Alice Diver *Editor*

Employability via Higher Education: Sustainability as Scholarship

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Foreword

I say that a cultivated intellect, because it is a good in itself, brings with it a power and a grace to every work and occupation which it undertakes, and enables us to be more useful, and to a greater number. There is a duty we owe to human society as such, to the state to which we belong, to the sphere in which we move, to the individuals towards whom we are variously related, and whom we successively encounter in life; and that philosophical or liberal education, as I have called it, which is the proper function of a University, if it refuses the foremost place to professional interests, does but postpone them to the formation of the citizen, and, while it subserves the larger interests of philanthropy, prepares also for the successful prosecution of those merely personal objects, which at first sight it seems to disparage.

Thus, John Henry Newman in *The Idea of a University*—a text which, for all its canonical status, might, when read in the context of twenty-first-century academia, appear rather old-fashioned in its defence of a generalist model of liberal education, 'aim[ed] at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life'. Some of us might indeed feel a sense of nostalgia for the kind of Newman-inspired academia, in which defiant Philosophy lecturers were prepared, when asked during a course validation exercise to state the aims and objectives of their course, to respond that they wanted to make their students better people. Noble as that ambition was, it would have been, however, rather difficult to translate into the language of key performance indicators as well as student satisfaction, retention, and employability statistics.

And yet, as the essays collected in *Employable Scholars: In Times of Austerity* demonstrate, there is perhaps rather more to the modern university and its profound concern with student employability than first meets the eye. The old distinction between vocational and non-vocational courses does, of course, continue to impact on our perception of the subjects we teach, not least in that it plays a decisive role in determining performance benchmarks for different specialist areas—but it is not as

absolute as it used to be: these days, employability is as much of a factor in History and Classics as it is, albeit in a different way, in Computing or Nursing. Most importantly, it is not about training for a particular profession—it is about developing a mindset, about helping students to grow as flexible and independent individuals who would be able to embrace the challenges of a world in which the concepts of a single career and stable employment are increasingly seen as belonging in the past, and in which what counts is not so much the content of what they have studied—which in some areas is likely to become out of date almost by the time they leave university—but the skills they have acquired and their ability to continue to learn and develop as they move between different environments, different occupations, indeed different countries. In other words, it is what graduates are, rather than what they know and/or what they have trained as, that we need to focus on—and the diverse insights this volume offers, whether contextualising the issue, or outlining a range of innovative strategies to address it, or indeed analysing a selection of subject-specific approaches, share exactly that very objective. And that objective is not miles away from what Newman postulated …

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Alice Diver (Ph.D.) is Senior Lecturer in Law at Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK, having previously worked at Edge Hill University and Ulster University in Northern Ireland. She spent several years as a solicitor in private practice before joining academia in 1993. Her teaching experience includes property law, child and family law, and human rights law. Her research interests focus mainly on adoption, law in literature, and human rights. She is the author of a monograph on closed birth records in law and policy called '*A Law of Blood-ties: The "right" to access genetic ancestry'* (Springer, 2013) and co-editor of an essay collection entitled '*Justiciability of Human Rights Law in Domestic Jurisdictions*' (Springer, 2015). She has published in a wide variety of peer-reviewed academic journals. She is a long-serving board member of Apex Housing NI and a trustee of Kinship Care NI.

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Part I
Definitions

Chapter 1
Introduction

Alice Diver

> Universities are an integral part of the skills and innovation supply chain to business. However, this supply chain is not a simple linear supplier purchaser transaction; it is not the acquisition of a single product or service. This supply chain is multi-dimensional, it has to be sustainable, and it has to have quality, strength and resilience. (Wilson, 2012: 2)

1.1 Introduction: Employability via Higher Education: A Sustainable Scholarship?

This edited collection is the result of a call for chapters made in early 2017,[1] which sought to collect, collate, and connect research across a wide variety of disciplines and jurisdictions, on the topic of graduate employability in times of austerity.[2] The contributing authors have all worked in Higher Education (HE) as, for example,

[1]I am very grateful to all of the authors for their time and efforts in contributing to this book: their deep commitment to their students, to their respective universities, and to the aims of Higher Education, is abundantly clear. Many thanks are also due to Astrid Noordemeer and Yoka Janssen of Springer, for their patience and support throughout the duration of this project. I am very indebted also to Professor Jan Jedrzejewski (English and Comparative Literature) of the School of Arts & Humanities, Ulster University, for his kindness in agreeing to pen the Foreword to this edited collection.

[2]On austerity measures within the UK generally see https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015 (accessed 17.09.18); https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/North%20West%20Final%20Report_2.pdf; https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/01/austerity-cuts-2015-12-billion-britain-protest; and http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/north-of-england-northern-powerhouse-george-osborne-cultural-wasteland-museums-are-hit-by-austerity-a6926321.html (accessed 18.10.18).

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academics, support staff and researchers, and all share a deep concern over the various issues discussed within the text, not least the changing role of the university. The need to promote economic and social development (McDonald & Van der Horst, 2007) whilst advancing knowledge via research and teaching (Brennan, Durazzi, & Sene, 2013) are key policy aspects of HE. The chapters collectively highlight how certain external factors have served to influence HE policy and practice locally and globally in recent years, namely via the following: increasing consumerisation, dwindling resources, occasionally hostile media scrutiny, rising levels of student anxiety, attrition rates, and the overarching need to convince employers of the 'work-readiness' (Allen, Quinn, Hollingworth, & Rose, 2013) of HE graduates. And yet, it is the positive contribution that HE can make to wider society generally that clearly underscores the arguments of these collected chapters.

