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Pop-up shops for increasing employability and contributing to civil society in times of austerity

Inge Hill and Tina Bass

1. Introduction: The impact of austerity on Higher Education and society

Universities are increasingly required to produce larger numbers of enterprising, employment-ready graduates (Lord Young 2014; Preedy and Jones 2017). This chapter frames austerity from the public-sector perspective, emphasising reduced public spending, and examining its impact on Higher Education (HE) and charities. Figure 1 below illustrates impact areas outlining the current socio-economic and political landscape of HE. Austerity has manifested within HE most significantly through reductions to direct government funding, increased student fees and growing engagement with industry. Simultaneously, increased monitoring of the efficient use of public spending in HE has seen the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) bringing more focus on employability rates, as measured through the survey on Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE), all of which in turn help to determine university rankings (Bolton 2018; Chalari and Sealey 2017). These rankings put pressure on HE senior management to achieve consistently high rankings, which is then passed down through the management structure to lecturers. These developments constitute processes of change with particular outcomes that often differ greatly from those of previous decades.

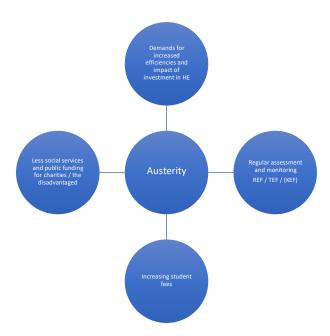


Figure 1: Impacts of austerity measures on society, with a focus on Higher Education

These measures mean also that more creativity, efficiencies and effectiveness are required of lecturers and HE managers, to deliver high quality education. Lecturers need to design and deliver learning outcomes that will meet the interests of students whilst still also equipping them to meet the employability expectations of future employers. Students are often not always (fully) aware of, or indeed aligned with, employers' needs, creating a tension between universities' societal roles i.e. providing education, and meeting employers' expectations, whilst still offering an education that students will hopefully rank highly, even against a backdrop of reduced, finite funding. In the UK, austerity has had wide societal effects, with government funding for the charitable sector also being much-reduced. Less money is available for dealing with social issues at the level of local government, affecting core delivery levels for social services. These changes have increased the burden placed upon charities: unsurprisingly, this has meant that income from individuals (through donations, legacies and purchases) has become an important sector income source (NVCO, 2018). Citizens of the future are likely therefore to play a significant role in social problem-solving, not just through paying taxes and making donations, but also through genuine engagement with charities e.g. as volunteers or staff.

2. Key concepts

In business, pop-up shops have become a well-known phenomenon. They are defined here as a physical space used for a limited period and offering retail or hospitality services. Pop-up shops may be offered in large retail shopping centres or on the High Street: restaurants can occur at festivals, or where independent chefs use existing premises but are offering a new style of food as a one-off event or over several days. Pop-up shops are not only used for start-ups to try out the market and gain feedback on a product (Hill 2015), they are also used by e-businesses who lack a fixed store, which allows them to win over new customers or introduce existing customers to their new products. These varied uses have in common a temporality in terms of location that allows for local-level interactions between the company (through an individual or team) and the public. Despite successful use in the business world, there is little evidence however that this business tool has been visibly embedded into HE for pedagogic purposes, nor is it constructively aligned with many learning and teaching strategies (but see Hill 2018a and b).

Within the austerity context, this chapter explains in detail how the real-life scenario pop-up shop was translated into an effective learning activity, offering practice-led learning (Neck and Greene 2011). The translation was underpinned by the pedagogical concepts of experiential learning and emotional resilience. Experiential learning theory postulates that significant differences in learning success are achieved by engaging with an activity, with new insights transforming learners' ways of looking at the world. These assumptions not only hold for entrepreneurs (Honig and Hopp 2018; Neck and Corbett 2018) but also for management learning (Gillespie 2016). Developing emotional resilience is also key: it is an important trait of both successful employees and their managers. In particular, organisations need to

continuously innovate to remain competitive (Aslan and Araza 2015) and their staff therefore need to be resilient. Aspects of this include the ability to

- Manage challenging or stressful situations (Gillespie 2015)
- Bounce back from challenges or lack of success
- React appropriately in the context of risk and recover from "adversity" (Grant and Kinman 2013)
- Be responsive to external challenges (Homburg et al. 2007).

