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CURRICULUM & TEACHING STUDIES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Embedding employability and enterprise skills in sport degrees through a focused work - based project; a student and employer viewpoint

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Abstract: With graduate employability being high on many universities' agendas, it becomes vital that a curriculum delivers not only subject knowledge but also the opportunity for students to develop and enhance industry-specific skills. This paper is concerned with how a work-based project can support skill development and considers the views of students and employers as to the application of these skills in the context of a sports undergraduate programme in a UK university. Using a mixed-method approach to data collection, 30 students and 5 project hosts took part in the study. The research findings reported a mismatch between the students' and hosts' viewpoints on whether skills were developed as a result of the project. Students appeared to have a lack of understanding how to apply the skills in the context of a sports organisation and were viewed by the employers as having an inflated opinion of their ability.

Subjects: Sport and Leisure Management; Higher Education; Teaching & Learning

Keywords: project-based learning; skill development; exemplars; employability skills; entrepreneurship; enterprise skills

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Track Dinning is a Programmes Manager and Faculty member in a UK university. Her main research focus at this present time is the development of student employability and enterprise skills. She utilises research to develop and enhance the curriculum in the field of employability and enterprise. This paper, whilst only a small -scale project contributes to much wider research by the author who is seeking to develop a framework for employability and enterprise, that connects the two sets of skills together. The overall aim is the enhancement of the curriculum where we as staff, informed by employer thinking, can develop a curriculum and learning experience that is not only subject specific but also develops industry specific skills in its students.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Understanding how students can be ready for the world of work upon graduation is crucial if universities are to be successful at producing employable graduates. There is an array of international literature on how employability and enterprise skills are developed in students, skills that employers want to see demonstrated by graduates. This paper uses the voice of first-year students in one UK university and sports industry employers to help develop staff's understanding of what skills are developed as a result of project based learning. Through a comparison of the students' and employers' perceptions this paper proposes a viewpoint that whilst project-based learning can develop employability and enterprise skills, how these skills are demonstrated in the work place may not be fully understood. Teaching staff need to ensure that strategies are in place when developing the curriculum to close this gap in understanding.

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1. Introduction

It is a well-established idea that students leaving higher education need preparation through their studies for employment including the development of enterprise skills. There is significant evidence that graduate readiness for work is likely to be valued by employers and other stakeholders (University Alliance, 2014). Furthermore, graduate-level employability is likely to be a key governmental performance indicator, for example in the UK by the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), to be implemented from 2017. As argued by Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), no longer will many students of this century have a linear career in one job, they need to be prepared for changing job roles that may include freelance work and multiple occupations. Minten and Forsyth (2014) suggest that in fact students will need to be prepared for working outside the sports industry, as their findings explain sports graduate will not all seek jobs within sport. Putting a growing pressure on universities to demonstrate their graduates' readiness to enter the world of work (Bridgstock, 2009). There is now a dual expectation of universities, both to intellectually stimulate learning whilst also fostering student employability development with greater intent within programme curricula (Evans, 2008; Tomlinson, 2008; Tymon, 2013). In terms of skills, competencies and capabilities, possession of high academic credentials alone is nowadays regarded insufficient to gain employment (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2004; Rayner & Papakonstantinou, 2015).

Many employers have become the most influential stakeholder to graduate employability (Singh, Thambusamy, Ramly, Abdullah, & Mahmud, 2013) and seek graduates who possess relevant skills demanded by industry (Jackson & Chapman, 2009) and who can have an immediate impact on an organisation's operation. According to Yorke and Knight (2006) employability skills can be categorised into three different areas, personal, core and process skills and it is these skills and competencies required for the modern workplace that students seem to lack according to employers (Cumming, 2010). For example, in a survey in 2014 by the Confederation of British Industry, of the 291 employers who employed a total 1.4 million staff across the United Kingdom, over one-fifth (23%) indicated that they were dissatisfied with graduate problem-solving capabilities. A similar proportion rated degree holders' team-working (26%) and communication (30%) aptitudes as being insufficient to fulfil the firms' expectations (Confederation of British Industry [CBI], 2014) showing that it is now common practice for these transferable skills to be judged as salient competencies when organisations recruit graduates (Archer & Davison, 2008; Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011).

