that the right skills and attributes are being developed so the current and future workforce is equipped with appropriate higher level and transferrable skills.

The review is structured as follows: key messages emerging from the HE sector are highlighted, after which a brief explanation of the context for this report is offered. An overview of the remit of the CETL project is then aligned with current policy issues. Examples of excellent practice and pedagogy are provided to illustrate the impact of the CETLs' work. Finally we summarise the most important features of the project.

Key messages

- The activities and outputs of the employability and enterprise CETLs amply demonstrate their influence and impact in a significant number of English universities. These reflect step changes in the breadth and quality of curriculum development, methods and materials and the engagement of students, staff and employers in employability and enterprise learning. This is a significant achievement and reflects the understanding that skills associated with enterprise and employability are not 'bolt-on', but are an integral part of any programme of study that all learners should expect.
- The CETL initiative as a whole was a classic, richly resourced, pump-priming activity that gave a major boost to developing good practice in this area. The outcome of the CETLs has demonstrated that institutions with imagination and commitment can influence their approach to employability and enterprise. The CETLs we reviewed have shown how it is possible to bridge specialist and mainstream practice and that HEIs now have a rich pedagogy of knowledge and resources. One of the legacies of these CETLs is that the resources produced and developed will support **all** HEIs in this mission.
- We do need to remember, however, that pedagogical development will only occur if changes to teaching practices are supported by sharing effective and innovative practice across institutions. We acknowledge that individual HEIs need to develop the confidence to develop their own frameworks to facilitate the successful

integration of employability and enterprise skills into their pedagogy. Institutions need to learn from and support each other in this endeavour and the HEA considers that its Employability and Employee Learning team can play an important role in fostering effective and innovative practice in all aspects of employability development processes.

An explanation of employability and enterprise skills

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) has developed a framework for the skills it considers important to employability. These include functional skills including using numbers and IT, a set of personal attributes including thinking critically and self-management, as well as having a positive approach to work and employment. Current notions of what it means to be enterprising are closely linked to this. They draw upon the characteristics of the enterprise mindset that constitute a set of personal skills, attributes, behavioural and motivational capacities (associated with those of the entrepreneur), but can be used in any context including social, work and leisure (Wilkinson and Aspinall, 2006). Prominent among these are, for example, initiative taking and strategic thinking.

Employability has been described as being “about having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required. For the individual, employability depends on:

- their assets in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess;
- the way they use and deploy those assets;
- the way they present them to employers; and crucially
- the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they see work.” (Hillage and Pollard, 1998)

In the context of higher education, there is an implicit assumption that these skills and attributes will be acquired at a high level. It is now accepted that there is a need to ensure that employability as a concept is developed within the curriculum and that people leaving higher education should be confident not only that their knowledge, skills and capabilities for entering the world of work are appropriate, but that they are able to articulate these to potential employers.

When we are referring to good practice in supporting learners to enhance their skills in employability and enterprise, we are not restricting our discussions just to employability, enterprise and entrepreneurial development within the actual curriculum. The range of resources that is available in the sector is extensive. It includes:

- teaching and assessment practices;
- toolkits and resources for academic staff;
- innovative work-related learning;
- work experience opportunities;
- career management developments (including the use of personal development planning);
- engagement with employers.

The CETL programme

In January 2004, HEFCE published an invitation to HEIs to bid for funds for become CETLs. The purpose of the CETLs was both to reward excellent teaching practice and to invest further in that practice to increase and deepen its impact across a wider teaching and learning community. A number of submissions for funding related to CETLs engaging with developing excellent practice in employability and entrepreneurial teaching and learning. Twenty-two of these were successful, and 18 contributed to this review. Most of these CETLs have now completed their planned programme of work.

This review demonstrates where CETLs have been at the cutting edge of practice in employability and enterprise. It can, of course, note only a small number of highlights: the illustrations selected are simply exemplars from a raft of rich and valuable resources providing substantial evidence of positive impact and success. CETLs have developed a plethora of teaching and learning materials and adopted new approaches and practices for employability and enterprise development. The resources include:

- toolkits;
- activities;
- materials and resources for staff and students;
- open learning resources;
- research;
- evaluation and impact measures;
- teaching and assessment practices;
- career management developments (including the use of personal development planning);
- engagements with employers;
- specific discipline-related developments;
- institutional strategy developments (including the use of data sources and/or tracking graduate outcomes);
- staff development.

A summary of the achievements of the CETLs

We have divided this section of our review into two. First, we examine how these CETLs have had a significant impact on their institutions at a strategic level. Second we describe how their outputs have benefited a range of stakeholders: students themselves, staff working in HEIs, and employers and businesses. In doing this we are illustrating how the impact of the CETLs has reached beyond the boundaries of their individual institutions, forming communities of practice, and has supported the needs of employers in a number of ways.