The book is aimed at anyone with an interest in HE learning and teaching, or in graduate employability. It looks also at wider issues of social justice, and at the role and remit of the university. Rather than approaching the work chronologically, the reader may prefer to dip in and out of the various contributions, perhaps by theme (e.g. the challenges associated with defining or achieving learning gain, quality, student engagement, motivation, emotional resilience, learner identity, etc.), or by academic discipline. They may wish to start with the various practical suggestions aimed at HE practitioners or policy-makers e.g. on innovations to assessments, distance learning, CV-building, or the use of social media to foster connections across jurisdictions, professions and industries. The contributors share a common purpose: to pool our resources and ideas, in a bid to find practicable ways of better supporting our students in their achievement of employable 'graduate-ness,' and other 'learning gains.'[3]

Our students should also be or become 'critical thinkers' (Nussbaum, 1997) so that they might act as 'future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large …to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy…' (Gurpur & Rautdesai, 2014). There is a parallel need for HE managers and policymakers to similarly 'focus upon the notion of the greater, common good,' to try and engender a more socially conscious 'new breed of faculty' (Muff, Dyllick, Drewell, North, Shrivastava, & Haertle, 2013). As Muvingi (2009: 163) further observed, often, certain entrenched 'cycles of poverty can only be broken through structural reforms' especially during prolonged periods of economic austerity.[4] That there is therefore a need for greater 'sustainability' (*Agenda 2030*[5]) within HE is also evident throughout this collection, especially given the backdrop of increasing marketization (Molesworth, Scullion, & Nixon, 2010; Bunce, Baird, & Jones, 2017).

[3]On the notion of 'learning gain' see further http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/lg (accessed 12.09.18).

[4]See further Cooper and Whyte (2017) on austerity; and Wolf (2002) and Goddard (2009) on the notion of upward social mobility. See also however the argument and observations of McKenzie (2015) on how within disadvantaged communities 'strong, resourceful, ambitious people…are 'getting by' often with humour and despite facing brutal austerity.'

[5]Goal 4 (2016–2030) is to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.' See further, Palmer (2015) Introduction: The 2030 Agenda, *Journal of Global Ethics*, 11:3, 262–269.

The authors are fairly diverse in terms of geography (e.g. the UK, the U.S., Australia, South Africa, and South America) and disciplines but the various barriers to student success identified and discussed here (in addition to those caused or aggravated by ongoing austerity and political instabilities) are often generic and perennial in nature. Students increasingly indicate a number of issues, including low self-confidence, poor motivation, limited emotional resilience, and an inability or reluctance to engage fully with the HE curriculum or with the activities offered. A lack of opportunity to avail of work-relevant experiences is also frequently highlighted. The authors identify certain gaps in practice and policy, tentatively signposting some new (and perhaps at times more traditional) approaches to HE learning and teaching that might offer innovative pathways around or through some of the obstacles to academic success. Clearly, it is now no longer enough to produce graduates who might be described simply as 'ideal employees.' Universities are tasked with ensuring that students are fit to cope with a multitude of challenges. The embedding and enhancing of a wide range of practical key skills and intellectual competencies must be seen to be occurring right from the initial induction-level stages of the university 'journey' so that '…whole person models of experiential learning' might embed employability as an 'integrative, reflective and transitional' set of skills and attributes (Eden, 2014: 266).

That said, there is no simple answer to the questions surrounding the sometimes-nebulous notions of 'graduate-ness' and 'work-readiness.' The demands of differing professions and industries can vary profoundly, as do degree-pathways and curricula: students themselves represent a wider range of the population than ever before in terms of background, mind-set, expectations, and innate abilities. As Cable and Willets (2012) argued however:

> A degree remains a good investment in the long term and is one of the best pathways to achieving a good job and a rewarding career. Demand for more highly skilled employees continues to increase, with forecasts suggesting that half of the jobs that will become vacant this decade will be graduate ones. We must continue to encourage people to enter Higher Education, but we must also ensure that our students emerge from university with the right skills. (Cable & Willets, 2012, p. 18)

The duty to promote or enhance motivation and resilience (Pryce-Jones, 2014) amongst university learners and graduates is a further common feature. Put bluntly, to issue degree parchments (or 'guarantees' of career success) simply on the basis of fees paid, time spent, or the fear of litigation by aggrieved learners, is to devalue the achievements of those graduates who do engage successfully with the learning process, by attending classes, meeting deadlines, overcoming disappointments and setbacks, avoiding plagiarism, and managing anxieties.[6] Saying so does not diminish the seriousness of the often quite profound challenges that many of our students will face during (if not also before and after) their degree studies. Anyone working in

[6]See further Kamvounias and Varnham (2006), Cummings (2017), Swenson (1995), Palfreyman (2010). See also *Siddiqui v The Chancellor, Masters & Scholars of the University of Oxford* [2018] EWHC 184 (QB) for an interesting, if alarming, case on the 'contractual' nature of HE outcomes (examined in more detail in the Conclusion chapter).