In addition, since the year 2000 the need for graduates to possess higher level skills, such as creative thinking, problem-solving and decision-making (Bridgstock, 2009) so they can operate in a more turbulent landscape has increasingly been argued for by employers. Similarly in a recent study by Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou, and Michalopoulou (2017) where employers opinion of graduate skills were explored, they concluded skills such as professional behaviour, problem-solving, decision-making, time management and communication to be amongst the skills expected of sports employers in Greece. Skills such as creativity, decision-making, problem-solving are synonymous with those being described as enterprise skills (The Quality Assurance Agency [QAA], 2012), although this is nothing new as Gibb (2002) clearly defined enterprise and entrepreneurial skills across three categories Skills, Attributes and Behaviours. Higher level skills are reported by other authors to also include the ability to generate new ideas in response to problems(Jones & Iredale, 2010). QAA (2012) suggest that these sought-after skills include creativity, idea development, problem-solving and communication with practical action. Furthermore, Ball (2005) reports that the development of enterprise and entrepreneurship skills is essential in the areas in which this article specifically focuses—the Hospitality, Sport, Leisure and Tourism sectors—in order to deal with the ever-changing landscape of today's graduate employment environment. Employers not only prefer good employability attributes such as technical, business and interpersonal skills but also seek graduates with entrepreneurial abilities (Ball, 2005). Whilst "employability" has been a widely used term in universities (Cole & Tibby, 2013), "enterprise and entrepreneurial skills" has become a regularly encountered term more recently. Perhaps it is important to note that according to the AQQ (2012) entrepreneurship is the enterprise skills applied in the context of organisational creation and growth. Johnson et al. (2009)

suggests that, whilst definitions may overlap and studies vary, there is a common denominator of skills in practice, namely, what skills are taught and practiced. This is interesting as Moreland (2006) described enterprise skills as sub-set of employability skills, whereas literature today can be seen to separate the skills, resulting in different taxonomies.

Considering this, many commentators agree how these skills can be taught in the teaching and learning domain (Huq & Gilbert, 2013). QAA (2012) highlight methods such as problem-solving, business simulation, competitions, pre-incubation activities, venture planning, work placements and experiential and contextualised learning. Learning should be active, giving students the opportunities to learn by doing and from their mistakes (Rae, 2000), shifting the student focus from passive listener to active learner (Hatrey, 2007; Samwel Mwasalwiba, 2010) whilst offering the opportunities to learn from real-world experiences (Bobbitt, Inks, Kemp, & Mayo, 2000), that test and develop new concepts (Sheptak & Menaker, 2016).

One highlighted approach that has increasingly been accepted across universities in supporting the employability and enterprise agenda is that of work-based learning (Lehmann, Christensen, Du, & Thrane, 2008; QAA, 2012). Such learning is an approach recognised widely as a more versatile method of curriculum delivery (Connor & McFarlane, 2007). It prepares students for entry into the work setting, enabling them to apply the knowledge and skills acquired from theoretical underpinning into the real-world context (Jackson, 2013; Knight & Yorke, 2003). The different guises of such learning are diverse, from lengthy placements within an organisation, project-based work using external agents as host (Huq & Gilbert, 2013), problem-based learning (San Tan & Ng, 2006; Wichard & Otting, 2015) and even the use of online interactive environments such as Sim Venture (Ehiyazaryan & Barraclough, 2009). While the connections between the impacts of such work-based learning on student experience are well documented, there is little or no research relating to the sports field that is comparable to the extensive literature geared towards alternative disciplines within universities, e.g. Tourism and Leisure: (Walmsley, Thomas, & Jameson, 2006); Architecture: (Sara, 2006; Engineering: (Graham, 2010; Hall, Palmer, & Bennett, 2012); and Business (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2011). The present paper will therefore add significance in the subject field of sport.

