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Developing global talent for the world of work through staff-student-industry collaboration and co-creation on a global scale

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Introduction

Over the past four years, Bournemouth University (BU) has run ten Global Festivals of Learning¹ (GFOLs) in seven countries. These have proved to be an innovative vehicle for fostering internationalisation and cultural awareness through engagement with “*a larger and wider range of local, national, and international communities, with a specific focus on delivering outreach and sustainable impact*” (Hambridge *et al.*, 2018). The aim of these events is to:

- facilitate development and dissemination of BU’s research in a targeted way;
- connect, for impact, regional stakeholders with international higher education (HE) and industry partners;
- build partnerships and profile in the host country;
- stimulate international staff and student mobility.

The academic and professional staff who are organising a GFOL are supported by a team of students who are actively involved in event management, research, video recordings, photography and publishing via social networks, and could also be invited as members of discussion panels alongside industry representatives and academics.

The tenth GFOL was delivered 1-5 April 2019², its key activity being the ‘Developing Global Talent for the World of Work’ forum (#WoWforum), co-funded by the British Council United Kingdom-Vietnam Higher Education Partnership (UK-VN HEP) and BU. The focus was on developing and shaping effective practices for academic-industry-student-engagement (AISE), aimed at bridging gaps between the needs of the workplace and academic provisions. These include various value co-creation projects, such as student consultancy projects, collaboration with professional bodies – for advancement of subject knowledge and curriculum co-creation – and ‘Dragons’ Den’-type student competitions with social entrepreneurship focus. The work has contributed to developing innovative solutions for addressing the global societal challenges best captured through the United Nations (UN, 2015) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (‘Quality Education’), 8 (‘Decent Work and Economic Growth’) and 17 (‘Partnerships for the Goals’). The GFOL ran at two locations, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and were organised in collaboration with the Vietnamese partners in the UK-VN HEP project, the Foreign Trade University (FTU) and the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH).

¹ <https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/study/global-bu/global-festival-learning>

² <https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/17576853.bu-delegation-travels-to-vietnam-to-promote-global-talent/>

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This paper presents the design and the outcomes of the GFOL-2019 event, discusses the experiences of students as co-creators and evaluates the impact and sustainability of this innovative entrepreneurial model for comprehensive internationalisation.

Key GFOL activities

Linking the GFOL with the UK-VN HEP project has resulted in delivering a multi-dimensional initiative that demonstrates the value of 'comprehensive internationalisation' (Hudzik, 2011). This has enhanced the previous GFOL models by adding two new dimensions:

- a curriculum link through the consultancy projects of two MBA and two undergraduate final-year students;
- a student online competition aligned with UN SDGs 4 (Quality Education) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), seeking innovative ideas on how these global challenges could be addressed through collaboration between academics, industry and students.

The latter, however, were fringe activities and will not be covered in this paper.

The format, content and the management responsibilities for the #WoWforum, the industry visits and the rest of the GFOL activities (figure 1) were agreed over three focus meetings of the UK-VN HEP project team.

