

Learning for a Complex World

A lifewide concept of learning,
education and personal development

Edited by
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Chapter 12

Learning through work

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Synopsis

One of the educational goals of a modern higher education system is to prepare learners for the demanding world of work in which they will subsequently spend most of their lives: a world that will be full of challenge, change and disruption. One of the ways in which learners prepare themselves for the world of work is to participate in paid or unpaid work while they are studying for a degree. Learning through work is part of the lifewide learning profile of many, perhaps most students. This chapter draws on three sets of studies and interventions undertaken at the University of Surrey to consider the nature of learning and development in the work environment. It describes a learning partnership model that was developed to support learning through work experiences that are not directly linked to students' programmes. It concludes that much valuable learning and development can be gained and recognised through a lifewide educational model that encourages systematic recording and reflection on the experiences and processes of working.

Introduction

This chapter draws together some of the things we have learnt about student development in the particular contexts of work environments and describes the piloting of a Learning through Work Certificate as part of the Lifewide Learning Award Framework. It seeks to present, connect and integrate three different research and development strategies that were focused on what students were learning and how they were developing in workplace situations.

The **first set of studies** relate to the question *what do we know about how professionals learn and develop in the workplace, and how can we make practical use of this knowledge to improve student development in the work place?* Our starting point was to connect to the extensive body of research into

how professionals learn and develop themselves through work (e.g. Eraut, 1994, 2000, 2004, 2007a & b, 2009, 2010, 2011). Eraut characterised continuous professional practice and ongoing development in terms of what he called 'learning trajectories' (Eraut, 2007a&b, 2009, 2010b). These were used by Willis (2009a) to examine the ways in which students at the University of Surrey were developing themselves through work placements. Eraut's research was used to:

- a) evaluate whether students on placement were developing in the same ways as professionals in the early stages of their careers
- b) create guidance for students involved in workplace learning on how people learn in the work environment
- c) create a self-evaluation tool to help students and tutors analyse the quality of workplace situations and pedagogic support
- d) inform development of a framework - the Learning through Work Certificate - that would enable students to recognise and gain recognition for their development through part-time work.

The **second set of studies** addressed the question *how do students engaged in work understand they are developing themselves as professionals?* Students' perceptions of personal professionalism in the work placement environment were examined through two essay competitions. The consequent analysis (Campbell, 2011a) of what being professional means to students undertaking a work placement demonstrated the complex and integrated nature of their development and led to the production of a Guide (Campbell 2011b) to help students preparing for a placement to appreciate the dimensions of professionalism. The study on what being professional means also informed the design of the reflective prompts in the Learning through Work Certificate described below.

Both of the above studies informed the **third intervention** which addressed the question *how can we help students recognise the learning and development they are gaining in part-time work environments and make claims for this development?* The 'Learning through Work' Certificate was designed to be part of the Lifewide Learning Award Framework and was piloted between July-October 2010.

First set of studies: Learning and development trajectories

Learning and development trajectories in the workplace are demonstrated by individuals and teams getting better at what they do and creating more effective, more efficient, innovative ways of working that enable the

organisation/business to be more successful. Becoming better at work can involve many different things (Eraut 2009):

- doing things faster
- improving the quality of the process
- improving communications around the task
- learning quickly
- becoming more independent and needing less supervision
- combining tasks more effectively
- quicker recognition of possible problems
- expanding the range of situations in which one can perform competently
- helping others learn to do the task or part of the task
- increases in task difficulty / taking on tasks of greater complexity
- dealing with more difficult or more important cases, clients, customers, suppliers or colleagues
- creating new and better ways of doing things.

Some of these types of progress could be described as *doing things better*, some as *doing things differently* and some as *doing different things*. Sometimes all three may be happening at once. They all manifestations of people developing themselves.

Progression in dealing with work situations often involves doing the same thing, or not quite the same thing, in more difficult conditions or across a wider range of cases. Although these types of progress seem fairly obvious, people are not always conscious that they are learning things and developing themselves through experience, nor do they remember how or when they learnt something. People are generally not very interested in the dynamic of their own learning. Research on workplace learning (Eraut 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2011) found that newcomers first recognised that they had learned something when they realised that they were doing things that they could not have done a few weeks earlier. Focusing attention on the how, why and when of learning does lead to enhanced self-awareness and it is these processes and how self-awareness can be used to motivate further development that are of particular interest to our lifewide learning project.

