Developing Employable, Emotionally Intelligent, and Resilient Graduate Citizens of the Future

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1. Introduction

The context of Higher Education (HE) has been changing rapidly in recent years, from the escalation of student fees in 2012 (which positioned students as customers as well as consumers of education), to the emphasis placed upon the wider 'student experience.' This reconfiguration of the student relationship has altered the ways in which students see universities and the ways in which universities view students: an increasingly consumerist approach to education has also led to innovations in the HE sector which are focused upon trying to determine, and subsequently measure, what constitutes a ‘good’ student experience. This included the introduction of the National Student Survey in 2005 which follows an annual cycle (HEFCE, 2017) and research into such specific areas as student contact hours (NUS, 2012). These are attempts to identify those sometimes quite elusive elements which can coalesce into a good student experience and often also indicate preparedness for graduate life beyond university. As such, a ‘good’ student experience is increasingly perceived to be an interconnected and collaborative education, which mirrors the challenges of the real world and includes opportunities for students to develop their employability, including their emotional intelligence (EI) and resilience.

The increasing inclusion of employability and enterprise curricula, in preparing students for the workplace upon graduation, also confirms the importance of ‘real world’ experience (Butcher et al, 2011). For at least a decade, the importance of including opportunities for students to develop emotional intelligence (EI) as part of their university experience has been asserted (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012). More recently, the HE community and employers have both confirmed the need to assist students in developing the resilience required for the rapidly changing, and challenging futures that they are likely to face when entering the world of work (e.g. Burns & Sinfield, 2004). Additionally, the influence of social media and the resultant change in relationships, networks and connectivity, make both EI and resilience even more relevant.

The concepts of EI and resilience are closely related. This chapter argues therefore that developing EI also supports the growth of resilience, resulting in students who are better equipped to deal with, and bounce back from, life’s unavoidable setbacks. The chapter firstly defines EI and examines the research evidence that supports its inclusion as an essential aspect of graduate employability development. It then explores the concept of resilience and explains why it is of vital importance to our students and graduates, both for their success within HE and in the years that follow. The chapter incorporates practical ideas that academic staff can utilise to support the development of these essential concepts in their students. This includes the use of interdisciplinary activities, which research has demonstrated can help students to develop their emotional competencies (Pertegal-Felices, Marcos-Jorquera, Gilar-Corbi, & Jimeno-Rorenilla, 2017). Finally, the chapter looks ahead and argues that, in a world that includes large-scale automation, artificial intelligence, and other significant changes within

both workplaces and society in general, EI and resilience will assume even greater importance for the global, graduate citizens of the future.

2. Defining Graduate Employability

Although there is no globally accepted definition of the term graduate employability, most people now recognise that it is much more than 'just teaching students how to write a CV', nor is simply about graduates 'getting a job,' or engaging in basic skills development. A distinction needs to be made between 'employment' as a graduate outcome, and the notion of 'employability,' which is a much broader concept as it relates to HE pedagogy, and to personal and career development activities. Employability is not something that a person obtains and gains for life, as they do for example with a degree qualification. Rather, it is a lifelong process:

> 'Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose, secure and retain occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful.' (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2012).

More recent debates further support the notion of employability as a process rather than as an outcome (Smith, Bell, Bennett & McAlpine, 2018). The importance of meaningful work is stressed: 'Employability is the ability to find, create and sustain meaningful work across the career lifespan.' (Bennett, 2018).

3. The *CareerEDGE* Model of Graduate Employability

There are several employability models and frameworks; a full discussion of these goes beyond the scope of this chapter.[1] The CareerEDGE model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007) however, emphasises the importance of students being given the opportunity to develop their EI whilst in HE. CareerEDGE is a mnemonic device to aid recall of the five components on the lower tier of the model (see Figure 1, below): **Career** Development Learning; **E**xperience (work and life); **D**egree Subject Knowledge, Skills and Understanding; **G**eneric Skills; and **E**motional Intelligence. For students to stand the best chance of developing employability and reaching their potential, they should be able to access activities in relation to all the areas on this lower tier and, essentially, gain opportunities to reflect upon and evaluate these experiences. This should result in higher levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem, which together with resilience (Forsythe, 2017) provide crucial links to life-long employability development. The model serves as a helpful tool for auditing employability-related activities which are embedded in the curriculum and for identifying areas where further development would be helpful.