HE will be aware of the fundamental importance, and clear value, of having in place robust student support systems, including comprehensive pastoral care, supervised peer assistance, disability/inclusion services, and welfare and wellbeing initiatives: we will also have seen how funding cuts have impacted adversely upon the student experience in recent years.[7] As tutors and employability facilitators we must remain mindful also of how people with similar levels of educational attainment can still possess significantly differing abilities, skills, and levels of knowledge (Allen & De Vries, 2004).[8]

The stresses of heavy workloads and tight deadlines have long been associated with university learning. The basic qualities of the highly employable worker can similarly include punctuality, reliability, diligence, politeness, common sense, respect for others, honesty, and the ability to think independently and behave ethically, whilst following instructions and completing set tasks: all of these can be framed as important components or aspects of a successful, fully engaged student journey. A generic notion of employability, if one exists, may perhaps then be most usefully defined in necessarily vague terms as the ability to 'perform the roles and tasks required by one's job to the expected standard'(Eraut & du Boulay, 2002). And yet, employers increasingly need more than traditional 'CV'-based displays of academic ability (Newcombe & Moutafi, 2009). Post-graduation, there is now an added expectation that graduates will quickly secure prestigious (or at least decently paid) jobs, and undertake an 'upwardly mobile' career pathway which will empower them and reflect their academic achievements. The evidencing of high levels of employability should, by implication, also showcase an underpinning 'teaching excellence' on the part of those who have supported students on their journey towards career success.

The difficulties of fitting essential employability skills into (or onto) HE curricula are therefore particularly relevant, in terms of designing and delivering workable learning and teaching activity templates, and addressing some thorny issues:

> While there is clearly a need to educate students on the theoretical aspects of their intended profession, classroom bound delivery limits the integration of theory and practice; a key element of developing work-readiness skills. (Ferns & Moore, 2012, p. 208)

Ascertaining what it is that employers expect or hope to see (or, perhaps more accurately, what they do *not* want to find) in graduate recruits is key, as is gauging how best to enable and/or enhance industrial or professional skills for these nascent employees. 'Bringing workplaces in' to a university setting is a common aim, often met via, for example, work-relevant simulations, peer/alumni networking or mentoring, short or longer-term work placements, formal or informal internships, and the (generally much-dreaded) group-working. Assessments are at the heart of this however (Fry, Ketteridge, & Marshall, 2009) not least in terms of having students face and survive the 'right level of challenge' (Eraut, 2007: 418). Tied to this also is the

[7] See further https://studentsunionucl.org/sites/uclu.org/files/u84290/documents/dsa_cuts_briefing1.pdf (accessed 10.02.19).

[8] Matching 'the supply of graduates with available jobs' is difficult (The Economist, 2015); in 2015 the proportion of unfilled vacancies for the average employer within the UK was however in the region of 5.4% (AGR, 2015).

ability to cope with disappointments, process and learn from tutor or peer feedback, and then engage in ongoing critical reflection e.g. upon why a particular career or learning pathway might have been chosen (Jones & Higson, 2012) or indeed altered, in favour of other options.

A dialogic, diagnostic approach to the notion of 'work-readiness' requires universities to acknowledge and address any skills deficits that might exist before, during or after 'the student journey.' The ability, for example, to cope with setbacks (which is seldom if ever set out as integral to surviving or thriving in HE) is perhaps one of the most significant attributes needed to attain the status of a successful, 'work-ready' graduate, who is able to crafting a professional or industrial identity. Self-sufficiency, gained via the tradition of *reading* for a university degree, places at least some of the onus for achievement squarely upon the shoulders of our students. Their 'investments' (i.e. material and emotional) in the processes of HE can be framed as symbiotic exchanges of effort, and ownership of one's results. This surely offers a fairer image of the 'consumer' student, who seeks to actively devour knowledge and opportunities rather than passively expecting guarantees of excellent results and 'refunds' when these are not obtained. In other words, if degree parchments were to be regarded perhaps as the 'title deeds' of learning (evidencing successfully negotiated learning landscapes, and the gaining of career-valuable core skills) then these would be more easily viewed as well deserved, hard-earned badges of honour. They are, and ought to be, indicative of substantial and significant personal growth, struggle, determination and exertion on the part of the mentally resilient, emotionally intelligent learner.

Clearly, no single blue-print or set template for achieving or evidencing enhanced employability exists, especially given the very differing demands of the various professions and industries that universities must cater for in attempting to predict workplace challenges and future job market trends. As academics, we are essentially united however in the need for fresh approaches to the issue of the perceived 'skills-deficit' of graduates and students. Together we should seek to spark further debate on the difficulties that tend to flow from the need to evidence enhanced graduate 'employability' during increasingly challenging times.[9] As such, the reader should be encouraged to question some of the current thinking within HE, and to find herein a useful selection of commentaries, research findings, and innovative practices, aimed at making our students' pathways a little bit easier.