Related competencies include emotional intelligence, social skills, an ability to reflect upon one's own actions (Grant and Kinman 2013; Karakas 2011), emotional self-awareness (Druskag et al. 2013) and the need for "attentional control and meaningful goals and values" (Milicevic et al. 2016, p. 26). Emotional resilience can be developed further through education and training (Aguilar, 2018). In the UK, the competencies that this pop-up shop activity will likely develop are often subsumed under the heading of 'employability' (QAA 2018) in terms of learned behaviours, expertise, and attributes. One core component of employability is enterprise-related learning; outcomes of becoming employable may include employment and/or starting a new venture. Many academics differentiate however between enterprising and entrepreneurial skills (Hannon 2018; QAA 2018). The latter are focused on building the competencies for starting up new ventures and developing new products; the former encompass business skills with a focus on considering financial and other impacts of certain actions upon the organization. In sum, enterprise skills are part of entrepreneurial skills.

The development of an entrepreneurial competency framework (Bacigalupo et al. 2016) was welcomed by the HE sector as a much-needed addition to the work on clarifying related competencies. As Hill (2015) argued, enterprising skills are citizenship skills which everyone should aim to possess, given increasing globalisation and digitization, which can lead to accelerated fragmentation of labour markets and result in more 'portfolio' careers, almost certainly with phases of self-employment likely for current and future students. A critical evaluation of how the learning activity of the pop-up shop addresses and builds the competencies that employers expect from graduates follows: exploration of the changing role of the lecturer precedes the discussion however, given the implications for how universities must meet the needs of generation Z and the demands of modern labour markets.

3. Practice-led learning for employability - the example of Pop-ups shops

3.1 What is the pop-up shop as a learning activity?

One of the most challenging problems lecturers and HE managers face is to develop learning activities that engage students whilst also providing relevant education that equips them for working in a business context, and simultaneously leads to reasonable forms of assessment (Carey and Matlay 2011). The pop-up shop learning activity (termed 'shop' from this point

onwards) meets these requirements (Hill 2018a and b). The activity is embedded within a social constructivist approach (Lobler 2006) and employs a practice-led experiential learning strategy (Kolb and Kolb 2009; Neck and Corbett 2018). The student learning objectives are as follows (Hill 2018b):

- Create an 'offer to sell' to the (university) public
- Identify the role of charity donations for citizens and raise money for a self-chosen charity
- Learn to 'bootstrap' for resources
- Develop skills in reflecting upon one's own (enterprising) activities
- Apply business planning and strategic thinking at a micro-level

These learning objectives address employability (in the sense of being better able to compete for and gain a job) and indeed self-employability, but with a sharp focus on *learning via doing* (Neck and Greene 2018).

3.2 Design features of the pop-up shop learning activity

The rationale for the design is based on the lead author's own previous experiences:

- Students should ideally have a month in which to prepare for their day, and must agree, in advance on a team structure, sales approach, working hours, and so on. It is best if no more than six students form a team, and the shop should be open ideally for at least four to eight hours.
- Students must carry out a *risk assessment* for the whole process.
- Students are encouraged to *bootstrap* (Hill 2015), working with the resources they have and can raise. To gain an insight into how easily they can make money based on what they have, what they know, and who they know (to develop a sufficiently attractive offer) is an important learning point. They should *not* be given money.
- Engaging students in *raising money for a charity* of their choice (Hill, 2018a) is a unique feature. Experience shows that a charitable concern should be the beneficiary of any profits generated by the teams. This activity equips students with an understanding of the societal role of individual-giving, as outlined above.
- The "shop" should be set up in a *safe environment* on the university campus, where university security staff can provide protection. This known environment provides safety for more shy team members.
- Staff should agree with students that legitimate *expenses* can be reclaimed via proper receipts, managed by the lecturer.
- The student *debrief* offers an important opportunity for learning support. Across teams, lecturers need to engage students in discussions reflecting on how the activity went and what they learned, and thus linking to Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb 2014). These lecturer-led

reflections are also essential for supporting the meaning-creation process (Higgins and Elliott 2011).