[1] On this, see further Cole & Tibby (2013); Small (2017)

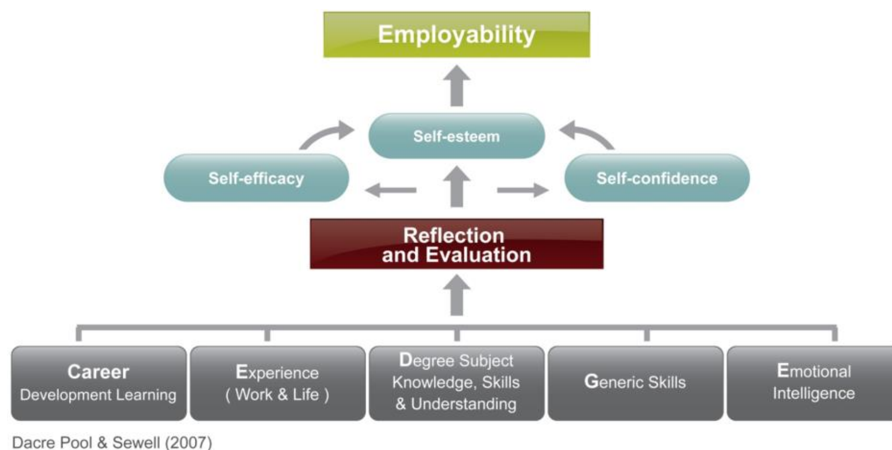

Figure 1. The CareerEDGE Model of Graduate Employability

Prior to the introduction of CareerEDGE, previous models and theories (e.g. Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004: Knight & Yorke, 2004) had alluded to EI as an aspect of employability. However, CareerEDGE was the first to give it such prominence, arguing that EI was an essential element for inclusion in any model or framework looking to provide employability development opportunities for students within HE.

4. Emotional Intelligence ('EI')

EI has been a topic of much discussion and debate in the academic literature (Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2018). Some researchers prefer to conceptualize it as a personality trait (e.g. Petrides & Furnham, 2001), with others arguing that it is an ability (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Clearly, it is something that can be developed and improved upon through learning activities. As Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004:197) argue, EI is an ability, which involves:

> '…the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately **perceive** emotions, to **access and generate** emotions so as to assist thought, to **understand** emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively **regulate** emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.'

This ability model, often referred to as the four-branch model of EI, has been extensively, empirically researched over the last two decades. Rather than framing it as a relatively stable personality trait, EI may be viewed as an ability: if so then it is something that we can teach, and a skill that our students can develop (Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012).

4.1 *Why EI is essential for graduate employability*

EI has been found to influence several outcomes that may contribute to the employability of graduates. For example, higher levels of EI tend to predict better academic achievement (Qualter, Gardner, Pope, Hutchinson & Whiteley, 2012) and can help students in a job interview situation (Nelis et al, 2011). Beyond their HE experience, EI has also been shown to enhance performance in the workplace (Cote & Miners, 2006; O'Boyle, Humphrey, Pollack, Hawver & Story, 2010), and to lead to more effective decision-making (Yip & Cote, 2013) and effective leadership (Walter, Cole & Humphrey, 2011). Individuals with higher levels of EI

are also more likely to perform Organizational Citizenship Behaviours, which are desirable, voluntary behaviours, not formally rewarded, but helpful to the organization in potentially making it a more desirable place to work for all concerned (Turnipseed, 2018). Higher levels of EI result in better social relationships (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin & Salovey, 2004), which may aid the development of more harmonious relationships with managers and peers. It is these enhanced relationships that will also help graduates build their 'social capital' which Fugate et al (2004) describe as the 'goodwill inherent in social networks.' This can be an invaluable asset to graduates as they seek to progress in their careers. Indeed, research has also shown that EI does foster the development of social capital, leading to longer term success, including higher salary levels when examined ten to twelve years after entry to the workplace (Rode, Arthaud-Day, Ramaswami & Howes, 2017).