The collection is divided into three sections of roughly equal size, based upon their content (with apologies for over-alliteration):

i. *Definitions—Key concepts and discourses within HE*

[9]Certain important aspects of HE learning and teaching (which can have a direct bearing on employability and academic success) have not been included in this collection e.g. issues arising from student plagiarism or malpractice, grade inflation, classroom or work placement behaviours, and online etiquette. The growing importance of strong and consistent pastoral care support (which, for example, can cover everything from studies advice and basic well-being tips, to acute issues of poverty, debt, unsafe housing, mental or physical ill-health, unmet disability needs, or sexual assault) should not be underestimated. The potential, indeed highly likely, impacts of such crises upon student engagement, exam success, and perhaps their eventual employability, will be obvious to anyone who has ever been tasked with attempting to improve things for their students.

ii. *Data, Designs and Difficulties*
iii. *Disciplines and Delivery*

Together, these set out and examine some of the fundamental core concepts and theories, to define and discuss those that have tended to increasingly underpin HE policy, practice, and decision-making, both within and beyond the United Kingdom. Throughout, the authors ask difficult questions about the nature and purpose of employability via HE, and examine the socio-cultural role(s) of university learning.

1.2 Section I: Definitions—Key Concepts and Discourses Within HE

Academics and support professionals tasked with enhancing—or perhaps simply engendering—often quite elusive 'employability skills,' will recognise the issues raised within these 10 critical essays. They look at such central concepts as Learning Gain, Academic Quality, Resilience, Learner Identity, Motivation, and Emotional Intelligence: at times there is a clear sense of near-exasperation on the part of some of the authors. Improving outcomes for students, nurturing their latent skills, reducing attrition rates, effecting meaningful pastoral care, encouraging contributions to civil society, and offering 'added value' within set degree programmes, is tiring work that often requires significant curricular change, and/or extra-mural effort from staff and students. And yet there is a shared, strong belief here in the social value of education, and our duty-led need to support those learners who are keen to engage with the challenges of academia and overcome barriers that might prevent them from doing so (i.e. economic disadvantage, disabilities, anxiety, or a lack of wider social supports). Common issues of concern amongst the authors in this first section are as follows: apparent student apathy (which may well mask other, more profound troubles) and fears over the political and economic uncertainties facing this—and indeed possibly also the next-generation of university graduates. This section contains however a positive note, highlighting the various positive changes and successes of recent years: significantly widened access and equity, increased academic willingness to innovate, more holistic forms of pastoral care, enhanced student (and staff) resilience, and greater public awareness of the wider benefits of engaging with HE.

It opens with (Chap. 2) the work of Evans (Swansea), Fox, and Taylor (Cardiff) which raises important questions about the very nature and purpose of HE, in terms of asking what contributions universities can or should make to civil society. HE may be harshly critiqued (e.g. as poor value for money or a waste of time) or framed as an essential aspect of national economic development (Universities UK, 2014). There are links clearly between what universities are 'good at' (e.g. research and teaching) and what they are 'good for,' in terms of making significant societal contributions on local, national or global scales (Goddard, 2009; Goddard & Kempton, 2016). Active participation in civil society by graduates (for example via membership of organisations, clubs and societies in later life) is often highly beneficial both for them

and for the wider community, underpinning democratic frameworks (Putnam, 2000). The next chapter examines 'Learning Gain' in terms of accurately measuring it. Gossman and Powell (Manchester Metropolitan, Worcester) highlight how the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education ('QAA') has noted an '…increasing tendency to see HE as a product with a price tag…' and the consequent 'growing interest in the extent to which academic programmes of study promote students' employability and earning power.' (QAA, 2013, para. 1) Defining learning gain requires more than a basic agreement on how best to measure it however (Boud, 2018): it is important to examine the motivations behind the need to both quantify and attribute credit (or causation) to the changes wrought in students as a result of having undergone university learning experiences. If we measure it in one particular way, this clearly also says something about the type(s) of learning that we most value and what sort of gain(s) might well exist within these. Chapter 4 looks to the notion of Quality and offers some critical reflections on its impacts upon academic practice (Chris Lawton, Edge Hill). The need to attain and maintain 'quality' standards (in respect of teaching, research, and the overall student experience) has been met with resistance by some academics. An alternative view, from both sides of the 'divide,' suggests that educators need not resign themselves to viewing the need for 'quality' as a bureaucratic exercise in fearful compliance (with perhaps unpalatable political and/or managerial agendas). Rather, well-designed quality processes used appropriately, as reflective tools for developing academic (best) practice frees staff and students to engage in effective ways of working.

The next three Chapters (5, 6 and 7, respectively) examine 'the student journey,' looking especially at what motivates learners, and at the psychological aspects of committing to HE (e.g. psychological resilience, emotional intelligence, learner identity). Clements (Bedfordshire) argues that some students simply seem to decide to avoid engagement with employability skills at an early stage in their studies and will not seek out our support. Gaps in the literature exist: clear job-searching strategies, and greater awareness of relevant environmental conditions within certain job markets, are essential, from an early stage of the student journey, to build and maintain motivation (Tansley et al., 2007). Dacre Pool, Gurbutt and Houston (UCLAN) similarly note how the 'consumerisation' of HE has altered the student-university relationship in many ways. Emotional intelligence has links to resilience: practical ideas presented here include the use of inter-disciplinary activities, aimed at developing emotional competencies (Pertegal-Felices, 2017). Irving-Bell (Edge Hill) similarly argues the significance of learner identity (especially as this might arise from or be affected by one's previous learning histories), noting how the influences of neoliberalism—and the vagaries of a harsh market economy—can at times challenge the very value, nature, and purposes of university education. A failure to effectively manage certain experience-related beliefs can lead to the imposition of barriers by students: these can significantly hinder their learning and personal development, not least in terms of identity-forming (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), academic success, and the cultivation of employability skills.