1.1. Importance of skills development for students, their views

Despite a paucity of research which reviews sport-related employer perceptions in relation to sports graduate competencies (Fleming, Martin, Hughes, & Zinn, 2008), and many UK universities seeking to prepare their graduates for the world of work (Bridgestock, 2009), students still need to recognise the need for appropriate and relevant skill sets, and to seize each available opportunity both to strengthen these and their readiness to be employed (Dees & Hall, 2012). Research in this area has frequently focused on graduate competencies obtained from the participation of students in work-based learning environments (Moise, Popescu, Kadar, & Muntean, 2013) and students' views of employability, however, beneath this sits limited research on students' experience and perceptions of enterprise and entrepreneurial skills not least in non-business subjects (Jones & Jones, 2014). How students view the value of activity and skills being developed is paramount if educators are to get students to value and appreciate the relevance of the learning activity in relation to their future employability.

In a qualitative review of 10 Sports Management students' experiences from a case study competition, candidates reported positively on the use of opportunities for developing work-related skills, whilst also improving personal growth in self-confidence and motivation (Johnson, Judge, & Wanless, 2013). Further, following a sports management experiential learning trip, Pate and Shonk (2015) noted student learners not only appreciated alternative learning environments over traditional classroom settings to reinforce theoretical underpinning but also acknowledged the tour's impact in strengthening their CVs. Yet while such merits are commonly accepted from student experiences, learners most often value the capacity to self-reflect and be held accountable for particular roles as they become more informed of their own learning processes (Lester & Costley, 2010; Moise et al., 2013).

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Conversely, students are reported to have questioned the validity of entrepreneurship skills being part of the curriculum, seeing it as a connection with self-employment (Jones & Jones, 2014) rather than an extension of their employability attributes, a matter which needs addressing in future research, but more importantly within the curriculum. A study by Sara (2006) gives clarity to academics' perception of project work, however, this fails to close the loop by aligning the perceptions of staff with those of students. Very often, one of the drawbacks of developing higher level skills in students is their lack of their engagement with the process because of their lack of understanding that they need such skills to gain employment. Students understanding that enterprise skills are a subset of employability skills (Moreland, 2006) and entrepreneurship is the application of these enterprise skills (QAA 2012) in the context of their own business or an organisation they might work for, then it will begin to support their thinking around the relevance of all of these skills.

Not only are skills validity questioned by students but in a study by Dunning, Johnson, Ehrlinger, and Kruger (2003) they suggested that students appear unaware of their own ability to demonstrate these skills, putting themselves performing much higher than actual test results. In addition is evidence that the Employers' opinion of skills are ascertained is vital if universities are to produce employable graduates (Minten & Forsyth, 2014)

1.2. Context of the work

This work is part of a multi-layered project within one School in a North West UK university that has for the last 10 years focussed on developing students' employability and enterprise/entrepreneurship skills. When preparing students for a competitive and unpredictable job market, universities need to empower students to take ownership of their skills development and demonstrate a wider range of skills to match the employers' needs.

The university's exploratory approach to this undertaking of integration of employability and entrepreneurship within the curriculum included the consolidation of the already-strong work-based learning element of its programmes, the introduction of a strong personal development programme and initiatives to develop students as entrepreneurs using the work of Gibb (2002) as the foundation. Furthermore, other commentators suggest that enterprise can be the conduit for the delivery of skills to satisfy the needs of the employers in today's employment landscape (Henry, Hill & Leitch 2005), thus suggesting that all students would benefit from some form of enterprise/entrepreneurship education no matter what their chosen career path. As a result of this strong foundation, the current study is based on a sub-structure of experience and scholarship which explores how an HEI can embed employability and enterprise skills into the curriculum, in particular in sports, a non-business subject, which Jones (2015) claims still constitutes a gap in the literature.

The module chosen for this study was one that would allow students the opportunity to apply theory learned in the classroom to a project within a local sports club, where they are asked to negotiate a project that might involve them in devising sponsorship, establishing a marketing plan or running a media campaign. The time given to the project was an eight-week period, with students being asked to produce a portfolio of evidence of 75 h of work. All project groups worked alongside an external project host from a local sports club, all working as volunteers within the local sports club.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

A purposive sample of 30 first-year undergraduate students from a single programme and module of study was invited by the researcher to take part in this study. The particular module had embedded a 10-day project-based learning experience that took place across a 11-week semester Consisting mainly of male respondents (29 males and 1 female), with an average age of 18 years, each student was selected based upon a successful application to the university's Sport Business programme and subsequent compulsory enrolment onto a project module.

