

A photograph of a wooden desk in a study or office. On the desk, there is a silver laptop with a black screen, a black adjustable desk lamp, a stack of several books, a stack of papers, and a white binder. The background is a plain white wall.

EMPLOYABILITY TRANSITION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CASE STUDY OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE UK

Dr Xiaowen Gao

Advance-HE Employability Symposium

Outline

A person is sitting at a desk, writing in a spiral notebook. A laptop is open in front of them. To the left, there is a white mug on a saucer. The background is slightly blurred, showing a window and some office equipment. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent grey filter.

- Background
- Literature review
- Approach
- Outcomes

Background

- Increasing importance of employability development at universities
 - In discipline modules: course design, teaching pedagogy
 - Stand-alone modules: Such as PPD1-3
- Student perceptions of employability
 - What is their understanding of employability?
 - What skills did they learn?
- Chinese international students
 - Increase 30% in the UK in 2019 and one in three non-EU students is from China
 - What are their perceptions of employability that we have been offering to them?
 - Has UK experience made positive impact on their employability?

Literature Review

- Concept of employability
 - Four key skills have been recommended to be developed at higher level within all subjects, namely communication, numeracy, use of information technology and learning how to learn (NCIHE, 1997).
 - Holmes (2011) proposes three competing perspectives on employability, namely possession, position and process.
- Adopted definition
 - “A set of achievements-skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Yorke 2003, p.5)”
- Prior research
 - Huang, Tuner and Chen (2014)

Approach

- A qualitative approach
 - Phase one: develop interview questions
 - Phase two: interview with refined questions
 - Phase three: interpret results
- Sample

**Postgraduate
UK-based
Group**

**Graduated from UK 07/2020
Graduated from CN 07/2018**

**Undergraduate
UK-based
Year 3 Group**

**Graduated from UK 07/2020
Graduated from CN 07/2019**

**Undergraduate
China-based
Year 3 Group**

**Incoming DE students 09/2020
Graduated from CN 07/2020**

Interview Questions

- What's your understanding of employability?
- What skills have you learnt from the discipline modules?
- What skills have you learnt from the employability module?
- Do you have experience of the careers service at university?
- Do you have any internship experience?

Outcomes

	PG UK-based	UG UK-based	UG-CN-based
Understanding of employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject knowledge • Having a Clear career strategy and work hard towards plan • Adaptation skills • Standing out from peers • Communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject knowledge • Relationship skills • Technical skills (Excel) • Language skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject knowledge • Relationship skills • Vocational qualification
Skills learnt from discipline modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of accounting • Knowledge of stock market • (Communication skills) • (Teamwork) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching data • Critical thinking • (Communication skills) • (Teamwork) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using accounting software
Skills learnt from employability module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic writing skills • Words, Excel • Writing CV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic writing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 1: a 4000- word report • Year 2: a PPT
Experience of Career Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Internship experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes

Key Points

- PG-UK students are more aware of employability skills and life-long career development and are more pro-active in developing employability skills.
- UG-UK and UG-CN groups, the students show a lack of interest in career-related activities
- UG-UK are aware of communication skills, teamwork skills. Critical thinking skills and technological skills from subject learning. Academic writing skills from stand alone employability module
- Future enhancement
 - Using credit bearing module to develop employability
 - Help to overcome language barrier to encourage full participation



Thank You