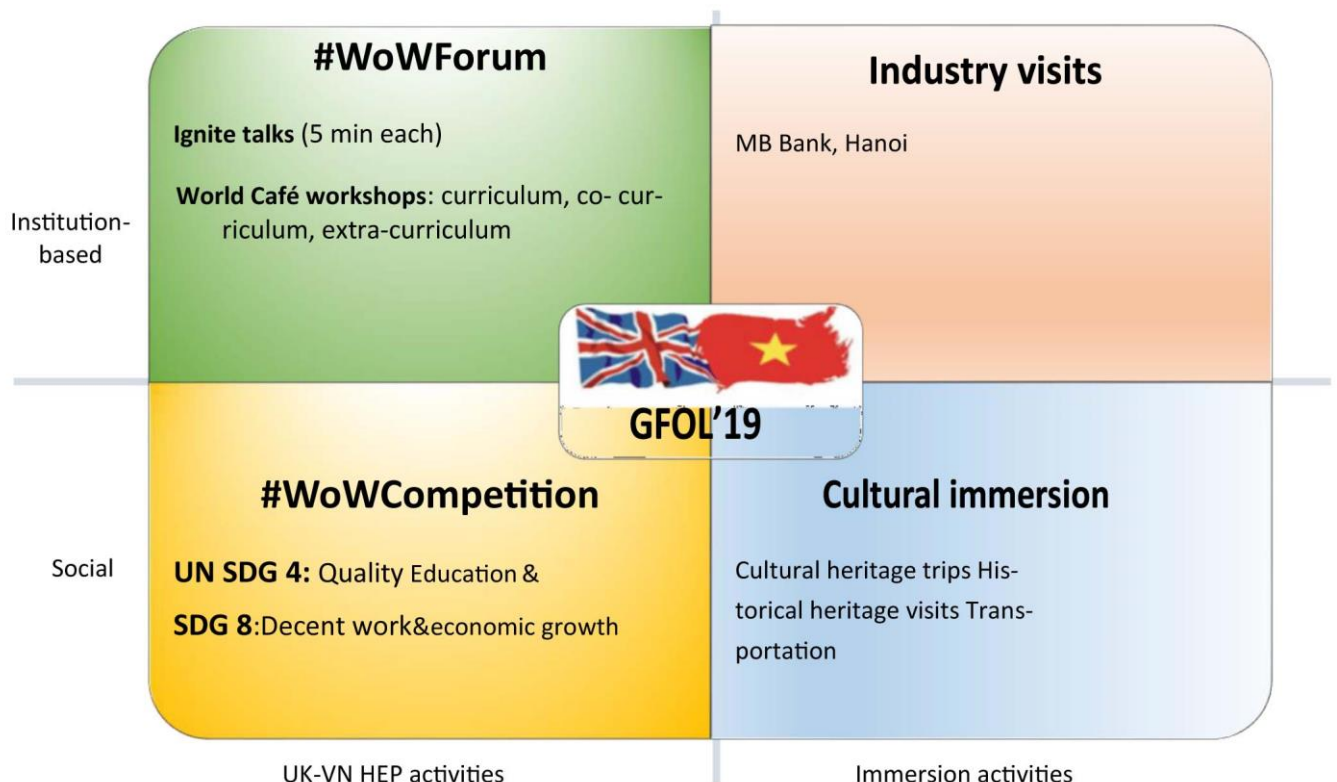


Figure 1. The multi-dimensional framework of the GFOL 2019

The students working on the undergraduate consultancy project had responsibility for research and event management. They prepared and delivered an interactive cultural awareness session for the staff, students and industry partners going to the forum in

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Vietnam. The work of the student support team was tested through the organisation, filming, photography and social media reporting for the two focus meetings that took place at BU in February 2019. The recruitment process, the training format and the student role specifications were shared with UEH and FTU for review, consideration and adoption, with the intention of enabling students across the three organisations to work together for the delivery of the activities in Vietnam.

BU academics from the Faculty of Management who had demonstrated impactful AISE practice were invited to showcase their work to the Vietnamese partners and take part in one or more of the #WoWforum sessions:

- **panel discussions** involving academic, industry, alumni and student representatives;
- **Ignite quick-fire, five-minute talks** on AISE curricular projects and co- and extra-curricular projects;
- **World Café workshops**, discussing innovation and effective practices for working with business and communities for the better preparing of students for the world of work. These were facilitated by BU staff who have worked on these areas with the involvement of BU students.

The latter two types of sessions explored a set of AISE-related themes confirmed during the focus meetings (table 1).

Curriculum-based engagement	Co- and intra-curriculum practice
Sustainability in the curriculum	Engaging with alumni
Personal and professional ethics	Developing the #WoW talent through extra-curriculum programmes
Bridging the skills gap through soft skills development	Volunteering, ambassadors and other community engagement
The value of placements, internships and work experience	Mentoring and coaching the multi-generational workforce
Impactful research for industry and communities	Developing mindsets for creativity and innovation

Table 1. Sets of discussion themes at the #WoW World Café

Research approach

This project employed a mixed-method case study benefitting from methodological triangulation, triangulation by data (quantitative and qualitative, including visual images) and triangulation by time for data collected through surveys and personal reflections (Mabry, 2008).