• Reflective assessments are constructively aligned with the above learning outcomes (Biggs 2011). Assessment forms can vary from reflective essay to video creation. Students at all levels need lecturer guidance on what to reflect upon, guided by questions on skills and knowledge employed and developed, experiences and attributes developed, and learning about themselves. Effective reflection is an essential professional skill which HE needs to develop more fully (Bruno and Dell'Aversana, 2017).

3.3 How the pop-up shop develops employability skills

A selection of learner activities¹ develop the entrepreneurial competencies of the EntreComp Framework, (Bacigalupo et al. 2016)² and the QAA enterprise themes (QAA 2018).³ In other words, the shop design addresses all relevant enterprise and entrepreneurial learning outcomes, matching the framework's fifteen competences (in three areas) with selected learner activities, and linking activities to the eight QAA enterprise themes. The shop design goes beyond the competencies that the two sector documents discuss however: it familiarises students with their roles for contributing to income for charities, making connections to wider societal problems. Actively raising funds for a student-selected charity goes beyond a baseline "competenc[y] of ethical and sustainable thinking" (Bacigalupo et al., 2018 p. 12), which largely focuses on mindsets. The following examples are indicative of the learning opportunities across the three entrepreneurial areas, namely, "ideas and opportunities", "resources" and "into action" (Bacigalupo et al., 2016) meeting the need for wider employability skills (QAA 2018):

• "Ideas and opportunities": Students must spot opportunities for selling products to the known target audience on campus. The learning focus across all competencies rests on social learning through team-working, having to make compromises and influencing others. For example, they agree as a team on product selection and on running the stall. In the risk assessment activity students evaluate the potential consequences of running the stall.

¹ Work in teams and make decisions as a team (what product to sell, roles in team etc.); Manage and solve conflicts; Select charity; Research what products sell, purchase materials and goods to sell; Develop / create product / services to sell'; Budget for pop-up shop, decide on pricing strategies; Carry out risk assessment; Plan resourcing and delivery on the day in teams; Deliver the pop-up shop in teams; Develop leads and sell to customers; Take money and deduct materials' cost, etc

² (1) "Ideas and opportunities": (A) Spotting opportunities, (B) Creativity, (C) Vision, (D) Valuing ideas, (E) Ethical and sustainable thinking.

^{(2) &}quot;Resources": (A) Self-awareness and self-efficacy, (B) Motivating and persevering, (C) Mobilizing resources, (D) Financial and economic literacy, (E) Mobilizing others.

^{(3) &}quot;Into action": (A) Taking initiative, (B) Planning and management, (C) Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk, (D) Working with others and (E) Learning through experience.

³ 1. Creativity and Innovation, 2. Opportunity recognition, creation and evaluation, 3. Decision-making supported by critical analysis and judgement, 4. Implementation of ideas through leadership and management, 5. Reflection and Action, 6. Interpersonal Skills, 7. Communication and Strategy Skills, 8. Digital and Data Skills

- "Resources": Students must combine their skills and resources to run the stall and self-evaluate skills to decide who does what both in preparation and on the day itself. They estimate product costs in advance, based on how many they are likely to sell, developing and applying financial planning skills. For example, if they choose a location with little footfall, they will have to move their tables, and find solutions, such as walking to where the potential customers are with a tray and starting conversations, showing determination in finding potential customers.
- "Into action": Team-working is essential for all decisions that lead to activities for running the stall. Students take the initiative in selecting a charity for which to raise money. They must decide on the products they will sell and plan what resources they need on the day they run their "shop". They must manage payments and keep track of takings; they might have to change how they interact with customers, thinking on their feet as needed. The uncertainty of the number of potential buyers needs to be integrated into the planning and purchasing strategy, as much as the product-pricing strategy.