1. Institutional impact

We have been able to show that CETLs have impacted upon institutional strategy and senior management awareness, leading to significant innovations in curriculum development and course design, drawing on resources for employability and related areas. Research and pedagogic enquiry has, in some CETLs, been a key driver that has strengthened this area of

learning. The ways in which these CETLs impacted on their institutions as a whole is explained in relation to change management (a number of CETLs acknowledged their role in the university's overall management of change programme); embedding in institutional strategies (CETLs were able to exert their influence on the strategic direction of universities); and curriculum development (one of the most significant legacies of the employability and enterprise CETLs has been the contributions they have made to curriculum development and enhancement in HEIs, through a range of innovative and accessible initiatives). They have also impacted on transdisciplinary developments and on generating research to inform practice (many of these CETLs engaged in research and scholarly activity to take forward knowledge and understanding of employability and enterprise in higher education).

Contribution to change management:

- At Birmingham City University, the CLSP CETL supported a significant change management process across the University. This was called 'ROLEX' (Redesign of the Learning Experience), which reshaped the validation processes within the University to ensure greater engagement of both students and employers in the design of all courses.

Embedding in institutional strategies:

- Again at Birmingham City University, the CETL soon developed the ability and capacity to attract external funding and was therefore given a brief to support educational partnership development across further and higher education providers and with employers. This has become embedded in the University's business strategy.
- At the University of Plymouth the CEPPL CETL led an institutional risk assessment around work-based and placement learning and as a result of that identified a number of strategic needs for the institution to address. The appointment of a Head of Work-Based and Placement Learning emerged from this, with the effect that the work-based learning agenda was embedded in University strategy.

Curriculum development and transdisciplinary developments:

- At the University of Central Lancashire, CETH developed a UCLAN Employability Framework (UEF©). The Framework provides a focused and standardised notion of what the institution should offer in relation to employability development within modules and programmes, while enabling employability to be delivered in a variety of ways by individuals and subject teams. It is designed to enable staff to recognise, categorise and label where employability is already being taught and assessed, and offers criteria for assessment. This approach offers a structure that retains academic independence and disciplinary rigour while providing the opportunity for staff to shape employability learning to suit their own discipline.
- At the University of Bedfordshire, in responding to both the widening participation strategy of the institution and the personal and social background of students, the Bridges CETL developed a new approach to the curriculum that offered opportunities

for all students to achieve outcomes supporting their future employability. The new curriculum was called 'CRe8: Curriculum review 2008' and included a range of dimensions of employability including subject knowledge, understanding and contextualisation; vocational relevance and applicability; and a realistic career orientation supported and underpinned by personal skills, attributes and independence as well as a sound value base.

- The Institute for Enterprise at Leeds Metropolitan University led a curriculum development that brought together students from diverse areas (including Graphic Design, Fine Art and Retail Management) to work together with a local social enterprise. A project to support a charity was embedded into a module and students contributed to an assessment and development of a business plan. Evidence from the Institute of Enterprise suggests that students who did the module are getting job interviews quite easily.

Generating research to inform practice:

- At the University of Surrey, for example, SCEPTRe had as a main objective transferring research knowledge of how professionals learn through work to how learners learn in professional work environments in the context of work placements. Over the last decade, the University of Surrey has achieved consistently excellent graduate employment statistics, and the University feels that this is because all programmes in all disciplines have to provide opportunities for learners to develop their professional capabilities through either a year-long work placement or a curriculum that integrates theory and practice throughout the period of study. In the context of the University's professional training, the CETL's applied research sought to extend support for students engaged in professional training: to explore and evaluate the use of mobile and classroom technologies to facilitate students' learning before, during and after professional training; to support learning through enquiry; and to consider the value of personal development planning as an effective mechanism for students' development. It also developed and evaluated networking, mentoring and coaching schemes to support and facilitate students' learning.

2. Impact on stakeholders

The CETLs enhanced teaching pedagogy and disseminated good practice to the wider community. They engaged with and influenced different stakeholders. This section explains how CETLs have benefited students, cross-institution staff (including academics, careers advisers and other student support staff), and employers and businesses.

a) Impact for students

The first objective HEFCE set for the CETL funding was that practice should demonstrate excellent learning outcomes for students. Engaging with students is crucial too. Almost all the CETLs employed students as student catalysts and for promotion of the new developments. Students have been drawn into learning partnerships in a number of ways

and have contributed to strategies for engaging their peers. The employability and enterprise CETLs have demonstrated many approaches and evidenced good practice that could be adopted with advantage more widely throughout the sector. Examples are given below in the categories of students as partners, students as reflective practitioners, entrepreneurial students and students supporting other students.

