

Obituary -- Professor Simon Cardwell Roodhouse

Jonathan Garnett, Professor of Work Based Knowledge and Director of the Institute for Work Based Learning, Middlesex University

Simon was a Renaissance man who enriched our understanding of the cultural and creative industries and vocational learning. I first encountered Simon in his capacity as founding Chief Executive of the Universities Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) in 1999. Today UVAC is the recognized body championing HE and FE interests in vocational learning, it is also the realization of a vision and a personal commitment to vocational education which was very much grounded in Simons profound understanding of the creative industries.

Simon studied fine art as an undergraduate and went on to train as an art teacher in the early 1970s. Teaching appointments in Scotland and then Sierra Leone were followed by appointment as Education Officer at the Walker Gallery and then a nine year commitment to the Yorkshire Arts Association. In 1985 Simon took up his first appointment in higher education as Head of the School of Creative and Performing Arts at the University of Northumbria. Further higher education appointments followed as Simon went on to hold senior positions at the Universities of Derby, Leeds, Bolton, Greenwich, the University of the Arts and Middlesex.

Simon was a prolific writer of books, academic articles and also opinion pieces in professional journals and the national press. The body of knowledge represented in his published works contributed to and drew from two driving passions; vocational learning and the cultural and creative industries. Simon argued convincingly that the overriding rationale for pursuing this work over the last 25 years was:

- i. the continual failure of government and education to recognize the centrality of the workplace;
- ii. the need for an alternative paradigm which recognized arts practice as business and creativity in business;

Through his work at UVAC, HE@Work and latterly the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University, Simon was highly influential in making the case for the importance in higher education of engagement with employers, the value of experiential and reflective learning and the potential of utilizing competency frameworks based in the work place and how competencies might be transferred into the higher education curriculum. This has led to a re-examination of employer standards, national occupational standards as a shared language between employers, and higher education captured in *Employers, Skills and Higher Education*, (2007) Roodhouse and Swailes, Kingsham Press. A further book published by Gower, *Understanding Work Based Learning (2010)* continued this line of development by investigating through case studies the learner experience. They are an essential part of my personal library and stand as excellent examples of Simons grasp of policy and practice and his gift of being able to use one to interrogate and elucidate the other.

My last communication from Simon was typical of the man as at a time when he was deeply unwell he took the trouble to ring me to ask after my health and to lay the seeds for a new academic endeavour. A gentleman and a scholar to the end.