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Table 1. Response rates for each stage of the data collection		
Phase of research	**Number of respondents**	**Response rate (%)**
1. Pre-Questionnaire–students	30	100
2. Post Questionnaire–students	22	100
3. Post-Focus group–students	22	100
4. Interviews–project hosts	5	71

From this sample, all students agreed to participate in each phase of the research design; they received no incentive for assisting in the collection of data. For the three parts of the data collection process there was a 100% response rate across the three phases. However, there was a drop-out of eight students across the course of the data collection, so whilst 100% responded, $n = 22$ at the end of the study (Table 1) was somewhat lower than the suggested 96% response rate judged adequate in a course which educates 30 students (Nulty, 2008: 310).

All external project hosts ($n = 5$) were selected through the researcher's personal network, a sampling method used previously in a study by Munro and Cook (2008), which acknowledged the value of organisations close to home and their personal contacts as providers of crucial learning environments for students. All hosts had a minimum of five years' experience working within their current role in sport, and all held an undergraduate degree. From the seven hosts used in this project, five agreed to take part in an interview.

2.2. Research method and analysis

Prior to the collection of any data, ethical approval was sought from the university's Ethics Committee to conduct this research study. There were principally two strands of data, firstly from the students and secondly from the project hosts.

Data collection from student participants employed a three-stage mixed-method approach, in which data was gathered over a three-month period to run concurrently with the students' commencement and completion of the project module. At the module's outset, students were emailed and asked if they would take part in this study. They were each issued with a Participant Information sheet that clearly explained the nature of the research and their involvement. In response to research by Jones and Jones (2014) suggesting that students need to develop the thinking that

Figure 1. Student perception of their own skills and skill development pre and post undertaking a project.
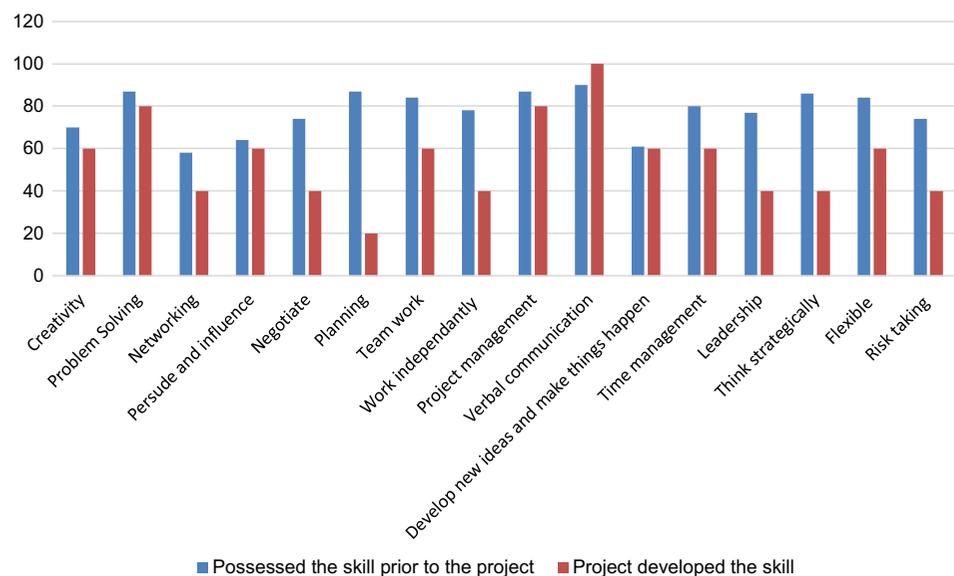
enterprise skills are an extension of employability, the derived skill list used for this research was adapted from Gibb's (2002) list of enterprising behaviours, skills and attributes and Yorke and Knight's (2006) employability skills.

The pre-questionnaire was administered using iPads and the Bristol Online Survey Tool. The questionnaire consisted of ($n = 3$) closed questions relating to the students' perceptions of their current skill levels against 16 skills and relevance of the skill to them as both students and graduates. Similarly, upon the completion of the module, students were asked to answer a post-questionnaire to reflect on whether their perceptions had changed as a result of undertaking the project module.