Some of these self-imposed barriers to success are examined in the next two chapters (8 and 9). O'Brien and Walker Martin (UCLAN) grasp a difficult nettle to some

extent, highlighting how non-engagement by some students is an issue of serious concern for the academics and employability support staff seeking to improve learners' career outcomes post-graduation. Extra-curricular activities aimed at enhancing employability skills seem to be particularly problematic: low levels of student engagement may be down to an endemic apathy, innate non-resilience, or lack of emotional maturity. Addressing the notion that a troubled 'snowflake generation' (Kehoe, 2018) perhaps now exists, they argue that a robust system of peer-mentoring and clear linkage of assessments to essential learning elements offer possible strategies for combatting the twin problems of student non-attendance and high attrition rates. Exasperation on the part of HE staff is also evident within other jurisdictions. Cusciano, Laruccia, and Moraes (Fundação Getulio, Vargas) discuss student motivation and high drop-out rates in Brazil, analysing the often-complex relationship between labour markets, academic performance, student satisfaction, and learner disengagement. Expectations of upward social mobility (defined here as the gaining of better living conditions, and the accumulation of professional achievements) are held by most, if not all, students entering university in Brazil: this does not however guarantee that such initially high levels of motivation will be sustained throughout their course, or that students will complete their studies. As is the case elsewhere, fuller discussion and further debate is needed, both within and beyond Universities themselves, to better understand the nuanced relationships between academic success and subsequent professional performance, and to consider the fluctuating conditions within job markets, both global and local.

The section closes with two chapters (10 and 11) which look to the need to promote student resilience. Ryan, Jones, Hayes and Turner (RMIT, Australia) argue that although resilience theory has its roots in studies of individual mental dysfunction, it has since evolved to look beyond the individual, and to recognise the wider-ranging impacts of social and environmental influences. An increasingly diverse student cohort has seen universities transform from an elite-bound system to one of mass HE (Moir, 2010). Significantly, there are two pivotal transition points in a student's life: entry into university, and departure from it, to enter the workplace (Turner, Holdsworth, & Scott-Young, 2017a). The inter-relationships between leaving and entering university matter greatly in terms of promoting employability. As King, Newman, and Luthands (2016) argued, there have been four waves of development within resilience theory. The first focused on those factors and characteristics that might enable individuals to overcome adversity through increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, and optimism. A second wave framed certain factors as contributors to resilience, whilst the third argued for interventions aimed at building greater resilience. The final wave highlights genetic, neurological, and developmental factors. Although resilience is acknowledged generally as being a complex construct (and thus quite difficult to assess accurately) universities are becoming increasingly cognizant of its importance and are generally investing in research and services aimed at promoting it.

Adopting a strengths-based approach to the question of employable scholars, O'Shea and Delahunty (Wollongong, Australia) similarly argue that universities throughout the world are increasingly 'opening wide' their doors to highly diverse

student cohorts. Students who are the first in their families to attend university have been viewed as requiring much institutional support so that they might be 'filled–up' with the particular skills needed to succeed. Such an approach suggests however that the knowledge derived from lived experiences is somehow at odds with the achievement of significant successes both at university and afterwards. An alternative, strengths-based perspective highlights the capabilities and social capital that such 'first generation' learners often bring with them, to counter such assumed deficit-framing. By exploring their strengths, skills, knowledge and work ethic, it is possible to look beyond the perception that some learners are automatically lacking in resilience or maturity. The underpinning support of family and friends is also highlighted here as an essential aspect of a successful student journey.

1.3 Section Two: Data, Design and Difficulties

The mid-section of the book comprises of 11 chapters (12–23), which include empirical studies and outlines of practical suggestions and innovations, aimed at enhancing 'employability' against a turbulent backdrop of austerity measures and political upheaval. Contributors offer glimpses of what has worked well within their own HE institutions to foster greater levels of 'work-readiness' and to raise student awareness of the need for enhanced professionalism. A common argument is that there is an urgent need for all involved to work together to create and maintain student-relevant academic and industrial/professional communities of practice, which engender meaningful ties to the wider 'world of work.' This may occur through work-based learning activities, internships, the involvement (e.g. curricular or extra mural) of employers and alumni, or via authentic, relevant simulations that seek to mirror the challenges of various workplaces to overcome social anxieties and gain relevant expertise. Assessments clearly matter too, not least in terms of their authenticity, and in their ability to appropriately challenge students to become (or remain) forward-looking and to take ownership of future plans and career opportunities. Perhaps the most significant message however is that there is a clear need (on the part of students and staff) to not only forge and maintain genuine connectedness with one's peers, but to also professionally network with persons yet-unknown, beyond their own circles. Technology has perhaps been to some extent neglected in this (Hargie, 2016). Helping students master the 'new' technologies is therefore important, in terms of improving online and distance learning skills, and gaining greater fluency in those internet resources which can enable the establishment of links across and beyond our own disciplines.