Students as partners in curriculum development:

- The Student Academic Partnership (SAP) scheme initiated by CLSP at Birmingham City University offers an opportunity for paid employment up to 125 hours to enable students to work in equal partnership with faculty staff to strengthen the learning and teaching development of the University. Students and staff are invited to identify educational development projects in which a student will play an active role, providing students with the opportunity to guide the development of projects in an academic employment setting, while in a paid post at the University. The impact of this scheme is the establishment of strong partnerships between staff and students as the cornerstone of learning activity.

Developing students as reflective practitioners:

- CCMS at the University of Reading enables students and future students to learn from their peers. This involved the establishment of a social networking site providing an extra-curricular community of practice where students helped each other with coursework, making friendships and securing internships. Some of the key learning materials developed, such as 'Beyond the PhD' and 'Student Stories' also make unmediated student learning available to other students. The 'Student Stories' project is now a website and UCAS anticipates that it will be helpful for pre-entry students considering HE (the target audience for this site was undergraduate students), the aim being to provide material for mediated or autonomous users to enable students to reflect on their own experiences through hearing the experiences of others.

Entrepreneurial students:

- Student Pioneers at the Institute of Enterprise performed an ambassadorial and awareness-raising role across Leeds Metropolitan University, and wider, during the academic year 2009-10. Working to enhance student perception and understanding of enterprise, the Student Pioneers focused upon projects that related to their own areas of interest. For example, they investigated access to entrepreneurial education for students with mental health issues; delivered enterprise 'taster' sessions and promoted volunteering opportunities as part of the employability agenda; and sought to gather members for the newly created Student Enterprise Society. One pioneer reported that "enterprise at Leeds Met Uni pretty much prepares you to stand up for yourself when you go out for a job. It gives you the options and then it gives you the means to actually develop yourself."

Students supporting other students:

- In 2006 the CLSP CETL at Birmingham City University worked with academic and student colleagues at other institutions to create the CETL Student Network, which has now been mainstreamed to become the Learning and Teaching Network. The Student Learning and Teaching Network committee has worked in collaboration with students from CETLs across the UK to develop practice in relation to student engagement across the sector in a number of ways, including running staff development workshops exploring approaches to student engagement at institutions across the UK, holding conferences for students to allow space for them to explore their role in the development of learning and teaching and holding conferences for collaborative staff/student teams to present and explore experiences of working across traditional hierarchical boundaries.

b) Impact on staff working in HEIs

The work of the CETLs has had an impact on HE staff who have engaged with them. There have been discernable changes to learning and teaching styles and increased understanding of what 'employability' and 'enterprise' in the curriculum might mean across the academic community. The CETLs offered an opportunity to stimulate and accelerate staff engagement in employability and enterprise. This section of the report describes the impact on cross-institutional staff in relation to engagement and support, staff development, and networking.

Engaging with and supporting staff:

- CETT, at the Central School of Speech and Drama, made funds available to staff in the institution through a Fellowship scheme and an Associate scheme with lighter engagement requirements for staff. In its self-evaluation, the CETL noted its support for putting on employability and enterprise-related conferences, which have succeeded in raising staff confidence in their capabilities in this area. CETT has also engaged a diversity of staff across the institution; for example, professional, support staff have been able to develop internships in media and production departments.

Staff development:

- Student engagement is enhanced when university staff can demonstrate understanding of employability/enterprise and the learning and assessment processes associated with it. Some CETLs supported secondments to other workplaces. This is a powerful form of staff development, and other benefits can accrue as relationships develop. Staff able to speak of recent first-hand experience of how their discipline is applied in the world of work can also enhance student learning. At Liverpool John Moores University, CELPL set up a sabbatical/secondment scheme. This was powerful professional development because it sharpened the interface between academia and other professional contexts.

Networking:

- Although the majority of employability and enterprise CETLs concentrated on enhancing provision internally within the project institution or institutions, some networks were created or formed naturally, making effective contributions to the development of staff across the wider external academic community. At the University of Reading, network groups were established for staff working with both foundation degree and postgraduate students and a wider group of 60 institutions in the UK, Ireland and Europe. Networking across organisations was seen as pivotal to the CETLs success. CCMS funded curriculum development at the Universities of Liverpool, Oxford, Wolverhampton and Westminster, Brunel University, Leeds Metropolitan University and Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network.

c) Employers and businesses

The employability and enterprise CETLs adopted a range of strategies to ensure the involvement of employers, employer bodies and businesses in their project plans and delivery. There have been three broad approaches. The first of these was the direct involvement of employers in aspects of the programme that accelerated developments in the traditional links of work placements and mentoring, and in workforce development. Secondly there was involvement of employers in the design and delivery of the programme in new and exciting ways. Thirdly, a step change in staff development took place. This produced materials that enabled and equipped institutional staff to relate better to, and work more effectively with, employers, although CETL teams did not always attempt to engage directly themselves. This section of the report describes the CETLs' impact on engaging employers in curriculum developments, on workforce development initiatives, on work-related learning and on partnerships with employers.