This was then followed by a focus group interview ($n = 4$) that stimulated a deeper debate between the students. This method was chosen to enable the exploration of the key themes which arose from the initial findings of the pre- and post-questionnaires (Huq & Gilbert, 2013). The focus groups comprised five or six participants, each session lasting between 18 and 21 min and were conducted by a single researcher to ensure research consistency (Pegoraro, O'Reilly, & Levallet, 2009), although it is acknowledged that the researcher may have had an impact and limited the study as she was the participants' tutor. Students were told that all answers would be used anonymously in the study and in no way would anything they said have an effect on their module marks, hence they were encouraged to be as honest as they could be. Derived from the topic's main themes, four questions were designed to better understand the students' perceptions of skills development following the project work. Each question was devised to be non-directive in order to allow for every opportunity of an open and varied discussion between all student respondents (Hennink, 2007).

For the second strand of data collection, a qualitative approach was employed using interviews with the project hosts. These took place after the completion of the student project. Each interview ($n = 5$) comprised of prepared semi-structured questions designed to better understand the results reported by the student participants and to establish from the external hosts whether they could account for the skills developments reported by students, from the nature of the project they were undertaking.

Interview data from both the students and project hosts were transcribed and key findings that related to the study's objectives were amassed through an interpretive thematic analysis that followed a staged process advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006). Following transcription, all accounts were read and re-read to familiarise the researcher with student and project host responses. The initial codes were systematically generated via the annotation of keywords and associated phrases for both sets of data independently. Themed data were then reviewed and refined to ensure the collated extracts for each theme not only appeared to form a coherent pattern but also reflected the entire data-set accurately. The use of the themes then guided the discussion, with all definitions clearly outlined, and final pertinent data selected and related back to the study objectives, which had been ultimately derived from the preceding investigatory literature.

3. Main findings

3.1. Skills developed
After being presented with a list of 16 employability/enterprise skills, in general the sports students perceived themselves as possessing a range of these skills (Figure 1). With the exception of networking, persuading/influencing and being able to develop new ideas and make things happen, over 70% of students agreed they possessed the remaining 13 skills prior to starting the project work

After the project students identified improvements in all skills to some extent, with 60% or more of the students reporting improvements in creativity, problem-solving, persuading and influencing, team work, project management, verbal communication, developing new ideas and making things happen, time management and flexibility (Figure 1). These findings are not dissimilar to those of Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, and Cragnolini (2004) who reported that students view group work,

placements, as the preferred option to develop problem-solving, team work, communication and assuming responsibility.

During the interviews with the project hosts making things happen creativity, planning, communication and problem-solving were identified as skills that could have been developed as a result of their project. In addition, the project hosts also offered that leadership could have been a key skill for students to demonstrate and develop, yet only 40% of students thought the same. Whilst similar skills were identified by both students and project host the key finding from these results at this point is that students reported as having and developing the skills, whilst the project host reported that the students did not demonstrate the skills, just that they could have. This mismatch in viewpoint will be developed throughout the paper.

When students were asked if they thought employability and enterprise skills were important to them as graduates, Figure 2 illustrates the findings and suggest that students do consider such skills important to them. Interestingly, after the project, skills such as developing new ideas, time management and leadership were reported by a higher number of students as being important than prior to the project. When asked in the focus group about this change in view one student commented:

> …… that undertaking the project has made me more aware of the skills that are required to work on a project. I thought leadership was something for the managers, but I realised that even on our project we needed a leader.

It is important that students appreciate the importance of such skills and need to use every opportunity to develop the skills if they are going to match an employer's expectation at interview (Dees & Hall, 2012).

3.2. Mismatch of view point

With the exception of verbal communication, the findings identify a mismatch between the students' and project host perceptions of how the skills were or should have been applied in the context of their sport project (see Table 2).