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A comprehensive data collection framework was developed to capture the complexity of the study and to support and provide evidence of the reach and impact of the #WoWforum and the rest of the GFOL activities on the participants. This framework included such widely used methods as:

- short, anonymous online evaluation surveys, before, during and after the key sessions;
- semi-structured and unstructured interviews;
- attendance data and footfall at key sessions;
- visual ethnography as captured through social networks and personal photo collections;
- participants' observations and reflections drawn at different times during the festival, as reported through the group communication channel (WhatsApp);
- social media engagement (including Facebook³, Twitter⁴, Instagram⁵, WhatsApp).

A unique perspective of the study was the use of critical participatory action research (PAR) and self-assessment of personal learning gains.

The PAR (Kemmis *et al.*, 2013) reflected the shared ownership of the project outcomes, as well as the orientation towards community learning and actions based on collective analysis of the daily experiences and team performance. This research approach aligned well with the daily briefing and debriefing sessions, where BU staff and students in the operations team were joined, as required, by staff with expertise in event management, photo- and video-documentation, marketing and communications. The above reporting arrangements also provided a logical link with the continuous risk assessment and quality assurance of the project. Furthermore, they allowed for positive and effective management of the demands of running an event in a foreign country with a very short adaptation period and in unfamiliar settings.

A critical success factor for this multifaceted approach was the open and friendly environment within the BU staff and student group. It fostered informal mentoring of the student participants, as well as reverse mentoring (Murphy, 2012) related to better understanding of generational perspectives, effective use of mobile technologies and social network platforms and improved awareness of Vietnamese culture. Such enriching experiences further bonded the group, allowing for participants, individually or collectively, to *“transform the conduct and consequences of changing practice to meet the needs of changing times and circumstances”* (Kemmis *et al.*, *op.cit.*) and continue to develop the communities of practice at the GFOL. Ultimately, this led to improvement in the quality of the project outcomes.

“I want to emphasise the positive impact this event had on my relationship with the academic and operational staff at the university. Getting the opportunity to work side by side as equals

³ <https://www.facebook.com/GFOL2019/>

⁴ [#GFoL2019 #GlobalFoL19, #GFoL2019, #WoWForum, #ukvnhep](https://twitter.com/GFoL2019)

⁵ <https://www.instagram.com/gfol2019>

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with the staff in a real-life environment allowed me to build excellent relationships with staff which most students never do, and I believe that it also helped the staff and academics to see us students as mature colleagues who have a lot to offer.”

Student (UG1), Bournemouth University

The second innovative element in the research design was the self-assessment of personal learning gains – a reflective task based on the concept of learning gains introduced in the RAND report (McGrath *et al.*, 2015). This exercise has proved useful for facilitating reflections on the impact of the GFOL experience on personal career development in the context of employability skills reports such as those by the World Economic Forum (2018) and the Institute of Student Employers (ISE, 2018). The outcomes of the assessment were visualised through Learning Gains Radars (LGRs), ten-point radar diagrams that represented the self-evaluation of professional competencies (figure 2) and were supported by development plans. These were completed by all UK students at the point of commencing their training and at the end of the GFOL event.

Appendix A presents more details on the set of data collection exercises and the applications (e.g. Bristol Online Survey, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter) used to support data collection and communication.

Prior to the start of the data collection, the surveys and interview agenda – as well as participant information sheets and consent forms – were presented to the BU Research Ethics Committee for review and feedback.

Implementation, outputs and outcomes

Analysing student reflective accounts confirms that, in addition to gaining experience in working overseas in a professional role and enhancing personal cultural awareness, students' motivation for outstanding performance was highly influenced by the fact that they would be working alongside staff considered both as mentors and as clients. This allowed them get to know the project and to gain better understanding of the values and behaviour of the GFOL stakeholders and/or clients of the UK-VN HEP project.

“When I got to know the project and client better, I realised that ambiguity would occur and that the client wanted me to find a solution, not explain a problem.”

Student (UG1), Bournemouth University

Good communication, timely feedback, reflections and self-assessment were an integral part of the student experience and support system, leading to a sense of achievement:

“it was a sign of trust in my abilities, and it helped me make confident decisions.”