5. Resilience

Graduate citizens face a future of unparalleled change, including a Fourth Industrial Revolution (World Economic Forum 2016), 'destabilising political events' and 'economic uncertainty' (HECSU 2017). If we allow that the pace and rate of change can in itself be perplexing, bewildering, or stressful, it is reasonable to assume that a degree of resilience will be a necessity. Global workforce changes, technological advances, uncertainty about the predicted reach of automation and the demise of certain job roles demand reserves of resourcefulness for the domino game of 'happenstance' (Krumboltz, 2008) that constitutes graduate career planning. The term 'planned happenstance' (Mitchell, 2004; Krumboltz, 2008), a career planning theory, seems particularly appropriate for the career haze facing graduates. This oxymoronic pairing of 'planned' and 'happenstance' seems more than contradictory. However, the proposition that effective career planning for graduates constitutes a degree of strategic future-scoping (and yet does not preclude grasping at serendipitous opportunities) recognises the reality of how graduates need to function with resilience in a changing and challenging job market. Planning for a career necessitates proactivity and opportunistic stratagems. Making multiple decisions in a super-complexity (Barnett 2014) career universe requires graduates to expand their thinking, be curious, and grasp opportunities as they emerge, whilst holding onto a sense of personal control during regular disturbance.

The study of resilience, grit (Duckworth, 2018), or hardiness[2] is relevant in terms of employability in HE. As a starting point, the definition offered by Edinburgh University for their student resilience model identifies the student experience as being one that requires specific levels of resilience:

> 'Resilience is both a key graduate attribute and an integral part of any transitions framework as it enables students to better cope with the challenges that they will encounter on their own unique learning journey. The term 'resilience' can be applied to both academic and social/personal aspects of the student journey and is often equated with wellbeing.' (Edinburgh University, 2018)

Whilst this definition pre-supposes challenge and even difficulties, it is worth noting that this negative view of life is balanced by the Centre for Confidence's claim that 'bouncing back from adversity' can be 'positively good for us'. (Centre for Confidence, 2018). Resilience is clearly a key graduate attribute and rite of passage for students, which extends into the graduate

[2]See further Maddi, S.R., *The Hardiness Institute*. (available http://www.hardinessinstitute.com/ accessed 14.11.18)

career start process. ‘Grit,’ as Duckworth (2018) defines it, means ‘sticking with things over the very long term until you master them:’ together with hardiness (with its ‘adversity to advantage’ mantra[3]) these feature as key components of resilience. As such, resilience can be viewed as both an extension of EI and a valuable attribute in its own right. Reivich and Schatter (2003) argue that ‘Everyone needs resilience’ and view it as a ‘basic ingredient to happiness and success’. Maddi and Khoshaba (2005) regard it as an attitudinal characteristic and while there may be some disagreement about the matter of whether it is to any degree innate, most agree that it is a learned ability (e.g. Costa, 2016). As Costa (2016) argues, ‘we are wired for resilience’ and this capacity relates to Dweck’s (2006) notion of a mastery focus and the development of self-efficacy. In addition, Kwek, Bui, Rynne, and So (2013) argue that resilience is a major predictor of academic performance. If we can support students to develop resilience during their undergraduate study, they will become ‘future fit’ (UUK/CBI 2009), primed and equipped for the possible disequilibrium of a fast-changing work environment. The ability to bounce back from adversity is a valuable aspect of resilience, based on the experience of tough times or difficulties, and evidencing the process of becoming resilient, resulting in the outcome of being successfully resilient.