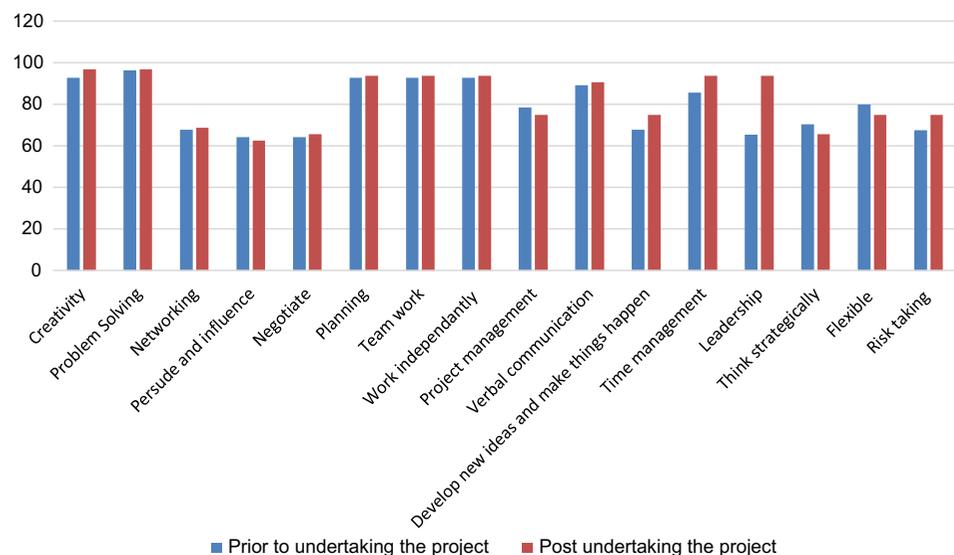**Figure 2. Student perception of the importance of skills.**

Legend: ■ Prior to undertaking the project ■ Post undertaking the project

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Table 2. Student and project hosts' comments on the skills		
Skills	**Students said**	**Project hosts said**
Creativity	I had to develop new ways to use social media	I think the project gave them every opportunity to be creative but I don't consider they really showed this skill
	We have to design a website that I thought was creative	
Problem-solving	We had to come up with new initiatives to include the membership of the club	The project should have involved them solving a problem on the low membership issue we have. I'm not sure the students' grasped the idea that the solutions needed to match the context of the club, where it is currently at and where it wants to go
Planning & project planning	At the start of the project we set each other tasks and deadlines	Students' did not seem to have a set out plan of tasks and deadlines, they to just amble through stuff with no real sense of when things had to be completed
Team work	I guess we had to work as a team to get the project done, so we must have done this	I did not see much team work, students' seem to book meetings and then not show or then even share the information I had given them.
Verbal communication	Phone calls and meetings with the host	This was done through the two meetings I had with the group
	We had to interview someone from the club	
Develop new ideas and make things happen	Having to develop new information for the host in the form of a website and sponsorship plan	From the information I gave the students' I was expecting them to come up with some new ideas and implement them
Time management	I think being on time for meetings made us really think about time management, having to get a bus and be on time was hard!	The project plan did not seem to come to fruition, the students' seem to leave everything until the last few weeks and so were unable to deliver a high quality project
Leadership	I thought leadership was something for the managers, but I realised that even on our project we needed a leader	Leadership skills could have been developed had the students nominated a leader, however the group I had all seemed to just work together on everything
Risk taking	I don't think we took any risks, as we just wanted to pass	I would have like to have seen them take a few more risks with their solutions. As they were not being assessed on the actual quality of the outputs then this would have been a great opportunity for them to experiment with something new

3.3. Making things happen and creativity

From the project host interviews all five hosts suggested that their projects should have developed a student's ability to make things happen which aligns with the findings of Huq and Gilbert (2013). In addition, hosts linked this to the students being expected to do this in a creative way. Whilst 60% of the students boasted that they had made things happen and had been creative it was not congruent with what the project hosts comments. One student gave the example of "having to develop a website and look for new ways to use social media", whilst the project hosts commented:

> I think the project gave them every opportunity to be creative, but I don't they really showed this skill. Host 1

> I would have liked to have seen the students being more enterprising in their solutions. They tended to play it safe. Host 2

Reviewing the qualitative data, it is apparent that students' perceptions of creativity focused on the medium—the website, whilst perceptions of creativity on behalf of the hosts focused on innovative inputs—the solutions. The students' perception of making things happen was to have the project finished, whilst the project hosts expectation of a completed project with creative solutions and fresh ideas was not met, this resulted in the project hosts being less than impressed with the

students work, as the students seemed unaware of the hosts expectations for each skill both before and during the project.