Student (UG3), Bournemouth University

The LGRs also suggest growth in confidence across the student team and development in areas that were identified as important. The four LGR examples in figure 2 illustrate the different approaches that students took to capture how being involved in the event had had impact on their learning and professional development. While the sets of competencies varied from student to student, most of the participants had listed cultural awareness,

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networking, critical thinking and problem solving and reported advancement in each of these. A few explicitly included gains related to working with staff members – namely reverse mentoring and relations with staff (as well as peers) – as a reflection of the opportunities for co-creation and collaboration. However, although the students reported only marginal learning gains in these aspects in their LGRs, messages shared through various social network channels such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter have been much more expressive regarding the value of co-production and close collaboration with the members of the GFOL delegation to Vietnam. It was reassuring to note that even students who had previously travelled abroad confirmed that working overseas for this event had had greater positive impact upon their professional development than travel per se.

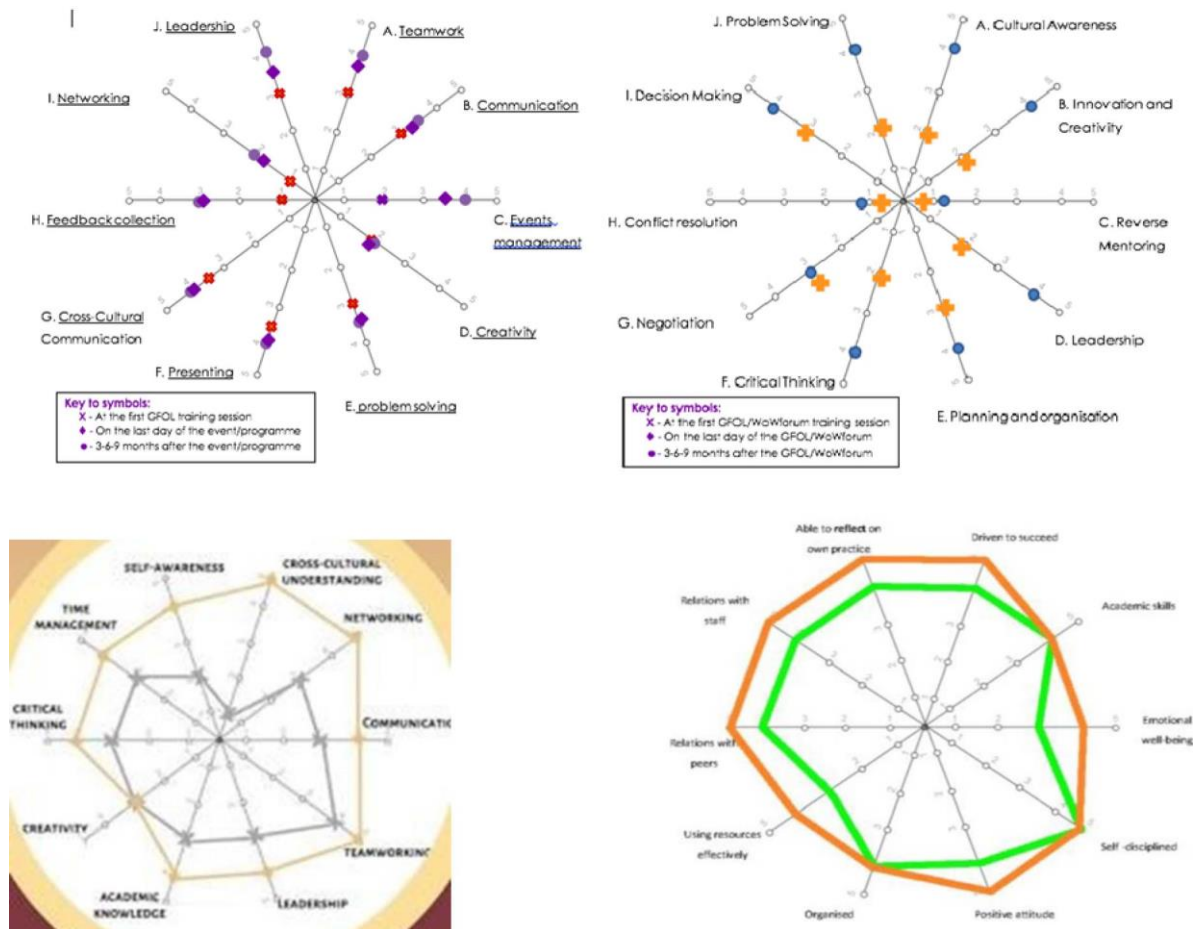


Figure 2. Examples of student Learning Gains Radars

The qualitative comments in the post-festival online surveys and the individual reflective accounts completed by the Consultancy Project students confirm the outcomes reported through the radars.

