Employability for Professional Practice through Research

The Partnership for Innovative Practitioner Engagement in Research (PIPER)

Maeve O’Loughlin
Department of Natural Sciences
Overview of Session

• Introduction to the PIPER Initiative
• Initiative development and initial engagement
• Annual PIPER process
• The outcome for students
• The role of the professional body – Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
• The employer experience – The Royal Opera House

Maeve O’Loughlin
MDX

Anne Isaacs
IOSH LMB

Dominique Perrissin-Fabert
ROH
What is PIPER?

- Partnership between IOSH London Branch and Middlesex University with University of Greenwich
- It aims to support student employability and bringing solutions to employer challenges in Occupational Safety, health and environmental management (OHSE) practice.
- Issues embedded to research plans for MSc students for their dissertations while supporting workplace experiences
- Academically supported with employer coordination and communication to support successful outcomes
The movie version of our story....
The Purpose of PIPER

• Engage student researchers in real life issues for employability
• Forge better links between universities and employers through generating social value
• Build a critical evidence base
• To support the OHS profession cost effectively

Would you like free, detailed and independent support to deal with OHS issues relevant to you?!

I have issues and concerns about OHS in my workplace and profession that I’d like to have investigated
I’m time and resource constrained to fully evaluate OHS issues that impact my industry

If you have similar issues that you would like research to address, come tell us!

Thursday September 18th
18.30pm – 20.30pm
The King’s Fund,
Cavendish Square, W1G 0AN

Come help define the research strategy for 2014 – 2015 relevant to you or email piper@ioshnetworks.co.uk
Challenges in OHS practice today

Social Response → Political Response → Legal Response

People
Control v Enable

Action
Constraints v Resilience

Approach
Bureaucratic v engagement

Orientation
Top down v Bottom up

Risk Perception
Averse v Accepting

Indicators of Success
Lagging v Leading

Management
Liability v work improvement

Consequences
Predicted v unintended

Social Response
Political Response
Legal Response
Initial Engagement Process

Increase value of academia to practice (Watson, 2007; Alter, 2005)

Willing Students

Increase reach and support of new practitioners

Wanting members

MARCH 2014
Initial discussion – value propositions and drivers for collaboration

APRIL 2014
Partnership Strategy – aims, objectives, commitments and process

May 2014
IOSH Corporate Approval

June to Sept 2014
IOSH Engagement and communications with Employers

December 2014
PIPER Employer & Student Project Workshop
Student – Employer Workshops

Orient employers towards existing challenges and the value of OHS research.

Transparency and clarity with employers on process and timelines

Structured workshop facilitated – Speed-networking/Speed-scoping

Sharing contacts encouraged and interest to projects detailed
Running PIPER

IOSH London Branch Webpage - News and Updates

Communications at monthly events, by email and online

Annual Competition for Best Project - Seminar Event and Prizes

Student/Employer Workshops - Tutor Attendance and Support
Initiative Successes

- Flexibility of research design has been of value to employers
  - Insight from in-depth employee opinions
  - Quantitative evaluation of shift data to support fatigue management
  - Action research to improve practices.

- Student Employability with 14 out of 30 students responding in evaluation exercises
  - Reported a positive overall experience (all)
  - Greater understanding of how the industry/sector operated (all)
  - Self-confidence/efficacy in entering the workforce (all)
  - 5 students linked getting their graduate role to engaging with PIPER projects voluntarily.

Some pitfalls too...!
Some unexpected positive results

Successful Crowdfund Campaign

Graduate employment funded as research assistant 2017

Nomination for Most Influential in OHS 2017

Published practitioner articles

MSc candidates up 100%

2012 – 2015 ~25 students
2015 – 2017 ~50 students
Key learning

• Shared values, engagement, passion, clarity and transparency between all coordinating parties
• Importance of a pilot phase
• Good project management with defined roles and coordination
• Lead-times for employer communications using multiple forums
• Early clarification of project scope, aims and objectives
• The criticality of ongoing communication with employers by academic supervisors – scoping, proposals, progress, completion
• Employer code of conduct
• Escalation procedures
Who we are, why be involved and what it has brought

Anne Isaacs
Introduction to IOSH

Aims of IOSH

• To promote ways to improve occupational health and safety
• To help IOSH members and the public exchange information and ideas
• To maintain and improve the professional status of IOSH members and people involved in improving health and safety at work

Structure of IOSH

Nominations Committee

Board of Trustees

Council

Research Committee
Networks Committee
Professional Ethics Committee
Chief Executive and EDT
Risk Management and Audit Committee
Professional Standards Committee
Remuneration Committee

Branches Groups International

Member Advisory Panels Working Parties as needed

Commercial Division
Finance Department
Membership Division
Policy Division
Governance Department
Information Systems Department
Marketing Department
HR Department
Facilities Department

Member Advisory Panels Working Parties as needed

Where we fit at the London Metropolitan Branch!
Role of The Branches

Caribbean Branch

Edinburgh Branch

London Metropolitan Branch

Qatar Branch
Clear direction and drivers for engagement with others
Some specific drivers for us at the IOSH London Metropolitan Branch

Drivers for IOSH

Demographics of OHS profession

Value of University learning over professional training in OHS

Meaningful employer based experiences

Support new generation in their study and work

Access to up to date research evidence
Maximising our contribution

• Sponsor and facilitate annual student winner of best project – prize, presentation opportunity of results

• In 2016, evening reception and seminar inviting the annual winner and other academic research professionals to discuss contemporary topics – full house, celebration, ongoing interest for our members

• Ongoing commitment to partnering and look forward the publication of research summaries and the new academic year
The value of engagement in PIPER for the Royal Opera House

Dominique Perrissin-Fabert
Health and Safety Manager
There is a shortfall of Health & Safety professionals in the entertainment sector.

We value a fresh pair of eyes who can bring real solutions.

It boosts the morale of our own staff.
Why address employability through research?

The complexity of employability and the variety that exists in curricula in UK higher education mean that no single, ideal, prescription for the embedding of employability can be provided. Embedding has to be undertaken with reference to the curricular context. (Knight and Yorke, 2003)

…also the external professional context!

stagetexts:
- **Stage 1.** Discussion & Reflection
  - ‘Creating and defining a shared point of reference’
- **Stage 2.** Review / Mapping
  - What are we doing / not doing?
- **Stage 3.** Action
  - How do we share and enhance existing practice?
  - How do we address ‘gaps’ in provision?
- **Stage 4.** Evaluate
  - What does success look like & how is it measured?
  - How can we enhance practice further?

Diagram: Self management skills, discipline specific skills, and generic skills.
Guiding Questions for us

1. What is our curricular context and professional context of OHS?
2. What does ‘good’ employability mean in OHS Practice? How do we already do that?
3. What additional value to employability can our programmes and students provide?
4. What external stakeholders may share/align interests?
5. How can a positive employability opportunity be ensured?
6. How will students be engaged with employability in the process?
7. How will we measure success?

Now… workshop questions to guide you. Groups of 4 or 5
References