The first chapter in this section (Chap. 12) is multi-disciplinary (Business and Management, Media Studies, Pharmacy and Modern Foreign Languages) and multi-institutional (Northumbria, Bournemouth and Surrey, respectively). Mullen, Bridges, Eccles and Dippold focus on potential precursors to employability, by examining how first year undergraduate students plan and strategize to become employable graduates. They argue that although increasing emphasis has been paid to the university-

workplace transition (as a means of evidencing the 'employability' of recent graduates), the first year at university is also a critical transition point (Murtagh, Ridley, Frings, & Kerr-Pertic, 2017; Coertjens, Brahm, Trautwein, and Lindblom-Ylanne 2017). Priorities for students during this time include making the necessary adjustments to life at university and developing positive friendships: it is important however for students to also find time to consider their future careers. The academic, social/personal and professional capital which students bring with them on entry to university clearly influences their subsequent, strategic decisions. The data from this study offers usefully detailed insights into the way in which 'freshers' typically plan (or fail to plan) for post-graduation employment. Holmes's (2001, 2015) graduate identity framework is utilised here to offer analysis of these case studies.

Chapter 13 (Bostock, Edge Hill) argues for a triadic approach to engagement, highlighting how students, staff and employers must be involved in the various processes, especially given the growing concerns over the UK's TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) metrics and the revised NSS (National Student Survey). Even where students might already be vocationally or professionally focused upon achieving academic and career success (with resilience and fitness to train perhaps already evident) desirable graduate attributes and skills often differ profoundly across disciplines. Students must still locate and articulate these qualities within the specific context(s) of their own subject area. Again, any given 'student journey' will be tied to the needs and expectations of industries and professions: career nurturing at programme and subject level is therefore a necessary element. Staff development (e.g. CPD schemes and the gaining of PGCerts) serves to reinforce how discrete HE disciplines can both contain and further highly specialised knowledge, wisdom and skills. Academics and professionals are 'communities of practice' and as such must engage in developmental dialogues to both preserve and enhance HE students' learning and 'upskilling.' Tutor professionalism (here termed 'dual professionalism') requires academics to be subject specialists *and* expert teachers. Employer involvement (via curricular design, influencing individual modules or learning outcomes) offers a key means of identifying how transferable work skills might be successfully merged with academic and subject-specific, practical competencies, so that students are better supported in developing – and perceiving - their own employability levels.

The benefits of such connectivity (and the need to maintain and enhance connections made) are further argued by Gurbutt (UCLAN) in Chap. 14. Meaningful rapport and engagement with people who are not already part of our existing professional or industrial networks, is essential. The development of social confidence and collaborative skills are necessary for success within the workplace: this has traditionally been viewed as one of the consequences of HE, although whether this automatically arises via academic study, is less certain. The future is an interdisciplinary one: the HE sector needs to prepare graduates for a rapidly changing world where workplace problems are increasingly complex, and intersectional, in the sense that problem-solving, prioritization, and active networking are now crucial to career success. Social media can however serve to evidence the dissonances which exist between the need for active engagement with a large group of 'friends,' peers, or contacts, and the frequent reluctance to connect with persons or fields unknown.

An ability to collaborate and connect with others, using an appropriate degree of professionalism is such a desirable skill however that HEIs must find ways to afford students more opportunities to gain greater confidence in this, and to then evaluate their competencies—or otherwise—within this area.

As Thomson (University of the West of England) argues however (in Chap. 15), many students are fearful of what the future might hold for them. The uncertainty of the 2016 EU Referendum revealed a deeply divided society within the UK, with many people aged 18–24 years old voting overwhelmingly to 'Remain' with the European Union (Moore, 2016). For those students who had started their university education within the EU and now find themselves graduating within a country perceived as being increasingly isolationist, the question of what impacts 'Brexit' might have on their future careers is one that cannot be ignored. This small-scale qualitative research study, conducted one year after the EU Referendum result, reveals a strong desire on the part of HE students to 'create a more tolerant country' and a determination to find ways through an increasingly uncertain jobs market. The findings underscore how unforeseen political events can impact upon potential career choices, industries and professions. They confirm that a progressive shift in career guidance practice is urgently needed, to more fully acknowledge the importance of social, economic and political changes, especially where these serve as the backdrop for conversations about future career choices.

Chapter 16 offers a practical suggestion with Whitfield and Hartley (Bradford University) presenting a strategy for enhancing the student learning experience and achieving substantial learning gains (alongside other important benefits). Their call for a focus on programme-level rather than module-level assessment i.e. programme-focused assessment (PFA) draws upon related perspectives (such as recent work on the 'assessment environment') and successful alternative approaches which have been adopted elsewhere. Potential impacts and implications are also discussed here. Davidson, Snelling, Karanicolas, Crotti and Phillips (Adelaide University, Australia) similarly stress the importance of meaningful assessment, citing authenticity as the key feature, in Chap. 17. Work-integrated learning is now a fundamental aspect of many university courses: flexible, adaptable alumni are often seen as the most 'work ready' of graduates. The 'bridging' of gaps between workplace and learning environment (Yorke, 2016; Yorke, 2010) can also serve as an indicator of academic success given how HE is increasingly regulated in terms of monitoring and measuring its standards and outcomes (Bosco & Ferns, 2014). Generic skills may include meta-cognition, critical thinking, self-reflection and self-regulation, but, aligned with these skills, graduates also need discipline-specific abilities that can be transplanted to a wide range of contexts. Authentic assessment and learning therefore play a critical role: four cross-disciplinary exemplars of authentic learning and assessment approaches are analysed here (Accounting, Biology, Oral Health and Engineering), each one looking to theoretical aspects of authentic learning and assessment yet providing a practical approach to helping students transition from simulation to reality in workplace learning. Common themes and characteristics are also benchmarked against an authentic assessment framework, providing tutors with an operational approach to design, implement and evaluate their own authentic assessment tasks.