3.4. Problem-solving and risk taking
Another skill where an obvious mismatch occurred was problem-solving. This was a skill which students thought they not only had already, but also had improved, whilst the hosts had a different view:

> The project they had for me should have involved them solving a problem on the low membership issue we have. I'm not sure the students grasped the idea that the solutions need to match the context of the club, where it is currently at, and where it wants to go. Host 3.

This suggests students saw problem-solving as recognising the issues, whereas hosts were much more focused on achieving pragmatic solutions. Project hosts also suggested that students need to take risks in the context of finding new solutions which was not demonstrated through the project. Clearly, another mismatch with one students commenting

> I don't think we took any risks, as we just wanted to pass

3.5. Leadership and team work
Leadership was perceived by the project hosts as a skill that could have been developed and they thought it noteworthy to include in the interviews.

> Leadership skills could have been developed had the students nominated a leader, however the group I had all seemed to just work together on everything. Host 4

However 80% of the students reported that they believed themselves to already have leadership skills, and only 50% said that the project had improved their skills. Whilst host 4 commented that the students did work together on everything three other hosts commented that they did not witness team work, with students not turning up to meetings and not being up to date on their project. The mismatch here focuses on the fact students perceived team work as a result for them doing things together, whilst project hosts were looking more for how effective the team actually operated and the leadership within the team

3.6. Planning, project and time management
The students' perception of these skills was biased towards the simplistic side of the skills, so arriving on time, and setting up a project planning tool. However, this was far removed from the project host perception with one host commenting;

> Students regarded the fact they were able to use a bus and arrive on time as evidence of time management, whereas I would have expected to see the students focused more in the outcomes of the project and seeing its development over the time period

The key mismatch evidence here is the students focus is on the "now", getting somewhere on time, setting a project tool up, whereas the project hosts expected students to focus on the future and the outcome of the project.

In summary the results show that problem based learning as a teaching pedagogy can be of benefit to the development of employability and enterprise skills in students, however, the results are clearly mismatched between the student and project host perceptions of how these skills are applied in the context of sport.

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4. Discussion

4.1. Skills

Consistent with the work of Huq and Gilbert (2013), this study shows that employability skills (Yorke and Knight, 2006) and enterprising skills (Gibb, 2002) are perceived to be developed as a result of undertaking a project, and in this case in a sports context. From the 16 skills used in this work, the fact that over 60% of the students agreed that they are important to them both as students and graduates is very encouraging, as Dees and Hall (2012) would suggest it is vital for students to recognise the need for such skills to be a successful graduate. Contrary to these finding Jones and Jones (2014) reported students had questioned the validity of skills within the curriculum. The significant difference between this study and the current research is that Jones and Jones framed their skills in the context of enterprise, whilst in this study there was not really a direct reference to employability or enterprise. Skills were presented such as creativity, problem-solving, communications and idea development all identified as being vital for employment (QAA, 2012), but if a university cannot get students to value them, then they are doing students an injustice when they go to seek employment as a graduate. A process needs to be fostered that promotes the skills as key ingredients of future employment, Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) suggest reflection is required to enable students to see how far they have come and what is required of them, otherwise they are less likely to identify with its value.

There is perhaps a need to introduce the skills in the context of the work the students might undertake, and limit the use of vocabulary such as employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship to counter any preconceptions as to what the skills actually are in practice. Sewell and Dacre Pool (2010) recognise that these words are often used interchangeably and suggest that this commonly leads to confusion for academic, students and employers alike. This was evident during the interviews with the project hosts, as one of them suggested the use of a simple list of skills to remove the ambiguity of classification and allow the skills to be framed in the context of the industry rather than a theoretical framework.

4.2. Mismatch

The study presents a worrying set of results for university lecturers if they are to prepare their students for the world of work. Whilst the results clearly show that both students and project hosts recognise employability and enterprise skills development as a result of undertaking a project, the mismatch between students' perception of their own capabilities and the meaning of the skill, and the project hosts' perceptions are of concern. Whilst it is recognised that there is a limitation in the sample size, the process of comparison of perceptions between students and project hosts is original and such results are under-represented by any previous research. In addition, this study does serve to open up discussion in a specific subject area, sport, which again has been under-represented in the past. Understanding why this situation exists will be crucial to universities if they are to equip graduates with the skills they need to make an immediate impact within in an organisation. Providing clarity of the skill in context on skills audit forms (Ramli, Nawawi, & Chun, 2010) might be a simple way to reduce this mismatch.