Engaging employers in curriculum development:

- CSLP at Birmingham City University described a relationship with a key employer, an NHS Trust, which took several years to develop. Success was evidenced by the extent to which the Trust approached the CETL to support it in developing its education strategies, and how much it perceived the CETL as a 'natural partner'. The actual (and unexpected) outcome was that CSLP has carried out four consultancy projects, redesigned the Trust's simulation (its virtual learning environment) and skills strategies, reported on its Quality Assurance Framework and is now helping it redesign its library and learning spaces. This is real, robust involvement in designing the future of education at the hospital.

Workforce development:

- CEWBL at Middlesex University reported an area of achievement with clear benefit for stakeholders. Within the Business School, the integration of work-based learning (WBL) opportunities in taught programmes has meant that validated WBL modules can be used for programmes in a variety of professional sectors including computing, construction and banking. Managerial staff have, by this means, been able to gain academic qualifications on the basis of professional development activities. The accreditation of development courses in the workplace has provided the opportunity

for staff successfully completing these courses to top up their studies to an MA by undertaking a WBL project.

Work-related learning:

- The ALPS CETL partnership, led by the University of Leeds, used links with employers as well as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), Health Trusts and practice staff to develop work-related learning. The approach has been both 'top down' (PSRB workshops, meetings with high level staff in Trusts) and 'bottom up'; for example, PSRB representatives indicated that they would be taking away ALPS work (maps and tools) and seeing if it could inform (and be included) in the Modernising Scientific Careers review programme. It is understood that some Trusts reviewed their policies on the use of mobile devices in practices following meetings with ALPS staff/informed by ALPS practice. ALPS tools are being included in the Single Assessment Tools for Nursing.

Partnerships with employers:

- Employers who were uncertain about how to get involved with higher education were supported by CETT at the Central School of Speech and Drama. CETT set up a symposium with a number of employers, to help them understand what they needed to do in order to contribute to the up-skilling of students leaving the University. CETT also acts as a trade show venue for the employers in return.

Concluding comments

This report celebrates the impact of the employability and enterprise CETLs. We have shown examples of CETLs impacting upon institutional strategy and senior management awareness, significant innovations in curriculum development and assessment, and an abundance of methods and materials for employability and related areas. Staff development and the dissemination of exemplars within and across institutions have accelerated, and one of the most significant changes noted are the many examples of how employability and enterprise development has been embedded in mainstream teaching and learning. Students have been drawn into learning partnerships in a number of ways and have contributed to strategies for engaging their peers, and innovative approaches to employer engagement have been explored including support for academic staff to work effectively with relevant employer partners.

When the CETL programme commenced, the economic context of both institutional funding and the graduate employment market was very different to the economic climate that faces today's institutional managers, new graduates and employers. HEFCE now requires that the institutions it funds must have statements about the support they offer to students to improve their employability and transition into work, made available on the Unistats website. This requirement for public information and employability development has been reiterated by the outcome of the Browne Review into higher education funding (BIS, 2010) and the

subsequent policy proposals by the Government on student fees. Such enhanced transparency of information will focus the attention of institutional managers on this aspect of the student experience. Much of the developmental work has been done.

As a consequence of the CETLs programme, the sector has developed a range of rich resources and innovative practices, which will enable institutions to take forward the employability and enterprise agenda in ways that will enhance the student learning experience and strengthen the development of the economy at this critical time.

References

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Appendix 1: List of CETLs

The following CETLs provided information to support this research project:

ALPS: Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings, University of Bradford, University of Huddersfield, University of Leeds (lead), Leeds Metropolitan University and York St John University.

Bridges: Personal Development Planning, University of Bedfordshire.

CCMS: Centre for Career Management Skills, University of Reading.

CEDP: Developing Professionalism, University of Liverpool.

CELPL: Leadership and Professional Learning, Liverpool John Moores University.

CEPPL: Professional Placement Learning, University of Plymouth.

CETH: Employability through the Humanities, University of Central Lancashire.

CETT: Training for Theatre, Central School of Speech and Drama.

CEWBL: Work-Based Learning, Middlesex University.

CLSP: Stakeholder Learning Partnerships, Birmingham City University.

CIL: Centre for Integrative Learning, University of Nottingham.

e3i: Employability, Sheffield Hallam University.

engCETL: Engineering, Loughborough University.

Institute for Enterprise: Enterprise, Leeds Metropolitan University.

PBPL: Practice Based Professional Learning, The Open University.

SCEPTre: Professional Training and Education, University of Surrey.

White Rose: Enterprise, University of York, University of Leeds and University of Sheffield.

Write Now: London Metropolitan University, Liverpool Hope University and Aston University.