Delahunty and Harden-Thew (University of Wollongong, Australia) add a note of caution in Chap. 18 on how global trends in HE have seen increased research student enrolments but have also brought greater uncertainty over employment outcomes, encompassing both academia and industry (Jones, 2018). Related research has largely focused on the products of student work and the experience of supervision, with student voices often going unnoticed, overlooked or unobserved. Foregrounding student voices, this chapter explores the impacts of relationships on the student experience (in terms of negotiating academic culture and preparing for life, post-graduation). Findings are linked to the leitmotifs of Dr Seuss' '*Oh the places you'll go*' with its themes representing the highs, lows, uncertainties and unknowns inherent within academia and in those important relationships which sustain learners. Data was viewed through the lens of identity theory (Whannell & Whannell, 2015), using a narrative approach (Crotty, 1998) and gathered from an anonymous survey of research students and recent graduates across universities in 15 countries. The findings highlight students' rich experiences and perceptions across the postgraduate research process, especially the relationships that enabled or constrained their identity formation. Participants were diverse but there were many consistencies, particularly on how the quality of one's social interactions often impact upon a sense of belongingness.

The various interfaces between university and 'the work place' (via student internships) are the focus of the next chapter (Caddell and McIlwhan, Heriot Watt and Edinburgh Napier, Scotland, respectively). Despite offering useful opportunities for gaining work experience (and possibly securing routes to permanent jobs) internships have increased in notoriety. Where they are unpaid or vastly underpaid, a 'new elitism' arises, where often only those who can afford to work for free, or for very little, will be able to gain the experience necessary to access certain professions. As such, universities must be seen to be developing and supporting opportunities that are meaningful, fair and pedagogically informed. The Third Sector Internships Scotland programme, a national initiative, sought to offer students across all Scottish universities the opportunity to apply for paid internships, to experience working in the third sector, and receive appropriate feedback upon their applications. Multiple layers of impact should flow from effective employability initiatives, and the challenges associated with meeting the needs of diverse stakeholders.

The final three chapters (20, 21 and 22) of this section look at how innovations in technology have served in some measure to re-shape certain aspects of HE. Goldspink and Engward (Anglia Ruskin) highlight how distance-learning has blurred traditional geographic boundaries and widened remote access to universities, in addition to having a significant role in campus-based pedagogic practice. Technology provides a range of pedagogic advantages, but to maximise learning, the individual learners' experience must be considered, to steer our pedagogic assumptions, actions and aspirations. Relatively little is known about how people learn at a distance: the dynamic nature of the self is often unrecognised within course design and learning content. Learning itself can be misrepresented as linear and compartmentalised, through modular-designed courses and instrumental evaluations that mainly monitor superficial aspects of the modular experience. By better understanding what it means

to be learning at a distance via the various interfaces of technology, we can design and deliver better learning, and use technologies more effectively, irrespective of where the learner is located. This interpretive, phenomenological research project on distance learning questions what it means to learn at a distance and offers practical suggestions about maximising outcomes.

In times of austerity and economic uncertainty, many students will focus particularly—and understandably—on the end goal of securing a job but may well overlook the importance of developing their employability more generally. One way of achieving this is by considering alumni networks as an invaluable community of practice within which students can connect and engage. Mogaji (Greenwich) discusses in Chap. 21 how student engagement with *LinkedIn* may serve to significantly enhance employability, given its overt focus on forging business connections between like-minded others, not least alumni, employers and professionals. Arguably, many students do not avail of the opportunity to network online as they consider the site and the process to be too 'profession-focussed.' The chapter offers suggestions to help students and tutors make the best use of *LinkedIn,* to improve student engagement and their subsequent employability. Fowlie and Forder (Brighton) similarly argue that students must consider their pre-professional identity: making connections with alumni is essential in this regard. Moving beyond a more traditional, skills-based approach to promoting work-readiness, undergraduates' pre-professional identity formation is presented here as a means of helping students navigate and understand the work-cultures of their intended profession or industry. Focusing on pre-professional identities also encourages them to take greater responsibility for their own levels of work-readiness. This chapter presents the results of a targeted project whereby participants were introduced to the concept of pre-professional identity and shown the value of connecting with alumni within their chosen field. *LinkedIn* is framed here as a valuable tool both for career exploration and for the gaining of a greater understanding of the graduate attributes sought by employers. Participants' attitudes towards using the platform changed as a result: for some this led to highly positive outcomes such as securing work and building new professional networks.

1.4 Section Three: Disciplines and Delivery

The third section of the book 'drills down' to the level of specific subject and discipline, to set out 12 examples of 'employability' activities, and further critiques of current frameworks and policies. The authors hail from throughout the UK, the U.S., South Africa and Australia. The subject areas covered include Law, Education, English, Criminology, Business, Computing, Media, Pharmacy, Modern Foreign Languages and Fashion. As Eden (2014) has argued, there seems to be a move away from the notion that self-contained 'employability skills' might somehow be encapsulated within one learner-generic blueprint or strategy: rather, the wider 'whole person models of experiential learning…[frame] employability as integrative, reflective and transitional' (Eden, 2014: 266) allowing students a glimpse of

their 'future-fit…possible selves' (Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007). Despite the focus on largely discrete professional pathways, these chapters still serve to identify useful teaching and learning suggestions for practice that can be adapted by others to suit their own areas. These include for example the use of e-portfolios in distance learning, online activities, critical thinking, the importing of practice-based activities into under-graduate assessments, industry-relevant simulations, 'living CV' projects, and the use of charitable pop-up shops.

