

Title: **Environmental Change: evaluating the impact of alternative teaching and learning spaces for staff and students**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- 1) Discuss the impact of Realistic Work Environments for teaching and learning
- 2) Identify ways in which the creative ethos of the Realistic Work Environment might be transferable to their own setting
- 3) Suggest ways of expanding the RWE space into more subject-specific teaching

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

According to Knight and Yorke (2004, p.20) the employability agenda within HE has been perceived as posing a series of challenges to traditional academic values; staff who embrace these challenges encounter a number of new approaches to teaching and learning, facilitating the development of new skills not only for their students but also within their own pedagogic practice. This paper proceeds from an evaluation of the unique teaching spaces provided by Realistic Work Environments (RWEs) within the Centre for Employability and the Humanities at the University of Central Lancashire. The aim of the evaluation was to assess the effect that such spaces have on both the learning experience of students and the teaching experience of staff. Following Knight and Yorke it is clear that engaging in such an employability-driven enterprise will have a significant impact upon academic practice: one of the key aims of both the evaluation and this paper is to interrogate the confluence of teaching and learning that necessarily occurs when a teacher must learn to inhabit a new teaching space whilst simultaneously engaging in the practice of teaching new material. Reflection and creativity are central tenets of twenty-first century pedagogy (Ashcroft and James, 1999); according to the DfEE 'the information and knowledge-based revolution of the twenty-first century will be built on...investment in the intellect and creativity of people' (1998, p.9). It therefore becomes vital to assess not only the way in which RWE spaces challenge/change the learning experience of students engaged in RWE modules but also whether such a revolution in practice can become integral to academic practice at large. Is it even appropriate to envisage such a change? This paper summarises the findings of the evaluation and introduces a new understanding of the RWE as a concept that informs a new ethos of teaching and learning, extending to open discussion the key issues that these findings raise for the future of teaching and learning in HE.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

20 minute introductory talk discussing the ways in which the RWE spaces are used and presenting the findings of the RWE evaluation. This will be followed by two key discussion questions: 1) Are there any

ways in which the RWE concept might be transferable to your own setting? 2) What do you envisage the impact of the RWE ethos to be for your own setting?

Each question will be followed by five minutes of small group discussion and a ten minute plenary

References

Ashcroft, K. and James, D. eds., 1999. *The Creative Professional*. London: Falmer.

DfEE, 1998. *The Learning Age - A Renaissance for a New Britain*. London: The Stationary Office, Cm3790.

Knight, P. and Yorke, M., 2004. *Learning, Curriculum and Employability in Higher Education*. London: Routledge Falmer.