“I also felt a sense of recognition and respect from people whom I perceive to be successful which impacted me positively as it gave me a boost in confidence and the encouragement to continue work to a high standard once returning to the UK. My feelings of being recognised and gaining respect placed me under the fourth sector (Esteem) of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.”

Student (UG2), Bournemouth University

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“Being part of the GFOL Student team gave me the opportunity to further improve my global mindset and abilities to work efficiently in a team in a culturally diverse environment. The event and partnership with Vietnamese partners opened my eye to the many great benefits of diversity and the way by which cultural and professional differences can be beneficial by seeing different perspectives. Further, working with people who have very different methods and culture opened me up to the idea that what we do in the western world are not always best practice, to and the best results will often be reached by combining the best from both sides. This trip also inspired me to go travel after university and I revisited Vietnam only 3 months after we got back.”

Student (UG2), Bournemouth University

The primary investigator’s feedback offers further insight on the GFOL implementation and outcomes:

“It is reassuring to note that these reflections highlight how experiential learning and social learning contributed to better understanding of theories introduced in formal class sessions. Experiences like these are the ultimate award for an educator.”

Evaluation

The large number of people reached through the different activities (956 unique attendees and 1557 total footfall across 26 organisations over 4 days) and via the social networks (75,250 impressions and 3,389 engagements), together with the high level of participant satisfaction (83%) (figure 3), provide positive evidence that the balance between institution-based and social, and in-person and online activities (figure 1), made the 2019 GFOL one of the most successful so far.

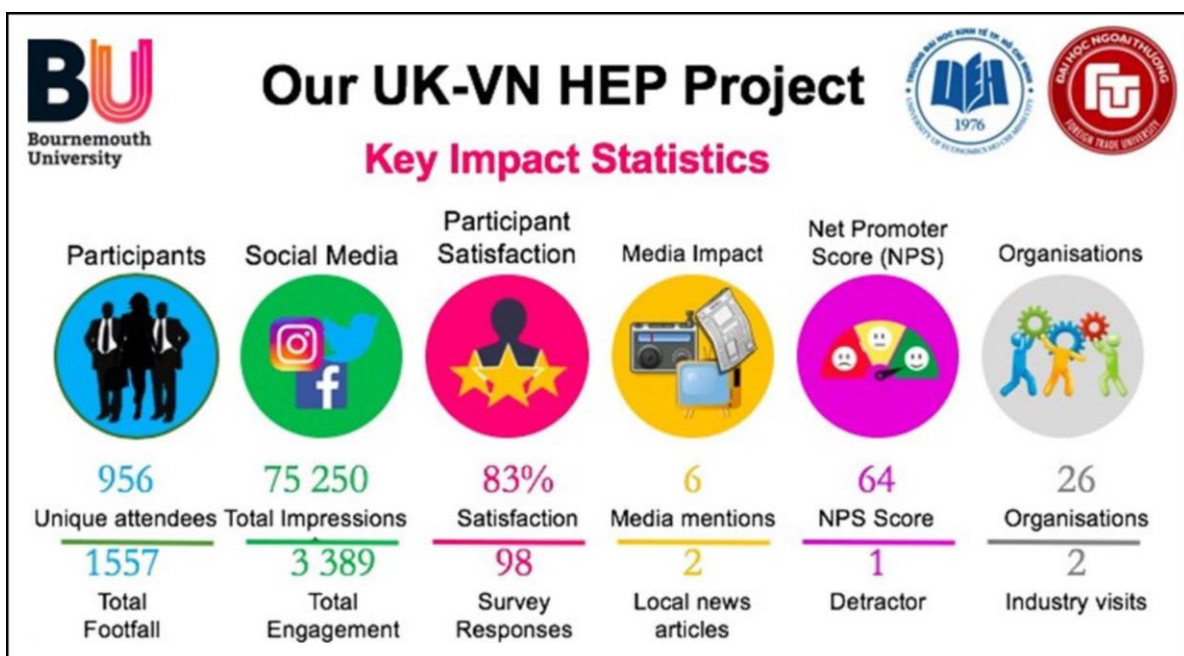


Figure 3. Key impact statistics of the GFOL2019 and the #WoWforum

The satisfaction scores have been confirmed by qualitative feedback provided through the online surveys, informal interviews at the end of each session and the social media posts on,

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in particular, Facebook and LinkedIn. The event has been perceived as both enjoyable, informative and inspiring.