The first four chapters (23–26) focus on Business. Forster and Robson (Northumbria) discuss the current need to cultivate 'oven-ready' graduates, detailing how twin-track programmes can deliver specialist, discipline-based knowledge overlaid with 'employment preparedness.' Experiential learning aims here to 'squeeze a quart into a pint pot' by incorporating the academic rigour associated with subject expertise into the 'softer' practical skills and 'organisational deftness' so prized by employers and enriching for graduates. The various successes and challenges experienced (including the issue of student buy-in) are also analysed here. Lock (Lincoln) similarly sets out in Chap. 24 the challenges facing Business schools in ensuring that graduates can work well across boundaries, in terms of geography, functionality and academic disciplines. Complex skill-mixes are needed to operate within, and respond to, work place dynamics: instead of using extra-curricular activities to embed or enhance the competencies needed to get a job, employability has been centrally planted within the undergraduate curriculum. Graduates are prepared for profession-hopping and less-delineated working environments, as industries move towards more geographically dispersed teams and more varied working practices.

Brown, Charity and Robson (Northumbria) offer analysis of the 'Graduate Premium' (in Chap. 25) defining it as a balancing of the costs of any given programme against its expected benefits such as, for example, facilitated entry into, and progression within, fulfilling and well-remunerated business careers. Tutors must differentiate their own programmes from those of other institutions, not only to attract applicants, but to give their graduates a competitive advantage when out in the job market. Their literature review acknowledges the debates surrounding the use of technology, identifying pedagogical benefits and potential limitations, and makes suggestions as to how technology might be better harnessed to provide more transparent pathways towards professionalism. The benefits and challenges as experienced by modern, increasingly demanding students are also discussed here, in relation to how graduates might adapt to differing social and learning cultures after university. The next chapter describes in detail how the charitable pop-up shop can be used both to develop employability skills and contribute to civil society. Hill, Bass and Frost (Coventry, BCU) note firstly how UK austerity measures have led to an increased monitoring of university teaching and employability outcomes. Reduced public spending has also meant that fewer graduate-level jobs are available, even though employers are increasingly seeking high levels of 'work-readiness' from their graduate recruits. Here, an authentic business activity—the setting up and running of a pop-up shop—is used as a team-based, intra-curricular learning activity, linked to a modular assessment. Money is raised for a student-selected charity and learner resilience is developed through this challenging, practice-relevant scenario.

A not dissimilar approach is presented in Chap. 27, which looks to the promotion of professional development within second year computing degree programmes. Whatley (Manchester Metropolitan) outlines in detail how students (from a variety of disciplines including Computing, Computer Science, Software Engineering, Games, Forensics and Animation) undertake a unit of study called Professional Development (alongside careers-based advice and a Live Project) to prepare them for the demands of the workplace. In Chap. 28, Dibben and Morley (Southampton Solent) offer the exemplar of a 'Living CV' aimed at helping Fashion students take ownership of their own academic accomplishments, experience and learning gain(s). This mixed methods study was conducted across all three years of a fashion degree and involved students in 'before and after' questionnaires, with a presentation on their Living CV, which links to and highlights their academic learning outcomes. This offers a personalised and explicit form of coaching on 'work literacy' and provides useful preparation for job interviews, which can be integrated into different university programmes at all levels.

The next two chapters focus upon postgraduate programmes in other jurisdictions. Van Staden (University of the Free State, South Africa) presents a pilot study in Chap. 29 on the use of e-portfolios as a means of demonstrating 'graduateness'(Glover, Law, & Youngman, 2002) within distance education. The module in question relates to the curriculum for Instructional Technologies and Multimedia in Education (INTMAEU) and seeks to prepare postgraduate distance education students to take up lecturing positions in HE. Learning tasks were used, rather than assessment activities, and these provided for prompt tutor feedback to facilitate current and future learning, and to actively involve the students as self and peer assessors. Students were encouraged to use a variety of technologies and multimedia: the reflections of a top-achieving post-graduate student are particularly insightful and thus are analyzed here to demonstrate how e-portfolios may be used to evidence employability.

Bippert, Pletcher and Valadez (A&M University, Corpus Christi, Texas) similarly examine post-graduate online education and distance learning, via a socio-constructivist approach, in Chap. 30. They argue that even within an online learning environment, social interactions between students and tutors often require a blending of different teaching techniques given varying learning styles (Yoon, 2003). A socially constructed learning environment permits collaboration and opportunities for social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). As online education becomes increasingly popular, tutors are challenged however by the shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to interactions mediated by computer technology. Knowledge comes from both biological and socio-cultural language-based interactions. For online instruction to be effective then, certain principles should apply: authenticity of learning experience, social interaction, students' contributions to their own individual experiences and perspectives, and instructors having a facilitative role (Doolittle, 1999). This chapter looks to one online Masters of Reading programme which initially provided relatively few flexible teaching techniques, and fairly limited opportunities for synchronous communication between students and instructors. To improve tutor presence, and provide students with authentic applications of new learning,