One of the benefits for students engaging in work environments is that they develop the capacity to learn through the activity and social processes of work – learning and personal development associated with learning is a by-product of working. As a result of participating in work environments students are exposed

to, and learn from and with others, the cultural knowledge of the organisation, which is then incorporated into their personal knowledge (Eraut 2010, 2011):

- *codified knowledge* necessary for the job in the form(s) in which the person uses it
- *know-how* in the form of *skills and practices*
- *personal understandings of people and situations*
- *accumulated memories of cases and episodic events*
- other aspects of *personal expertise, practical wisdom and tacit knowledge*
- *self-knowledge, attitudes, values and emotions.*

This form of knowledge development and use of knowledge is highly relevant to the idea of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda 2004 and Chapter 5) with its knowledge-based assumptions that 1) *knowledge is complex and socially constructed*, 2) *self is central to knowledge construction* and 3) *authority and expertise are shared in the mutual co-construction of knowledge among peers.*

Table 12.1 Typology of modes of learning in the workplace

Work processes with learning as a by-product	Learning activities located within work or learning processes	Learning processes at or near the workplace
Participation in group processes Working alongside others Consultation Tackling challenging tasks and roles Problem solving Trying things out Consolidating, extending and refining skills Working with clients	Asking questions Getting information Locating resource people Listening and observing Reflecting Learning from mistakes Giving and receiving feedback Use of mediating artefacts	Being supervised Being coached Being mentored Shadowing Visiting other sites Conferences Short courses Working for a qualification Independent study

Source: Eraut 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2010, 2011

Eraut’s study of the early career learning of professionals (Eraut 2007a&b, 2011) demonstrated that most learning was not a separate activity but a by-product of their ongoing work; and most of these events involved working with other people. This gave rise to a typology of learning modes of early career learners (ibid.). They are the means by which cultural and personal knowledge are developed.

Table 12.2 Summary of learning trajectories organised into eight categories

Learning trajectory	Details
Task performance	Speed and fluency; complexity of tasks and problems; range of skills required; communication with a wide range of people; collaborative work
Awareness and understanding	Other people: colleagues, customers, managers etc; context and situations; one's own organisation; problems and risks; priorities and strategic issues; value issues
Personal development	Self evaluation; self-management; handling emotions; building and sustaining relationships; disposition to attend to other perspectives / to consult and work with others / to learn and improve one's practice; accessing relevant knowledge and expertise; ability to learn from experience
Academic knowledge and skills	Use of evidence and argument; accessing formal knowledge; research-based practice; theoretical thinking; knowing what you might need to know; using knowledge resources (human, paper, electronic); learning how to use relevant theory in a range of practical situations
Role performance	Prioritisation; range of responsibility; supporting other people's learning; leadership; accountability; supervisory role; delegation; handling ethical issues; coping with unexpected problems; crisis management; keeping up-to-date
Teamwork	Collaborative work; facilitating social relations; joint planning and problem solving; ability to engage in and promote mutual learning
Decision making and problem solving	When to seek expert help; dealing with complexity; group decision making; problem analysis; formulating and evaluating opinions; managing the process within an appropriate timescale; decision making under pressure
Judgement	Quality of performance, output and outcomes; priorities; value issues; levels of work

Source: Eraut 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2010

Eraut's study (2007a) also identified over 50 learning and development trajectories, each involving the individual to access, integrate and utilise their knowledge, capability, qualities and dispositions in order to perform or accomplish something. At any point in time an individual performing a professional role is either developing or regressing within a particular trajectory depending on the experiences he is gaining through his work. Eraut (2010b) argues that in dynamic work environments the concept of

competence-based goals as indicators of a person's workplace capability is far too restrictive. Lifelong learning requires the use of lifelong learning trajectories, which can offer more freedom to be holistic, attend to the emotional dimension of work and appreciate the significance of complexity. Lifewide learning contributes to the holistic development of a person and offers the potential for individuals to develop along some of their lifelong learning trajectories through different parts of their lives simultaneously.

We hypothesised that students on work or clinical placements are also developing to varying degrees along these trajectories in ways that are appropriate to their particular work contexts. Willis (2009a) tested this hypothesis by using these trajectories as a tool to analyse 28 student narratives of how they developed themselves as professionals through their work placement. The students identified 32 factors, either explicitly or implicitly, that they believed were relevant to them being and becoming professional in their particular work context. Each student's narrative revealed a different combination of perceived learning and the aspects of learning and development reported could be related to Eraut's eight learning trajectories (see Willis 2009b for a description of the analysis).

Second set of studies: how students become professional

As Eraut's work demonstrated, fulfilling a professional role requires working with epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal complexity. This is more than simply a checklist of things that have to be done; it requires assessing situations often with incomplete information, and making decisions about the best courses of action and then following through to ensure that actions are appropriate and effective. We were interested in concepts of professionalism that students had developed through work experiences. Students who had completed a year-long work placement and/or other work-based experiences were invited to reflect, in a structured way, upon the idea of personal professionalism (their view of what being professional means). An analysis of 22 essays (Campbell 2011) demonstrated that students conceptualised professionalism as a way of being, rather than a checklist of skills and behaviours. The quotes in this section are taken from student essays.

In essence I believe that personal professionalism is more about the way in which you conduct yourself and your outlook on life.