However, it is apparent that resilience is also an intentional activity, and a way of thinking. Reivich and Schatter (2003) maintain that thinking style affects emotions and behaviour and that ‘accurate thinking, not positive thinking’ is the best means of cultivating resilience. Self-reflective practices may be included in the curriculum alongside or within their subject discipline, to develop the capacity of students to recall past experiences of resourcefulness, which can be the source of present resilience. Whilst university teachers may resist the inclusion of personal development activities (Grant & Hooley 2017), there are ways of aligning these to particular subject areas or as preparation for placement experience which will ensure that students become aware of their own resilience, whether innate or learned. These types of learning activities allow students to develop awareness of their thinking style with the added benefit of possibly adapting or changing a less than effective thinking style. Reivich and Schatter (2003) suggest three main thinking patterns that need to be challenged. An ‘achievement-oriented thinking style’ is apparent from statements such as: ‘I have to be the best.’ An ‘acceptance thinking style’ may be expressed through statements such as: ‘I want to be loved,’ whilst a ‘control thinking style’ may be articulated through a statement such as: ‘I need to feel in control.’ Awareness of these mindsets as examples of restricted thinking (at best), serves to support the need to effect changes in thinking, resulting in adaptability and resilience.

Discussion in relation to student resilience is also becoming ubiquitous throughout HE. As is the case with employability and EI, there is no single, agreed-upon definition. Like EI, there is growing evidence to suggest that resilience is not an innate, fixed trait, but rather something that people can learn and develop (Grant & Kinman, 2013). Additionally, it is linked to other psychological factors including self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem (Robbins, Kaye & Catling, 2018), all of which feature in the CareerEDGE model of graduate employability. It could be argued also that it is essential to develop resilience alongside these concepts for students to gain - and retain - occupations that will bring them satisfaction and success, thereby achieving their full potential.

[3] *ibid*

6. Developing employability, EI and resilience within HE

There are numerous ways for us to help our students develop their employability and EI through the curriculum. Providing opportunities for students to improve their EI is also likely to help them develop resilience. EI positively impacts upon resilience-related constructs such as life satisfaction and happiness (Sanchez-Alvarez, Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal (2015). A further resilience-related construct, Psychological Well Being, is closely affected by the ability to understand and manage emotions (Altaras Dimitrijevic, Jolic Marganovic & Dimitrijevic, 2018). Therefore, developing EI, in particular the ability to identify, understand and manage emotions, will also support the development of resilience. For example, where a student who receives an unexpectedly poor grade for an assignment has a low level of EI, they could feel overwhelmed with disappointment which could in turn result in feelings of helplessness ('I can't do this') and/or anger at the assignment marker/tutor. Neither of these emotions are going to be helpful in the long term. However, a student with a good level of EI will be able to recognise that they feel disappointed and go through the process of understanding that disappointment (they may have put a lot of work into the assignment and the emotion is a perfectly appropriate one in the circumstances). They can then engage in deciding how they will use and manage their emotions. Reframing the disappointing situation as one from which there is much to learn could be a helpful strategy and provide motivation to use this learning (and the feedback provided) to aim for better results next time. As such students are also developing resilience, learning that disappointing results are, in many domains, a part of life: we can deal with and bounce back from such experiences, often stronger and wiser than we were before. Teaching our students such basic reframing techniques can be helpful in developing their EI and their resilience.

On developing an 'emotional curriculum for the helping professions,' Grant and Kinman (2013) suggest several evidence-based strategies that have the potential to enhance EI and resilience in students from any discipline. These include: mindfulness approaches, reflective practices (e.g. narrative writing, logs, journals), peer mentoring/coaching and experiential learning (e.g. case studies, role-plays, simulations). The next section includes some practical examples of resilience-building activities.

7. Practical examples of EI and resilience building activities

7.1 Reflection and reflexivity

The opportunity to reflect and challenge thinking using models such as the 'ABCDE' (Adversity, Beliefs, Consequences, Disputation, Energising) technique (Seligman, 2012) could be the best route to resilience. For example, students might be encouraged to undertake carefully controlled peer conversations using the ABCDE framework to talk through a low-level challenging situation that they have encountered. This would allow them to recognise the consequences of misinterpreting a difficult life event, offering the opportunity for a re-think and realisation of their own capacity to be resilient. Additionally, reflecting on experiences where things have not gone quite to plan (often the best opportunities for a learning experience) can be quite valuable, especially if poor emotional management was involved. Encouraging students to consider what they might have said or done differently to bring about a more positive outcome, provides them with alternative strategies to use in future similar situations and helps them to develop their EI ability.