The "shop" activity allows students to develop *emotional resilience* through having to work in teams and agree on a number of options. Possibilities for learning include having to accept the selling of a service they might not have chosen individually. Moreover, they must respond to potential customers perhaps not liking their offer and even refusing to talk to them, developing (customer) responsiveness (Homburg et al. 2007). Similarly, they might learn that their planned activity is too risky. For example, in one iteration, students wanted to offer freshly made sandwiches using a toaster, which the Students' Union (as the space manager) told them was too risky. They immediately reacted and developed a different service using the groups' skills set, which is an example of effective adaptation (Bardoel et al. 2014). A mindful tutor can support vulnerable students as a mentor, contextualising the experience of offer-rejection and supporting students to develop appropriate reactions. These experiences link to the entrepreneurial competencies needed to actually start a business, which may also include overcoming fear of failure and acceptance of risk. Reflection also builds evaluative judgement (Boud and Soler 2016), allowing students to link class-learning to real life situations, which again needs support from the lecturer.

4. How the pop-up shop changes the lecturer's role

This learning activity successfully employs experiential learning, meeting the call for innovative teaching methods (Carey and Matlay 2011; Lilischkis et al. 2015) with the lecturer moving into the role of facilitator and mentor. And yet, this activity requires certain lecturer behaviours and associated mindsets, which the literature has perhaps given insufficient attention to (Fayolle 2013; Hannon 2018). Lecturer input for running the pop-up shop will likely include the following:

- Organisation of a location with tables and chairs
- Organising reflection as part of assessment strategy
- Managing time slot allocations
- Briefing class about running a pop-up shop
- Training in organising a stall
- Facilitating team management
- Answer students queries
- Mentoring students dealing with challenges
- Collecting the money raised and handing it over to selected charity with students
- Leading debrief and student self-reflection through setting questions
- Marking assessment

This checklist illustrates lecturer input in terms of staff time and material costs. Key tasks include facilitation and coaching of students for planning and running the activity and careful leadership through reflection and assessment. Comparing lecturer and student activities suggests that this exercise offers effective lecturer resource management whilst also responding to austerity challenges. There are a number of challenges that lecturers can face however, from institutional politics and/or bureaucracy, when aiming to be creative in integrating experiential learning into the curriculum (Carey and Matlay 2011). The proposed checklist above hopefully develops the debate on the value of HE: the lecturers' role shifts to that of facilitator and developer of a learning "framework," offering support in line with student-led learning models (Biggs, 2011; Doyle, 2011). Learning is more clearly retained when students make choices on what and how to learn, in line with the constructivist approach to learning (Lobler 2006). The underlying experiential learning approach suggests also that the lecturer supports students in selecting learning activities relevant to their understanding.

An important lecturer task is to support learners in linking their existing knowledge and insights to new, actively-acquired learning. Indeed, students make many decisions on the content of their learning and indeed *how* they learn it, when participating in the "shop". Table 1 below presents some of their choices. As such, the suggested assessment design ensures that students learn reflective skills as part of professional practice (Bruno and Dell'Aversana, 2017).

Decision on what to offer / examples of HOW they can implement this learning	Existing offer examples	Innovations
Service? Decide in teams	Shoe cleaning or decorating; Card making.	Game designed for the occasion; Bespoke exercise class.

Product?	Selling fresh donuts, or stationary, or small gifts.	Create gifts for an occasion; baking and selling cupcakes with unique cover and logo.
Service and product?	Gift wrapping.	Uniquely combine sweets into a flower bunch on request.

Table 1 Example of student choices

The activity goes beyond traditional approaches and adds relevance to the learning activity by adding the element of selling for a particular purpose, namely, raising funds for a charity. Allowing students to choose which charity they raise money for adds another choice/task and allows them to own another aspect of the activity. The lecturer role focuses here on setting the framework and ensuring that all students participate in the decisions.