This way of being is made up of facets such as appearance, manner, conduct, communication, interpersonal skills, attitudes, values, approach, skills and openness to grow.

Factors such as continuous dedication, learning and commitment to success help individuals to become effective professionals. Not only that but also the extra knowledge that involves ethics, positive attitude, enthusiasm to learn, teach, and many other aspects mentioned above such as respect, passion, persistence and professionalism. In summary, everyone has some degree of personal professionalism but each individual has the ability to develop it through self-improvement.

People are not only merited on what they know and their credentials, but also on their attitudes and behaviour, so the way I carry myself and the things that I do should be a reflection of what I'm capable of.

Interacting with others (people you work with, managers, customers and clients) appropriately and respectfully, and communicating clearly and directly emerged from student accounts as essential to being professional.

How you interact with people plays a big part in how professional you appear.

Professionalism is a combination of taught aspects, like knowledge and skills, and experiential, such as interpersonal skills. Students feel you can't be told how to be professional; it is something you learn from direct experience of doing things that require you to be professional, and the conception of it changes as you gain more experience. Becoming professional is a never-ending process.

Being professional is not something you are told how to do, but something you learn from experience.

Professionalism can also be learnt by observing others as they fulfil their role. Students often stated their own conceptions were a result of observing others either embodying professionalism or conversely being unprofessional. Students also commented that experience had broadened their conceptions of professionalism and helped them to realise that previously held stereotypes of a professional did not capture true professionalism.

Each member of staff has their own methods and ways of being an effective professional and being in contact with a team like this has helped dispel some of the myths and stereotypes I still had regarding the world of work and being a professional.

I witnessed firsthand the variety of ways to be a successful professional. Whilst each individual may have their own methods of performing their job well, I have noted certain themes that I believe are fundamental in professionalism.

Various skills are important to professionalism, but a key aspect is approach to work, delivered through effective interpersonal skills. Achieving and succeeding requirements of the role, but in a certain way, to a certain standard, to deadlines, characterises professionalism for students. Students have a sense that professionalism must become intrinsic and internalised. If professionalism is internalised, it leads to achieving self-efficacy, self-worth, achievement, accomplishment, a sense of satisfaction and most of all embracing confidence, which in turn strengthens and develops a professional identity. This professional identity helps self-determination and motivation, with the will to do well derived from intrinsically motivated desires.

I conclude that professionalism is more than simply doing right by the context of one's workplace, but also the personal determination to better oneself in practice and conduct.

Personal professionalism seeps into all we do in life, in both career and social scenarios.

What emerged from accounts was a sense that being professional is about bringing yourself and your personality into the role, enhancing not only yourself but also the role and the organisation. Professionalism is about not only doing what is required or behaving in a way because you are told to, but also doing/behaving because of internalised professional values, doing it for self and self-set standards, arising from intrinsic motivation.

For me the answer is that a professional works to such standards, not because of the penalties that are imposed if they don't, a bad mark, a sacking for example, but rather they do it because to do anything else would be unacceptable to that person themselves.

I work to high standards because I know that if I did otherwise I would be personally disappointed, the results would not be a reflection of my ability and so I would be letting myself down.

An appropriate set of dispositions is essential to fulfilling the professional role in the right way. The *willingness* to be a certain sort of person behaving in a certain sort of way is paramount. Here are some of the dimensions of willingness identified by student accounts.

- willing to try to perform at a high standard
- openness and willingness to learn and develop for the role, necessitating an ability to listen
- willingness to present yourself in a confident but not arrogant manner
- willingness to do that bit extra, which is necessitated by taking the initiative and an aspect of creativity
- willingness to take responsibility for and learn from mistakes
- willingness to be open to constructive criticism, seeing criticism as positive chances for change
- awareness of different perspectives and willingness to see alternative perspectives to your own
- ability and willingness to both learn from others and teach others; ability to lead and to be led
- willingness to take an active role in being a professional, in the work, and a commitment to growth and self-development
- willingness to be positive and encouraging
- willingness to accept and use feedback from colleagues in order to improve.

These aspects of willingness all amount to a sense of resilience in attempting to be professional. Passion, commitment and seeing the positives in both people and situations all contribute to a climate of encouragement which helps to bring out the best in other people. This fosters another important dynamic in work: the importance of working effectively in a team or collaboratively with others. Students recognised the importance of being able to work effectively with others as well as the ability to work autonomously by taking the initiative. A professional is expected to manage himself and regulate his own behaviour. Knowing your limits of competency, taking responsibility for your own decisions and actions and knowing when to seek help are all important aspects of self-management. Another key aspect of self-management is the ability to manage and regulate emotions. This awareness also enables awareness of the emotions of others and helps to take other perspectives. This ability to manage

emotions is an important part of effective interpersonal skills and is captured by Emotional Intelligence theory, which has become a prominent feature in business and organisational research. These are key skills in being an effective leader and employee.