In addition, there has been for many years a belief that students over-judge themselves when asked to self-assess (Boud & Falchikov, 1989) and it is clear looking at the qualitative data that perhaps students do have a higher opinion of their skills level as well as a lack of understanding of skills in the context of their subject. Dunning et al. (2003) suggest that being insightful of one's own ability is essential for successful negotiations in everyday life, otherwise the lack of awareness results in both poor performance and also the inability for that person to recognise it. Thus, making it even more important to have a shared view between academic and employer of the skills required in the context of the industry.

Once there is an understanding of this, the practice can be developed to reduce this mismatch. Cox and King (2006) talk about closing the employer loop, which fits well in this context. All five

employers interviewed for this study commented that for universities to get the skills aligned with the sports industry it would be a sensible solution to have them involved in the development of the curriculum. As students seek employment in the future, they need to understand what employers expect of them. Students need to be able to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses as they relate to the industry's needs. For example, asking students if they are good leaders without context in hindsight does leave it open to over-inflated answers.

Therefore, academics have a duty to become the enablers of this and support students to appreciate their capabilities. Host 2 suggested that:

> Lecturers need to use employer from sports organisations to build up examples of how the employability and enterprise skills can be applied in the context of sport.

Whilst this would mean some extended preparation for academics in the planning of activities such as skills audits, an audit whereby students rate themselves against a set of industry-specific examples would seem to warrant some evaluation. Providing non-prescriptive exemplars demonstrating the level of skills and capabilities required is likely to pay high dividends in terms of students' developing capabilities. This has been evidenced in work by Sambell (2011) and Hendry, Armstrong, and Bromberger (2012) who studied the use of exemplars when giving students feedback. Sadler (2010) previously suggests that exemplars can bear a message to a student that can be interpreted easier than words and can develop the discussion between students and academic (Sambell, 2011). Alternatively, academics must establish a process for students to be guided to industry-specific examples of the skill, and what it means to be very good/good in those skills. Students must also be given the opportunity to practice and develop the skills that their sector requires, if graduates are to satisfy the employer's needs.

A further consideration for academics would be the use of basic generic skills audits, as were used in this study. Whilst they might serve some initial purpose, if universities are to develop sought-after graduates, they need to develop industry-specific audits, full of relevant examples and realistic contexts.

5. Conclusions

To conclude, this paper has considered the students' and employers' viewpoints of employability and enterprise skill development through a project-based learning approach to teaching. Whilst no more than a snapshot, this paper does highlight employability and enterprise skill development in the context of sport which has been previously lacking in the literature. The paper highlights that both students and employers judge project- based learning as a practice that can develop skill level in students. The main contribution however comes through the very clear mismatch in perception between student and project host as to the application and demonstration of the skill in the context of the sport. In turn, this offers a key implication to academics wanting to prepare their graduates for today's ever changing landscape. Students need to understand their strengths and weaknesses in the context of the industry they intend to seek employment. Universities need to ensure students have an awareness of how employers expect skills to be demonstrated and utilised in their industry through the use of examples and benchmarks. In doing this, students will be less likely to inflate their opinion of the level they are at and more likely be able to demonstrate their readiness for work at interview.

6. Practical implications and future study

The substantial mismatch between student self-perception of their capabilities and the way the project hosts perceived them, suggests a strong need for an intervention strategy in future years. It would seem that the development of industry-specific audits may have merit, if students are to understand what employers want. Such a strategy could include:

- Sharing with students the kinds of mismatch found in this study.
- Sharing with students what high achievement is for skills in the context of the specific industry employers in an attempt to limit over-inflation of ability by graduates.
- Discussion with students about what high achievement looks like from their perspective, particularly through the use of exemplars.
- Reviewing employers' perceptions of relevant skills.
- open dialogue is required between student and employer

In addition, further research could be developed that looks at skills development through the lens of pedagogies for sports students, or indeed any other subject. Until such research is undertaken, we can only continue to generalise the links between pedagogy and skills. Larger scale research would benefit this area of study to the benefit of both students and lecturers, if industry-specific skills are to be identified and developed. To build up a model of sports-specific skills would add to the body of knowledge.

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