7.2 Timeline exercise

It can be useful to remind students of transition points throughout their lives (changing schools, minor setbacks, exam re-sits, obstacles encountered and surmounted) through a simple timeline activity. Students plot a timeline of their life from birth to present (horizontally or vertically) and are encouraged to note down key moments of dealing with changes in their life experience. This is undertaken on an individual basis to begin with. For most students, this activity will pinpoint normal life changes such as starting school, a first Saturday job or a bad school report. Instructions for this activity should recommend care and sensitivity in relation to more troubling memories. Students then reflect on what helped them through such key transition points. They uncover their own approach to overcoming these obstacles and then share with a peer their own resilience strategy. As a result, they become more fully aware of their own resilience quotient and can be encouraged to see future changes in a more positive light. This exercise affirms and commends their own personal resourcefulness and raises valuable self-awareness, a key aspect in the development of EI.

7.3 Gratitude practices

Gratitude practices are characterised by purposeful activities that requires someone to recall on a regular basis what they are grateful for. This encourages a high positivity to negativity ratio in the mind (Fredrikson, 2009) or a 'brightening' of the mind (Taylor Wilson, 2016). This 'gratitude attitude' (Action for Happiness, 2018) or 'grateful recounting' (Watkins, Udher & Pichinevskiy, 2014) encourages a resourcefulness habit, building resilience for learning: 'College students who practice gratitude on a consistent basis…experience increased ability to focus while learning and remain resilient when learning felt challenging.' (Taylor Wilson, 2016). The 'Three Blessings Technique' (Centre for Confidence, 2018) or the 'Find Three Good Things Each Day' practice (Action for Happiness, 2018) can also be included within a personal development segment of a university teaching session. Students may also be encouraged to test out a gratitude journal entry, write a gratitude letter or engage in a gratitude conversation with a peer.[4]

Any activities that involve students working collaboratively provide opportunities for the development of EI and resilience. Recent empirical research provides further evidence for the notion that Interdisciplinary Education (IDE) activities are particularly helpful in relation to students' development of emotional competence (Pertegal-Felices, Marcos-Jorquera, Gilar-Corbi, & Jimeno-Rorenilla, 2017)

8. Interdisciplinary Education (IDE) and the development of EI and Resilience

Other drivers that have accompanied the cultural shifts in HE include the introduction of the Research Excellence Framework (HEFCE, 2017) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (GovUK, 2017) both of which encourage interdisciplinary working. Collaborative working and working alongside stakeholders is increasingly viewed as one of the measures of effective education, mirroring broader cultural shifts.

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[4] Having tested out these resilience-building and EI development activities with students, the authors have found that students valued the opportunity to develop self-awareness and recognise that these practical strategies benefit them in the present and for the future.

8.1 IDE and connectivity

A tension exists between what constitutes preparedness for work, from the standpoints of students and employers. Clearly, discipline knowledge is important, but increasingly students (and those who pay their fees) want to be reassured that they will be able to secure graduate employment, function effectively in the workplace and manage the transition to work: this includes being able to make connections, work collectively in teams and manage relationships with colleagues and stakeholders. Interprofessional education is a requirement of professional statutory bodies in Health and Social care and is defined as 'occasions when two or more professionals learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care' (Centre for Advancement of Interprofessional Education, CAIPE, 2017). For collaborative learning to be inclusive of all students and not only those in specific contexts, it is necessary for the parameters to be extended to include disciplines as well as professions, thereby ensuring that the benefits are experienced across the student body. Learning about others enables students to also learn about themselves, which is one of the components of resilience and an essential aspect of developing EI.