Communication emerged as a vital element of being professional and to the effective use of interpersonal skills. Students' recognised communication occurs through various mediums (telephone, face to face conversation, email, written reports, presentations etc.) and in different contexts with different people. Being able to conduct professional conversations, knowing what / what not to say and how to say it, is part of professionalism. Having the appropriate language is essential as is:

- speaking/writing well, concisely and clearly – being comprehensible
- being polite and respectful – addressing people with their titles is important
- being able to express opinions appropriately
- being approachable
- not being patronising
- willing to share your ideas, knowledge, opinions; having your own voice, ideas and therefore confidence is important to facilitate the sharing of these ideas
- being able to write appropriately in ways that meet the needs and interests of the audience
- when resolving issues, remaining objective rather than being personal
- managing expectations; being clear, direct and concise
- networking skills and building relationships.

Students recognise and appear to cope with the complexity of professionalism, seeing it as something that is embodied in outward appearance and conduct, but also internally in terms of values, attitudes and approach. Students talked of forming a professional identity which results from integrating many of the aspects mentioned above, as well as others. This identity of professionalism is then presumably integrated into the many other identities people hold at any one time; hence some students touch upon taking professionalism not only into the workplace but also into other aspects of life.

Students also recognised the importance of learning from experience, positing that professionalism can only develop from experiencing professional contexts. Students acknowledged that whilst higher education helps develop many of the 'soft' skills inherent in professionalism, these are not realised fully and further

developed without the experience of professional contexts. This will help students to realise how transferable many of the facets of professionalism are across situations, which can then benefit them during their time in higher education. This highlights the importance of encouraging and supporting students to engage in professional contexts during while they are studying in order to begin to develop and internalise a conception of professionalism.

The studies described above allowed us to connect a body of research in professional work environments with the experiences of students on work placement. Our next step was to extend our examination of the learning potential of the work environment to situations that were not linked to any formal educational experience or course structure.

Third set of studies: learning through part-time work

In May 2009, 368 undergraduate and postgraduate students completed an online survey inviting them to comment on the opportunities that part-time work provided for personal/professional development. The primary reason cited (100 per cent) was to earn money, followed by the intrinsic motivation of doing something useful and seeking enjoyment (35 per cent). Students also believed that the experience would be useful for their CV, but relatively few students (less than 15 per cent) said that they got a job to develop their skills. Part-time work is predominantly in retail, sales, bar work, waiting, but there are also a range of roles in volunteering, teaching/tutoring, secretarial/temping, cleaning, healthcare and other areas (Figure 12.4). While only a small percentage of respondents claimed that they sought part-time work to develop their skills, a word cloud (Figure 12.5) of 888 responses to the question 'What was the most important thing you gained from your part-time work?' shows that students recognised they gained significant skills and experience.

Table 12.3 provides more detail on the opportunities for personal development that part-time work provided. Over 60 per cent of respondents to the survey believed that the part-time work environment *often* or *always* provided opportunity for the development of professional skills, communication skills, working with others in a team, learning how to interact with customers or clients, learning how an organisation works and how people are managed, learning how to manage themselves, learning how to negotiate with and persuade others, taking on challenging responsibilities and gaining confidence in self. These are all significant dimensions of development for individuals.

Table 12.3 Opportunities for personal/professional development provided through part-time work (n=363 figures in per cent)

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
Finding and applying for a job	14	41	28	17
Gaining interview experience	17	39	25	20
Learning in a work context	10	27	35	29
Applying classroom learning	38	41	15	6
Gaining useful work experience	7	30	31	31
Valuable professional skills	28	28	34	30
Developing communication skills	2	13	31	53
Develop and use IT skills	30	34	22	12
Learning how to work with colleagues or in a team	4	15	32	48
Learning how to interact with customers or clients	1	14	24	58
Learning about how an organisation works	5	26	36	33
Learning about being managed	6	22	40	32
Learning how to manage others	17	35	29	20
Learning how to manage self e.g. turning up on time	4	17	26	53
Learning about business skills and practices.	12	33	32	23
Learning how to negotiate with/persuade others	11	36	35	22
Clarifying future career goals	21	37	27	16
Being given challenging responsibilities	10	30	38	22
Gaining self-confidence	4	13	41	42

Learning through Work Certificate

Convinced that there was value in encouraging students to reflect on and evaluate the learning and development they were gaining through part-time work, in 2009 SCEPTRe developed and piloted a Learning through Work Certificate. This was subsequently aligned to the capability and values statement for the Lifewide Learning Award and incorporated into the Award Framework as a freestanding certificate and as a pathway in the Award. The revised Learning through Work Certificate was piloted between July and October 2010. Eleven students joined the pilot scheme; four withdrew before completing and seven successfully completed the requirements for the Certificate. Their portfolio accounts provide a useful database from which to draw out the learning and achievements they gained through their part-time work.