"I hope I can have more discussions about the problems in administration in the future. Thank you for holding such an inspiring event, offering us million-dollar chance to meet such amazing people."

Student at University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City

The responses to the post-festival survey with the BU participants were equally positive about the impact the event had on both staff and students:

"Before we went away, I was feeling stressed, disempowered, frustrated and under-appreciated. Today, I had lunch with a colleague and I was saying how being with you all, and participating in this amazing opportunity, had re-invigorated and inspired me! ... I want to thank all of you for making me feel like me again"

Staff, Bournemouth University

"... It was overwhelmingly amazing, inspiring and empowering to chat to you all and receive support from people who essentially started as strangers to me. With every fibre of my being, I would like to thank you all for showing myself and the student team the true value of teams and hard work, as well as the immense value of friendships. Thank you for continuing to open my world and perspective to the beauty of people."

Student (PG1), Bournemouth University

The post-festival survey also identified that the experience improved student skills in teamworking, communication, time management, working under pressure, cultural awareness, leadership, problem solving, networking and organisation.

Similarly positive feedback came via the Facebook page for the event, confirming how enriching the GFOL/#WoWforum experience had been to the participants:

"Thank you so much for recognizing our efforts. We must say that your congratulation messages mean a lot to us...[you] encourage us to keep learning and moving forward."

Student at University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City

The large collection of photos, social media posts and blog articles captures the excitement, enthusiasm and pride of the participants, experiencing activities that enrich communities beyond their immediate circles (figure 4).



Figure 4. Highlights from photos captured by participants in the #WoWforum

The blend of video, story-telling and poster reporting of the ideas students were presenting, alongside the original solutions they were proposing, have 'WoW-ed' both the industry representatives and the university staff involved with the project. Relevant key outputs from the work of the student team will be shared with the UK-VN HEP network for consideration for adoption.

Learning gains and global talent for the world of work

The GFOL/#WoW project experience has proved to be a very successful one, on the basis of the data collected and the strong bonding created within the group. The development of shared values by both staff and student participants leads to better understanding of the project objectives, which in turn fosters creativity and has positive impact on risk avoidance. Together, the group faced a number of challenges (table 2) and recognised this as experiential learning that could be effectively managed by employing collective intelligence and aptitude for personal and professional development. The set of skills and attributes presented in the table also highlights the developmental journey that students went through and the impact that this co-creation with academics and industry had on their employability traits.

Challenges	Skills and attitudes to manage these
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trust • definition of a team (multi-generational perspective); managers/supervisors/senior staff as team members • different learning preferences and/or cultural backgrounds • understanding of the tasks and risks associated with action plans • commitment, tenacity and perseverance (if it is not an assessed task) • recognising different views and contributions... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ time management ○ risk management (avoidance, mitigation etc); having backup plans; ○ stakeholder management ○ resource management • agility • recognition of different learning preferences • emotional and social intelligence • can-do attitude • motivational skills and self-motivation • enthusiasm and passion • cultural curiosity

Table 2. Post-festival staff reflections on the challenges and how these were managed

The project confirms that students who took part alongside staff in the management of the event delivered, with minimum steer, outputs of high quality and initiated enhancements in both processes and format. Thus, the final report prepared by the student events team has now been only slightly modified for various presentations and was used as the basis for: the final report for the UK-VN HEP project; a successful bid for BU's becoming a member of the Advisory Committee for the UK-VN HEP; and an ESRC Festival of Social Sciences workshop.

