Preparing students for the graduate labour market: from ‘unfreezing’ to ‘action’

Paul Greenbank, Centre for Learning and Teaching
Conceptualising personal capital and a narrative of employability

- **Soft currencies**
  - Skills
  - Values
  - Personality traits

- **Hard currencies**
  - Evidence from curricular and extra-curricular activities

**Personal capital**

**Narrative of employability**

*Source: Adapted from Brown and Hesketh (2004)*
Research methodology & key findings

• 2007-2012
  • Initial survey and interviews
  • Action research
  • Longitudinal study

• Findings
  • Failure to develop their personal capital
  • Undecided about career intentions

“I just saw the deadlines, panicked and put a couple of applications in. It was just a case of trying to get SOMEWHERE”
Values influencing student approaches to preparing for the graduate labour market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Facilitators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present orientation</td>
<td>Future orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System 1 thinking</td>
<td>System 2 thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency</td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity to ‘norms’</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External locus of control</td>
<td>Internal locus of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk aversity</td>
<td>(Calculated) risk taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Purist’ orientation</td>
<td>‘Player’ orientation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interventions: Kurt Lewin’s ‘Three-step Model’
Transformative approaches to learning

- Activity-based learning
- Group work
- Self-persuasion
Strategy for unfreezing the students values

*Students should:*

- Be aware of the nature of the graduate labour market
- Critically reflect on the way they have made decisions in the past
- Critically reflect on a series of case studies
- Consider their ‘future possible-selves’
Lewin’s ‘Three-step Model’

- Unfreezing
- Change
- Freeze
An example of the type of interventions that might be implemented over the three years of an undergraduate degree programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1 &amp; summer</th>
<th>Year 2 &amp; summer</th>
<th>By the end of summer, just before Year 3</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unfreezing</td>
<td>Reflecting on progress</td>
<td>Formulate clear career objectives</td>
<td>Apply for jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Awareness of nature of graduate labour market</td>
<td>Continuing to develop and evidence personal capital</td>
<td>Evidence of personal capital fully articulated</td>
<td>Reflect on progress and if necessary take action to overcome setbacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Critical reflection on decision-making</td>
<td>Revisiting future possible-selves</td>
<td>Develop strategy for applying for jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Case studies/ analogical encoding</td>
<td>Refining career objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identifying future possible-selves</td>
<td>Developing skills for the recruitment and selection process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing career objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and evidencing personal capital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges to implementation

• My status as an ‘outsider’

• Interventions are time consuming

• Issues about the objectives of the interventions

• Implications:
  • These ideas need testing more rigorously
  • And in different contexts
Publications