Educational design

The Learning through Work Certificate provided university recognition for informal learning and personal development gained when students completed at least 100 hours of part-time or temporary full-time (paid/unpaid) work which was not part of a programme of study. In order to receive university recognition for learning and personal development participants had to document their experiences and evaluate the learning and personal development they had gained. Four techniques are used to help students understand, evaluate and reveal their learning and personal development:

- completion of a skills and experiences self-evaluation questionnaire and personal development plan
- online resources to help participants appreciate the nature of learning through work (in contrast to learning in an educational environment) based on the research of Michael Eraut described earlier
- creation of an ongoing reflective diary or blog to record and make sense of their experiences and the learning and personal development gained from them
- reflective account (2,000–2,500 words) – to connect, synthesise and integrate the learning gained through the experience or work. The account draws upon the reflective diary and any other documents or artefacts (such as digital images or audio or video recordings) used to represent learning and personal and professional development.

The Certificate encourages participants to focus on key aspects of personal development that are generic to all work situations and are important to being an effective professional. These are incorporated into the same capability and values statement that underpins the Lifewide Learning Award (Chapter 11). The Certificate also recognises more specific skills that are necessary to fulfil a particular role. A copy of the guidance can be found at <http://lifewideeducation.co.uk>.

In common with the Lifewide Learning Award, the Certificate encourages students to be aware of and reflect on the situations they encounter and deal with at work. This is consistent with Eraut's research into learning in the workplace.

Situational understanding is a critical aspect of professional work, and probably the most difficult [for a student on first entering the work environment].....because situational understanding tends to be taken for granted by all but newcomers. While newcomers may be well aware of their

lack of situational understanding, they may not get much helpful feedback on it. This is because most people get so familiar with many situations that they cannot imagine anyone else “not being aware of the obvious”. Thus newcomers’ ignorance of the local culture may not be understood; and there may not be much information to help them learn about the situations and contexts that are so familiar to those around them. Most students on placement need a lot of advice on how best to understand the groups and contexts they encounter....because the tacit dimension of situational understanding is critical.

(Eraut 2011:4

Learning and personal development

The seven participants in the pilot scheme were a mix of male and female, home and overseas students, studying at level 2, P (professional placement year) or 3. Their disciplines included applied psychology and sociology; sociology, culture and media; mathematics; business management; and economics. Each had different levels of experience of paid work, and the nature of their experience ranged from retail through care work, technology support and events management. Some were junior members of a team, others led a small team.

At the start and end of the process, participants were invited to use an audit tool (Table 12.4) to help them think about a) the sorts of learning and development they anticipated from the work and b) the areas of moderate or significant development they had gained through the work experience. Given the diversity of their roles and experience, each profile is individual. The 23 audit dimensions are listed in the second column of Table 12.4. Participants’ evaluations of their personal development is shown in the columns labelled 1 to 7, with dark shading indicating considerable development, light shading indicative of some development and blank cells meaning there was little or no perceived development in this dimension. The final column calculates the total score for each dimension, using the scale 1 = considerable development, 0.5 = some development.

The most striking feature of this table is the extent to which participants identified significant or some learning over a majority of the 23 opportunities for learning and personal development listed. All participants believed that they had gained valuable work experience and 14 of the 23 elements of experience were rated 5 (out of a possible 7) for the significance of the learning.

Many of the themes identified as being significant in the earlier Willis (2009a) study relating to student development in the professional training environment, also featured in the narratives of students engaged in part-time working. For example - responsibility/trust, feeling valued, variety of work, new skills or knowledge, dealing with challenging situations, communicating with different types of people, being part of a team, working independently, being organised and able to manage time.

The dimensions that score most highly (Table 12.4 with 6–7 points) are communication and interpersonal skills, personal dispositions/qualities associated with self-realisation and developing self-confidence through successful execution of a responsible work role. Participants express a sense of self-fulfilment having coped successfully with challenging situations.

[T]he main challenges were managing and prioritising different customer demands with very urgent demands with very short time scales. One of my greatest challenges of my job was to interpret what the customer wants and on a few rare occasions I was in a difficult position, where the customer didn't know or understand what they were asking for. On one occasion [we were] commissioned by a customer to create a podcast of a series of lectures a guest speaker was doing at the University. The customer made it clear through 2 phone conversations that they would like a podcast. After confirming to the customer what a podcast was, we then agreed to take on the project. We filmed the first event and guaranteed that the podcast would be produced within 72 hours onto a DVD. Once the customer had viewed the product, she wasn't happy. The customer expected more than a podcast but wasn't sure what. This was a difficult conversation and in the end we had to cut our losses. This experience has highlighted to me that customer relationships are a complicated beasts and continually evolving as all was not lost as a few months later the ex-customer re-commissioned xxxx to create her some podcasts and now with the right expectations.