Within specific disciplines, IDE is increasingly part of educational and practice landscapes, (e.g. Police Foundation, 2016; NHS 2014). The NHS focus on integrated care is a key driver in increasing collaboration across services. This is however restricted to the public sector. Increasingly, businesses require connected, integrated, adaptable, culturally aware graduates whatever their primary field: 'Interdisciplinarity looks at the same phenomena from different viewpoints but tries to integrate the explanations producing connected stories.' (Adunmo, Bitterberg & Schindler Daniels, 2013). For many HEIs this is supported by a 'solution focused approach' to interdisciplinary learning, where examples are drawn from the workplace to simulate real-world problem solving. IDE is driven also by the belief that students benefit from learning together. IDE thus includes the 'ability to change perspectives, to synthesize knowledge of different disciplines and to cope with complexity.' (Spelt et al., 2009). This is important in a context where HEIs must prepare students for roles which may not yet exist, and in working closely with people they may never meet face-to-face. Increasingly, portfolio careers will be characterized by adaptability and agility between disciplines, contexts and sometimes identities, with the 'constant' being the individual's own ability to evolve, connect and reframe their skills.

8.2 IDE and emotional resilience

Interdisciplinary work with students indicates that opportunities to work together enables not only learners, but also their lecturers, to understand the roles and perspectives of other disciplines and professions (Gurbutt & Williams, 2018). This is a relatively unexplored facet of IDE, namely the learning about collaboration which occurs between staff, leading to increased interconnectedness across faculty (and providing a site for co-creation). It also provides an opportunity for students to learn from the ways in which academic staff model collaborations, in addition to teaching the theory of collective working. One of the challenges experienced by students is the requirement to work in teams however, and not just familiar teams, but the shifting teams that mirror the practice inherent in some workplaces. Developing a rapport with others, building confidence and trust, and being confident within their own professional identity are areas in which carefully constructed IDE can help to build resilience and EI. IDE facilitates a raised awareness of different perspectives and insights, helps develop empathy, and the cross fertilisation of knowledge and skills. Students are enabled to consider alternative perspectives, priorities and practices. In short, IDE provides a safe space to practice

skills for employability, including EI and resilience, and to develop and express an emerging professional identity (Gurbutt and Milne, 2018)

8.3 IDE and employability

Quantifying the 'good' student experience remains elusive. The benefits of IDE are difficult to measure via the traditional modes of assessment, but there is a growing awareness within industry and the public sector that the prevalence of so-called 'wicked problems' requires an innovative approach to employment and employability. The emphasis is increasingly on collaboration, problem-solving and disruption of traditional boundaries. The HE sector increasingly is enabling students to develop these skills in collaboration with others within and across disciplines:

'Many of the major challenges that society faces today will require solutions developed through interdisciplinary research and cross disciplinary collaboration. Improving support for and addressing the barriers to this work could contribute to major scientific breakthroughs at the interface of disciplines, develop new technologies and ultimately support the economy and develop novel solutions to societal challenges.' (The Royal Society, 2015)

9. Conclusion

Our students and graduates face a rapidly changing landscape in relation to the world of work, but this is not necessarily a negative thing. Change can bring increased opportunity, but to take advantage of this, graduates need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes that will allow them to adapt, effectively communicate and collaborate globally. As the use of large-scale automation and artificial intelligence increases throughout the labour market, some current job roles will no longer exist. In many areas, such as consulting, project management, and in fields like medicine, dentistry, legal, and customer service occupations, there will always be a need for resilient, adaptable people with effective interpersonal skills and a willingness and capacity to work in interprofessional and interdisciplinary ways. Nearly all job growth since 1980 has been in occupations that are relatively social-skill intensive: this is because people are generally much better than computers at human interaction (Deming, 2017). By providing our students with opportunities to develop their employability, including EI and resilience, we should ensure that they stand a much better chance of achieving their goals, gaining and retaining the occupations that will bring them satisfaction and success, and making their unique contribution to the world based on an education model that favours self-direction and personal development.

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