

## Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

0474

Tue 07 Dec 2021

15:20 - 15:40

The Missing Link Between the Realms of HE and Work? Conceptualisations of Knowledge Exchange in Educational Collaboration

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**Research Domain:** Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

**Abstract:** This paper sets out to explore how to conceptualise KE in educational collaboration. While both KE and educational collaboration have been addressed in existing research, educational collaboration is seldom framed as a site for KE. Starting from the observation that engagement in work and work-related activities tends to enhance students' employability, we explore how to capture and explain KE in educational collaboration. Our initial analysis suggests that there can be identified three types of KE that allow students to make sense of the roles and the requirements in the realm of work and how to network and signal competency to potential employers. Thus, KE activities allow students to shift from skill acquisition to application and sense making.

**Paper:** In this paper, we set out to explore how to conceptualise knowledge exchange (KE) in educational collaboration. As KE is often framed as dissemination of scientific or disciplinary knowledge to the wider society, less attention is given to other sorts of knowledge that is exchanged when HEIs collaborate with industry partners and other stakeholders. While attention has been on the learning processes that underpin educational collaboration (Billett 2011), how to incorporate industry contextualisation into the curriculum (Dollinger and Brown 2019), and collaboration between HEIs and industry partners (Fleming et al. 2018), educational collaboration is seldom addressed as a site for KE. As engagement in work and work-related activities is associated with increased self-confidence (Billett, 2011) and career management skills in students (Jackson & Wilton, 2016), it can be assumed that educational collaboration incorporates KE that furthers students' career readiness. Thus, this paper sets out to explore the following question. How to conceptualise the benefits of KE in the context of educational collaboration?

Drawing on the tenets of embedded case study that combines elements from grounded theory, this paper focuses on educational collaboration that takes place between Pearson College London (PCL) - namely, its two schools Pearson Business School (PBS) and Escape Studios (ES), and industry partners and other organisations. While PBS offers programmes in Business, Management, Accounting, Law, and until recently also degree apprenticeships (DAs) in Business Management, ES delivers

programmes in Visual Effects (“VFX”), Game Art, and Animation and short courses in Previsualisation and Storyboarding and Producing. Both Schools have strong industry links. The data set consist of 12 alumni, 12 tutor, 9 student, and 16 industry interviews and 8 focus groups with current PCL students. Drawing on grounded theory, the transcripts were open coded followed by focused coding to test out the conceptual definitions.

Based on our initial analysis, we propose that the benefits of KE activities can be captured by drawing on the concept pair of realms of study and work. In this context, the realms should be understood as networks in which individual actions are linked to certain expectations and organisational relations that spiral outwards. While the realm of study is linked and shaped by HEI governance, disciplinary and academic communities and traditions, the realm of work extends from teams and organisational context to industry and economic relations. Moreover, one of the major differences between these two realms is how skills are acquired, developed, and applied. Along these lines, the realm of study is characterised by the acquisition of skills and knowledges that are assessed in relation to certain learning outcomes, whereas the realm of work requires the application and development of skills to deliver certain outcomes. Therefore, the realm of study can be seen to prepare students for the realm of work because the realm of study provides students with skills and knowledges that are required in the latter.

In this context, educational collaboration occurs in between these two realms and provides access to skills, knowledge and understandings that reside within each of the realms. When engaging in KE activities organised in the context of educational collaboration, students start to make sense of roles in the realm of work, make sense of requirements in the realm of work, while learning how to network, and signal potential and achievements to the realm of work. Along these lines, KE in educational collaboration is not limited to dissemination of disciplinary knowledge to those in the need of it but it also involves exchange of knowledge about professional behaviours, attitudes and skills that are relevant in the realm of work. Moreover, while these skills and behaviours can be taught in the realm of study, engagement in KE activities consolidates students’ sense making of what is possible and required in the realm of work. Thus, KE activities allow students to shift from the skill acquisition to application and sense making. However, one of the observations this paper puts forward is that KE activities in the context of educational collaboration do not confine neatly into categories based on the type of knowledge exchanged. Rather, the conceptual framework should be seen as a heuristic device to identify and communicate the purpose of diverse employer-linked activities to students, as well as to enhance educational collaboration for the benefit of students.

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