A student who undertook a month-long internship in China.

I feel that I was finally able become an effective communicator because I had improved the way I read other people's emotions through different forms of communication that I originally never really looked at before. In the past, during my time at work I tend to communicate clearly orally or through written communication as there was a slight language barrier between some of my colleagues and I learnt how to communicate and read off body

language and see how they were feeling. Although it sounds extremely elementary, this use to help me decide whether or not a task should be prioritised because my worker was in a rush and also use to help me see what my supervisors and colleagues thought of my work when viewing it.

Table 12.4 Learning through Work Certificate participants' evaluation of new learning through their experiences of work

	Opportunity for learning and personal development	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Summary
1	Finding and applying for a job				1/2				2.5
2	Experience of being interviewed							1	2
3	Learning about how an organization/business works		1/2	1/2					5
4	Dealing with challenging situations at work	1		1/2		1/2			6
5	Applying classroom learning	1	1/2	1/2					2
6	Gaining valuable work experience	1						1	7
7	Developing valuable technical skills		1/2		1			1	3.5
8	Learning professional behaviours			1/2		1/2			6
9	Developing communication skills				1/2				6.5
10	Develop and use IT skills		1			1	1		3
11	Learning how to work with colleagues or in a team			1/2	1/2				6
12	Learning how to interact with customers or clients			1/2	1/2		1		5
13	Learning about being managed		1/2	1/2			1		5.5
14	Learning how to manage others			1/2		1			5
15	Learning how to manage yourself eg punctuality		1	1/2	1/2				5
16	Learning about business skills and practices.		1/2				1		5.5
17	Coping with and managing emotions	1/2		1/2		1/2			5.5
18	Learning how to negotiate with and persuade others	1	1/2	1/2				1	4
19	Clarifying future career goals		1		1/2			1	5
20	Being given challenging responsibilities		1/2	1/2	1/2				5.5
21	Being creative and resourceful to make things happen	1/2	1	1/2	1/2	1/2		1	3
22	Experience of being enterprising			1/2		1	1	1/2	2.5
23	Self-confidence	1/2		1/2					6

Notes: (n=7); significant new learning = dark grey; new learning = light grey; sum = total for the number of cells that are defined as significant (1) or some new learning (1/2).

Even when they feel they have not been successful, participants recognise the developmental value of their experience, as put by this student who had a month-long internship in China:

Another area of skill that didn't seem to go so well included my ability to problem solve tasks. I remember being set a vague task from one of my colleagues to create a collage of event pictures that Auditoire had produced so it could be used on the website. The process of it was quite long but it was embarrassing that it took over 5 attempts for me to get it correct and that I stayed in the office until 9:30pm trying to get it correct. It was partially to do with the language barrier as well but I believed that my inability to work out what I had been set reduced my self esteem for a while. I learnt how to move on from the situation as mistakes are always made.

Moving down the scale of perceived significance, dimensions that score 5.5 and 5 relate to aspects of management or being managed, business structure and function, and once more an opportunity to rise to a challenge through being given responsibility. Least perceived development lies in the process of job application and selection, perhaps reflecting participants' prior experience of this or the informal/casual way in which part-time jobs have been found and secured. It is also evident that the nature of the part-time work these students were engaged in rarely offered them the opportunity to apply learning from their programme of study, reflecting the fact that the primary motivation for part-time work is often to earn income rather than to gain career specific experience. The exceptions to this rule, however, shows that part-time work if linked to a field of study and career aspiration can provide valuable and relevant personal development

Something that I found to be valuable and relevant to my course is applying theory from books on mental disorders to reality, speaking to patients and hearing how that disorder affects them. There is nothing more valuable than getting the opportunity to discuss real life cases from their point of view that you learnt about in a book. A particular example I think of is a patient who had bipolar disorder mixed with alcoholism which they used to self medicate the lows they experienced from their disorder. They shared with me how they felt and acted when experiencing the highs/mania of bipolar in contrast to what it is like to experience the lows of the disorder. It was an amazing experience as I had read about the theory of this disorder extensively however for someone to open up and share with me what it really like for them to live with this disorder is so enlightening. In a book I can read about

the typical behaviour that may be displayed by someone with the condition but the book cannot tell me what was going through that persons head when they were displaying that behaviour and how it feels to look back on it as they are progressing through the treatment.

By comparing the learning they anticipated with what they actually achieved using the self-audit tool (Table 12.4) students were able to recognise how they had changed. An illustration of this process is given below.

A further difference [I noticed] is the depth to which I went into for the 'Developing communication skills'. In the chart I completed before starting this position I merely ticked the 'some new learning' option for the entire category, and upon reflection of what I have learned so far in these last 3 months I can identify a difference in learning between verbal/oral skills, listening skills, written, designing and media use. These are secondary skills which have developed along the way, I have had no formal training to develop my communication skills, but they have inadvertently improved in the process, something which I am grateful for! I feel that is applies to a large number of the categories on the above list ...