The collaboration of professionals and students with diverse cultural and discipline backgrounds resulted in a number of outcomes with positive impact:

- critical appreciation of current HE practices and their effectiveness for developing global talent for the twenty-first century workplace;
- insights into innovative approaches for pedagogic and discipline alignment with employer perspectives and needs and societal challenges;
- ideas for innovation, entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial interventions in HE and their transferability in participant's own context;
- research-informed views on developing global AISE and co-creation based on the recommendations from the student feedback;
- readiness for effective management of future events using the outcomes of the student research and event management team;
- establishing new liaisons for driving collaboration and co-creation across countries, programmes and institutions.
- the innovative format of the #WoWforum has been appreciated by attendees at the event and has since been adopted at similar dissemination events.

Conclusion

This paper offers insight into a staff-student-industry co-creation project with the goal of informing related practices and developing scholarly knowledge. It has offered participants' views on how to engage stakeholders effectively, as collaborators in multi-dimensional studies for generating knowledge, action and self-awareness. Furthermore, it confirms the value of such curricular- and extra-curricular experiential and collaborative learning initiatives for developing global talent that will meet industry skills needs. The GFOL/# WoW experience demonstrates the value of 'comprehensive internationalisation' and confirms that investment in similar practices leads to more globally oriented and better internationally connected and impactful HE institutions.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Data Collection Matrix

No.	Title	Project phase	Start date	End date	Format	Purpose	Participant	Analysis plan	Impact category
1	GFoL/WoW Learning Gains Radar	Pre-departure	30/01/2019	30/01/2019	Written	To identify and measure skills development	BU student team	Compare self-evaluation pre and post event	Student development
2	Technical training impact evaluation survey	Pre-departure	08/02/2019	08/03/2019	Online survey (BOS)	To identify impact level of provided training session	BU student team	Microsoft Excel	Future development
3	BU focus meeting Padlet	Pre-departure	14/02/2019	14/02/2019	Padlet	To identify potential improvements for future focus meetings as well as to capture student emotions	BU student team	Transcript and identify key themes	Future development
4	Cultural training impact evaluation - survey	Pre-departure	13/02/2019	10/04/2019	Online survey (BOS)	To identify usefulness and value of the session, as well as improvement areas for future sessions	GFoL staff and student associates	Microsoft Excel	Future development
5	Pre-departure - survey	Pre-departure	13/02/2019	28/03/2019	Online survey (BOS)	To understand expectations of the festival and motivations for participation	BU student team, BU staff and external attendees	Microsoft Excel	Staff, students and external personnel development
6	BU team interviews	During GFoL	30/03/2019	07/04/2019	Video/audio	To capture the experience of being at the festival	BU student team	Transcript and identify key themes	Future development

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7	Student team daily emotions	During GFoL	30/03/2019	07/04/2019	Padlet	To capture the student team's feelings and emotions throughout the duration of the trip	BU student team	Transcript and identify key themes	Future development
8	Session attendee data	During GFoL	02/04/2019	04/04/2019	Head count	To record the total number of attendees at each session	Session attendees	Microsoft Excel	Reporting
9	During festival attendee registration	During GFoL	02/04/2019	04/04/2019	Online survey (BOS)/head count	To record the total number of attendees at each festival	GFoL attendees	Microsoft Excel	Reporting
10	During festival attendee feedback	During GFoL	02/04/2019	04/04/2019	Online survey (BOS)	To capture feedback and data of effectiveness of festivals and understand the demographics of the audience	GFoL attendees (non-BU)	Microsoft Excel	Reporting
11	Post-festival survey	Post-event	06/04/2019	19/04/2019	Online survey (BOS)	To reflect on the festival experience, development and learning	BU student team, BU staff and external attendees	Microsoft Excel	Staff, students and external personnel development
12	Long-term post festival - survey (pre 2019)	Post-event	11/04/2019	30/04/2019	Online survey (BOS)	To reflect on the festival experience, development and learning (6-9 months after the event)	Previous attendees at festivals	Microsoft Excel	Staff, students and external personnel development
13	GFoL/WoW Learning Gains Radar	Post-event	08/04/2019	08/04/2019	Written	To identify and measure skills development	BU student team	Compare self-evaluation pre and post event	Student development
14	Social media data	Post-event	15/04/2019	15/04/2019	Statistics	Official data from BU's social media sites to demonstrate the popularity of festival and engagement	N/A	Microsoft Excel	Reporting

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15	Social media data	Post-event	15/04/2019	15/04/2019	Statistics	Statistical data from the student team's social media accounts	N/A	Microsoft Excel	Reporting
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