5.Discussion

Several challenges arise, and two are discussed here. Firstly, there is an ongoing discussion of the future role of universities, not only for educating 'generation Z' but also to meet the changing needs of employers and society. The pop-up shop offers meaningful face-to-face interactions with peers and potential customers, alongside online learning, to meet the challenges of an increasingly digitising economy (Carretero et al. 2017). It links together the identified needs of generation Z (social interaction and co-creation of experiences, Skinner et al. 2018). Our students have used technology from a very young age: they have developed on the one hand highly sophisticated internet, media and computer skills but will often admit that their face-to-face communication skills are, for many, a clear weakness (O'Boyle et al. 2017; Ricoh Europe, 2015). The pop-up shop activity is an intra-curricular learning activity, aimed at meeting enterprise education demands (Neck and Greene 2011) to reach out to the largest possible number of students (given that many students simply do not take part in extra- or co-curricular activities, due to lack of time or interest).

The shift in the role of the lecturer to one who supports learning and advises rather than transferring knowledge (Doyle 2011) is clear: core responsibilities still include provision of the main resources (physical, time-related and social support). The required skills-set is not entirely clear within some of the literature (Biggs 2011; Doyle 2011) however. A useful skills' set should include competencies not yet widely offered through postgraduate certificates in the UK, for example, appreciative enquiry, coaching / mentoring, co-operative learning and facilitation. These skills focus on supporting students on their learning journey. Additionally, lecturers need to be supporting learners through emotional challenges to develop their mental resilience, something for which they will often have had very little training.

Entrepreneurship teaching and learning (Hannon 2018; Neck and Corbett 2018) is only one tool on the way to achieving wider employability skills (QAA 2018). Calls are increasing for universities to radically change their business models: they will need to serve new target customers, including those professionals, who need to update their skills and knowledge in a rapidly changing globalised and digitised economy (Davey et al., 2018a). Changing expectations of one's working life (a good work-life balance having the highest priority for generations Y and Z, who seek more opportunities for independent and flexible working, O'Boyle et al. 2017) and the impacts of modern labour markets have led to a further fragmentation of workplaces (Davey et al. 2018; Hill 2015). The number of full-time jobs available will likely decrease, forcing many into self-employment or perhaps into starting new ventures. The role of universities is increasingly seen as one that must be preparing young people for such portfolio careers (Lord Young 2014).

6. Conclusion

Employability skills can be acquired within the traditional delivery time of a module to maximise learning outcomes for employability and meet the needs of future graduates and their employers. Pop-up shops are an ideal vehicle for encouraging young people to develop key social and communication skills within a low-risk environment. Employability-relevant elements are clearly identifiable (Bacigalupo et al. 2016; QAA 2018). The actual impact of running this learning activity is outlined elsewhere (Hill, 2018b), but further research is needed to evaluate in more depth the short and long-term impacts on learners' employability. As we have limited knowledge of the impact of lecturer training on student learning (Parsons et al. 2012) research on what teaching style has the biggest impact on student learning could reveal further relevant insights for what kind of training is needed. Policy implications are manifold: allocating funding based on university performance measures (primarily generated through student surveys) may often miss the point. Policy-makers need to find better ways to encourage universities to change. Many universities are in the process of re-organising their core business models and how they deliver the socially relevant education. As a learning activity, the "popup shop" offers an example of how universities could change the delivery of services to ensure they still have a unique selling point in twenty years' time (Davey et al. 2018). The pop-up shop illustrates also how intra-curricular learning can help meet the needs of future learners, employers, and indeed wider society.⁵

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⁴ Currently, Enterprise Educators UK, the main body for Enterprise Education in the UK, is offering exchange workshops to learn from colleagues' experiences across disciplines in these areas (Michels et al. 2018).

⁵ For more detailed teaching instructions see further Hill, 2018b.

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