This process of structured reflection is supported by participants' personal diaries or blogs, which they keep in the medium they choose. An extract from one student's blog shows how she used it not simply to record events, but also to analyse her experiences:

14th July – Today has been a mad house, with the new releases of Eclipse and Shrek 4th, the cinema was packed with Orange Wednesdays guests. There was not enough staff to cover the number of guests we received. I started to panic and had to do a lot of refunds, I learnt that I need to slow down and keep calm even if there is a huge queue and guests are waiting. Guests appreciate for you to take your time with them so they don't feel rushed.

16th July – Today I was called in to the office about a team member harassing the girls. I personally have encountered a few incidents but failed to report it due to it seemed natural for him to do it as a joke. He was dealt with and if he is complained about again then he will be fired from his job as this is not the 1st time this has happened. Apart from that I am now fully trained and confident with in the box office. I haven't spent my full month here because Odeon has not been that straight forward however I am now

trained fully in 3 of the main areas and am now a confident worker who the supervisors are pleased with.

18th July – I am on another close which I appear to be doing a lot of. Over 60 per cent of my shifts are working until past midnight. Now I am fully trained in retail, everything was done quickly except the supervisors were arguing amongst each other saying none of them were doing their jobs correctly. This is slightly worrying if my bosses aren't getting along and can't work as a team as this reflects.

Participants appreciate the value of this process of reflection, as expressed by one who focused her submission around her work in a private clinic:

I feel the whole point of completing this certificate is that it gives me the opportunity to evaluate and consolidate what I learnt from my summer of work experience. On a day to day basis we often do not take the time within our lives to sit down and reflect on what we have learnt, what hurdles we have jumped over and what we should be proud of or on the other hand what we can take away from our mistakes to develop as a person. A major part of what I feel this certificate has given me the chance to do is exactly that, reflect on my work experience at a deeper level than I would have ever thought to have done ... It helped me on days ... of low morale which we can all get when busy with many tasks in our lives by reminding me why I am doing this, what I have learnt so far and how much more I have to learn if I continue. Having come back from the summer and spoken to class members who have not completed the certificate I have to say I feel a sense of accomplishment, I worked hard over the summer and am putting these experiences into the certificate – the words I will put into this I will always have and can look back on in the future to remind myself what I spent the summer doing.

She concludes with words that demonstrate the life-changing impact of her reflecting on her work experiences:

In this work you have to try and keep your work as value free as possible, otherwise it would not be considered ethical. Any emotions or feelings that may arise due to a patient have to be kept aside; otherwise it may cloud your judgment when trying to effectively treat patients. When working with staff alike it is important to remain professional and value free. Through working at the clinic my personal values may have been shaped but this is something

that must remain personal and free from my professional life. I however do feel I gained a new sense of self confidence from my time at the clinic, confidence for talking to members of staff (not being afraid to ask questions) as well as confidence when working with patients. I feel I even gained some more confidence at being interviewed, although this was not my first time being interviewed I feel you gain something new from every interview you have.

Conceptions of professionalism

The Learning through Work Certificate encourages participants to reflect on what being professional means to them in the belief that professionalism is a necessary characteristic for appropriate and effective performance in any work environment. Some examples of students' responses are given below.

Student A My views on what makes one a professional have undoubtedly changed over the past few years, and in some cases even more so over this summer. I feel that the key characteristics that demonstrate you are a professional are:

- A mature attitude; being able to draw a line between having a laugh whilst working and immaturity
- An open personality; being the sort of person who can meet a stranger with an open smile and engage and involve anyone in a conversation or project.
- A sense of humility; being able to admit mistakes and to learn from past mistakes to make more justified and informed decisions in the future.
- A democratic countenance; being able to listen to other colleagues opinions when making a decision.
- A flexible nature; being able to adapt to changing situations.

I feel that my placement over the summer has improved these characteristics within me, as well as improving my understanding of what I need to do to become a more effective professional. One significant improvement I feel I have made has been around my maturity, particularly regarding my ability to behave in a much more professional manner around the workplace, despite distractions.

Student B Something else which I feel is appropriate is maintaining a high level of maturity in the workplace and respect for other colleagues. As the youngest member of the team there could be some things I say or do which would not be suitable or which could offend others. I therefore must adopt a

certain attitude and adhere to office etiquette to enable myself to not only fit in, but also be respected and considered as a member of the team. This is something which I feel I have managed to do throughout the past three months as I feel I am generally a very mature and respectful person, and have developed this through my working like so far and other activities where I have worked alongside a variety of different people.

