



## Work Based Learning at Middlesex University

Case Study: Jessica Clipp

# THE INSTITUTE FOR WORK BASED LEARNING (IWBL)

Work Based Learning at Middlesex University is a modern way of providing university-level learning in the workplace. As every place of work is unique, IWBL offers customised learning programmes tailored to the specific needs of the organisation and the individual.

Work Based Learning (WBL) changes lives and improves businesses, through work, in work, for work, at work. WBL studies benefit all business sectors and industries, individuals and organisations.

IWBL recommends that organisations should work strategically to support and achieve their overall business goals; aligning learning interventions with organisational strategy. A strategic approach to Learning, Training and Development for your staff will develop a more skilled, motivated and loyal workforce, better able to respond in a changing world.

Learning is work based, and will be tailored to meet the specific requirements of an organisation, so that new knowledge and skills are highly relevant. You'll be able to offer the same standard of training across your organisation, even on a regional or national basis.

In WBL studies work experience plays a key part, utilising both previous and current experience. We assess prior learning in the workplace for academic credit. This may form part of a programme, reducing the length of time and number of modules needed to achieve a target qualification. Work based learning formalises a range of real activities, bringing them together in the overall learning process.

Work Based Learning (WBL) can be most simply described as achieving learning through work and can be undertaken in many different ways; it describes a situation where the majority of the learning takes place away from a classroom. This does not mean that all the learning takes place "on the job"; it still involves research, investigation, analysis, evaluation and reflection, and it does require the investment of personal time - all the things that are expected in an academic programme.

### We offer Work Based Learning at every level of Higher Education:

- Accreditation of your in-house programmes
- HE Certificates and Diplomas
- Foundation Degrees
- Honours Degrees (BA, BSc)
- Post Graduate Certificate and Diploma (PGCert, PGDip)
- Masters Degrees (MA, MSc, MProf)
- Research Degrees (MProf, DProf)

IWBL pioneered the development of work based learning at higher education level, and is a nationally recognised Centre of Excellence and a Queen's Anniversary Prize winner.

### Benefiting Business

WBL provides excellent development routes for the key people in the business. Its focus on increasing personal and business performance is intended to bring benefits straight away.



### Middlesex Organisational Development Network:

Working with our MODNet partners we offer a portal for organisations seeking learning solutions from initial Entry Level to Professional Doctorate level, Level 1 to Level 8. This is a specialist advisory service on the use and development of learning as a resource to achieve business objectives. IWBL offers accredited training, research and consultancy services; we can also accredit existing in-house training and extend its impact through customised work based projects.

Contact IWBL Business Development to discuss how WBL can start supporting your objectives.  
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Jessica Clipp has been artistically involved with Chickenshed, an inclusive theatre company based in north London since 1994. During this time she has progressed from a Children's Theatre member, to a Youth Theatre member, and is at present a Company Theatre member.

Jess also studied there, completing a Foundation Degree in Inclusive Performance at Chickenshed in 2007. Whilst studying for this qualification she was given the opportunity to work within many different departments in this professional inclusive theatre, including Artistic, Education, Development, Marketing, Press and Publicity, Front of House, Administration and Production. Following graduation she wanted to continue working for the company and also gain a full degree – it was fantastic then, when the BA (Hons) Work Based Learning course at Middlesex University was advertised.

Alongside undertaking the BA (Hons) Work Based Learning Degree, Jess was also working for the company, as a Development Manager (Events and Project Co-ordinator) and a Box Office Assistant, both on a part time basis.

Jess says, 'I have artistically and creatively been involved with Chickenshed for fifteen years now. During this time, I have experienced performing in their annual Christmas shows, gala performances at various locations in London, and have participated in weekly inclusive theatre workshops; all of which have developed my inclusive performance skills and understanding of the inclusive creative process.

Active experience in artistic (AE) and artistic work support development (AWSD), helped me choose my research topic. My research project focused on the Chickenshed Theatre Company – the connection between the AWSD staff and the inclusive creative work and process.

'Every member of staff, AE and AWSD, is encouraged to attend all Chickenshed's productions so as to gain an awareness of the creative work. However, here, staff are only exposed to the final, finished product – they do not see the inclusive artistic process which created the performance. It is this process which is the essence of Chickenshed, and for this reason I believe all staff should be encouraged to see it in practice and understand it. Through my research

project, I am hoping to find the best ways in which AWSD staff can engage in the process so as to gain a deeper insight in to its inclusive approach and develop their understanding of inclusive theatre.

I hope the AWSD staff participating in my project will see a positive development in their own work, as I have, through having more access to the artistic process. This extra exposure, which will hopefully develop AWSD staffs' current understanding of the process, could potentially benefit the Chickenshed organisation as a whole. For example, through having a developed understanding of the artistic work, Chickenshed's Development Department may write more successful financial bids. It is these bids which support the artistic work, and by gaining extra funds, Chickenshed will have the opportunity to put more productions on, potentially generating a larger annual income'.

This project seeks to discover and present the most constructive methods for engaging Chickenshed's AWSD staff in the artistic work and creative process of the Chickenshed theatre, with the hope that this develops their understanding of this work and the company's inclusive philosophy.

Jess identifies the benefits of this work as allowing her 'to use my expertise to research a specific area within my place of work. This process has significantly developed my work based learning skills and also has useful outcomes for my employers. Through

completing this module I have developed good working practice amongst staff – an aim of the Chickenshed organisation. This is beneficial, since Chickenshed was the site of my work based project activity. Due to my expert positioning (which I became aware of through engaging in all the modules), my project and its findings should initiate beneficial change in my workplace'.

'From engaging in this programme of study, I now have a deepened understanding of what it means to be a work based learner. I have recognised that the ability to thoughtfully reflect and critically evaluate is an essential part of work based learning – which I feel I have now developed. Work based learning has enabled me to engage in deep effective learning – learning by doing – learning through work. Reflecting on previous academic courses, I am now aware that this is the best way I learn and attain new information and knowledge. It is the ideal combination of practical and research based learning.

I have seen myself grow and develop as a result of this course, and from constructing meaning from my experiences. I am now clear of my needs and what activities I should engage in so as to further my career and reach my own aspirations.'

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**"Rather than expressing frustration over management and individual capabilities, business leaders must implement effective learning and development programmes, and performance management tools to enable them to enhance their performance."**  
IWBL, 2009

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