Student C Being an effective professional means includes having the ability to:

- Identify any problems and get them sorted out as quickly as possible before they manifest themselves
- Working as part of a team
- Learning from others and give knowledge to others
- Adapt and be flexible when given situations or problems arise
- Learn from previous experience / encounters with previous customers
- Make the job your own by bringing any past experience you have or new ideas

Student D after my experience in China it is possible to become a professional in different ways. Usually when asked what makes an effective professional I would list technical skills such as having the ability to apply numeracy or applying IT. I feel that in the past I have demonstrated such skill but after my experiences in China I believe that an effective professional must at least have the skills listed below:

- Self Management – through time management, being a self starter at tasks and improving skills through constant reflection.
- Problem Solving – by analysing situations and creating appropriate solutions.
- Communication – the ability to clearly express a subject or emotion orally or verbally.
- Team working – through co-operating and respecting others, negotiating with colleagues and realising the interdependency of a team.

I feel that an endless amount of skills could be added to the list but this is the minimum required to become an effective professional.

These perceptions represent much valuable learning gained through exposure to and participation in everyday work situations. They are insights that can be

built upon in future and insights that can be shared when they present themselves to prospective employers.

A learning partnership for self-authorship

The Learning through Work Certificate provides another example of a learning partnership (Baxter Magolda 2004 and Chapter 5) through which students' experiences of being and knowing, and their development of personal knowledge (skills, qualities and dispositions necessary to make effective use of this knowledge), enabled them to successfully fulfil their work roles.

The work of Baxter Magolda draws attention to the importance in personal development of what she calls 'the growth of epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal complexity' (Baxter Magolda 2004:41 and Chapter 5). As Eraut shows (Eraut 2007) and our students' reveal (Willis 2010; Campbell 2011) the work environment provides an important setting in which students can encounter the conditions that provide the opportunity for growth in being able to deal with complexity.

Examples of students engaging with and appreciating such complexity in the situations they had to deal with has been provided in some of the extracts above and some further examples are given below. All seven accounts revealed, to varying degrees, students engaging in situations that involved the three assumptions that underlie the concept of self-authorship namely: 1) *knowledge is complex and socially constructed*, 2) *self is central to knowledge construction* and 3) *authority and expertise are shared in the mutual co-construction of knowledge among peers*.

Student A took on a part-time summer job at a major supplier of building materials.

Naturally, some opportunities passed me by, some causing me to miss out on a high value sale. One particularly expensive sale I [nearly] missed out on was when a customer came in looking for a price list of our various timbers and tonne bags of ballast and shingle and the suchlike. After ascertaining that the customer didn't hold an account with us, I proceeded to give him the prices that would be charged to customers that were described as 'cash customers', and were naturally more expensive than the 'trade customer' rates that were set up. The customer was quite shocked that we were around 40p a metre more expensive than one of our largest competitors and began to leave when my colleague came over and rescued the sale. As it

turned out, the gentleman was part of a large firm who were beginning a new building project nearby and were looking to purchase a large quantity of supplies from us – something that I had failed to enquire about before offering prices.

Student B undertook a month-long internship for an events management organisation in Beijing. Before she went she tried to prepare herself by reading about what it was like to live in China and took lessons in Mandarin, but this did not really prepare her for the significant cultural differences that she had to learn to deal with.

During my internship, I kept a diary and I learnt that my attitude towards the Chinese culture had changed over time. I firstly entered the country thinking that Chinese people were not welcoming and were too traditional and to some extent narrow minded to eventually become a world economic power. I then realised during the second week into the internship that I had come with a Eurocentric point of view and been slightly unfair and so did my best to give a try and adapt to it. Once I stopped being Eurocentric I realised that I was much more happy in my time during China and felt much more confident with myself ... I learnt that Chinese companies (or at least the company I worked for) placed a high level of importance on hierarchy and sometimes suggestions were not really regarded as useful if you were low in the company's hierarchy. It would sometimes be regarded as rude or going beyond your designated boundary. I learnt that it was best to give advice or suggestions when asked as oppose to using your own initiative.

Concluding remarks

There is no doubt that 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. These forms of knowledge development and use are important to the development of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda 2004 and Chapter 5).

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. The learning partnership model developed through the Learning through Work Certificate, encouraged students to pay attention to the cultural and social interactions in their workplace and to use these events as resources for learning. Fundamentally, this process helped participants reflect critically upon their experiences. The process of making their understandings explicit enabled participants to appreciate even more what they had learnt and how they had changed. This enhanced self-awareness is the most tangible and useful outcome for participants in the process. The mediating artefacts created by participants to reveal some of their learning and development enabled the assessors to appreciate and validate the personal knowledge and newly acquired practical skills.

Through the process of developing and piloting the Learning through Work Certificate we realised the important role played by work in enabling students to learn and develop in ways that are essential for their future employment. These forms of development could be incorporated into a higher education through a lifewide concept of education.