Off-campus learning and employability in undergraduate design: the *Sorrell Young Design Project* as an innovative partnership

An evaluation article

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Abstract

This article reports on research which explored the opportunity for extra-curricular undergraduate learning afforded by the Young Design Project (YDP), aimed at bringing together HE Design students, industry and schools. The research was undertaken in the context of the importance attached to 'employability' as a key driver for recent policy developments in Higher Education (see Leitch review and Cox report), as well as the political importance of Widening Participation initiatives between HEIs and schools. This research investigated the second iteration of the YDP in 2007, with 32 undergraduate students from two design degrees at University College Falmouth (BA Graphic Design and BA Spatial Design) on a project based in four Cornish schools (three secondary, one primary). The research sought to answer the question: what do undergraduate students learn from working with pupils as clients and industry practitioners in the context of a school-based project? This question is explored through a case study drawing on four triangulated phases of data collection: desk research of relevant policy documentation; pre-project semi-structured questionnaire; post-project focus group interviews and individual face-to-face interviews with key gatekeepers. As well as reflecting on the opportunity to engage with innovative learning in design, the findings offer fruitful insights to HE practitioners and policy makers considering issues around off-campus learning. This research recommends notions of 'employability' be subject to greater scrutiny in HE policy, since a key finding from this research is the crucial importance of appropriately resourced authentic project partnerships for deep and worthwhile undergraduate learning to take place.

Keywords
undergraduate design
off-campus learning
HEI/school partnerships

employability skills

Introduction

Employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship, although still contested terms, have been key government drivers of recent HE policies in England (Smith et al, 2004, 2007, HEA, 2006). As such, they offer an opportunity for reconceptualising learning in undergraduate design. This re-emphasis in thinking about work-relevant skills is manifest in the Leitch Review (Leitch 2006), which addresses the skills matrix by espousing expansion through a new form of HE, requiring a significant input from employers and a focus on flexible work-based courses to deliver the skills employers allegedly want. In addition, employability and entrepreneurship underpin the large scale funding available for collaborative projects between HEIs and local, regional and national employers through HEIF, the Higher Education Innovation Fund (DfES 2003). The foregrounding of employability is also evidenced through the espousal of Foundation degrees (DfES 2005), in which universities or FE colleges collaborate with employers to create a blend of academic and work-based learning. HE is also adjusting to the potential impact of the 14-19 Diploma which, in its Creative and Media strand (QCA 2007) foregrounds personalized learning, in a creative industries sector context, as its progression route. This policy concentration on professionally-relevant skills across HE is highly significant for design, but HE cannot deliver in isolation, and success will depend upon far greater dialogue between HE and employers, and a considerable extension of existing collaborative arrangements.

Concurrent with this policy shift towards a discourse of industry-relevant skills to meet employer needs through collaboration, HE in England has experienced a political prioritising of Widening Participation, as represented by a range of policies and funding streams designed to: target groups disengaged from HE; remove barriers to access to HE; increase the proportion of citizens with HE qualifications; and enhance the national skills base. A key element of the national WP activities has been aspiration-raising with school pupils, the best examples of which have seen increasing collaboration between HEIs and schools over enhanced-curriculum projects, pre and post-16 summer school provision and undergraduates placed in school settings as learning mentors (HEFCE 2001).

Although HESA statistics (HESA 2007) do not separate undergraduate design in the Creative Arts and design subject category, it is noteworthy that in the most recent academic year for which figures are available, the largest proportion of students receiving a disabled student award come in Creative Arts and design (7.5% compared to a sector average of 4.1%): fewer mature students from low participation neighbourhoods come from this category (17.6% compared to a sector average of 22.6%). While the national statistics hide a host of subject and geographical inconsistencies, design has been noted, at the institution in which this research was conducted, as an example of a curriculum area which could engage in a wider range of learning opportunities, including those extra-curricular and off-campus experiences aimed at supporting Widening Participation initiatives.

Usually, work on employability/entrepreneurship involving links between HE and industry is researched (and indeed conducted) entirely separately from that aspect of Widening Participation work which brings together HE and schools. Limited evidence of looking beyond this can be found in Foskett's (2005) study of HE collaboration with a charity. However, the Sorrell Foundation's Young Design Project (YDP) offers an interesting attempt to bring the worlds of HE, industry and schools into alignment. Although the original impetus (The Sorrell Foundation 2005) was empowerment of the pupil voice in the design of schools supported by industry-based mentors (and this continues to be its main philosophy), the last two years have seen its work grow and evolve with the involvement of undergraduate students. This has led to a number of innovative and energetic three way collaborative partnerships between HEIs, schools and industry, and as such, it represents an unusual application of work-based learning in HE endorsed by professional groups.

Following a pilot in London in 2005-6, YDP was conducted with schools in London, Leeds and Cornwall in 2007. Each of the schools engaged with undergraduate design students from their respective regions. The HEIs were: University of the Arts, London; Leeds College of Art and Design, and University College Falmouth. The focus on schools operating in particularly challenging circumstances (school partners chosen to work with the three HEIs represent a range of communities experiencing urban and rural deprivation) illustrates a WP agenda, as well as a focus on off-campus learning in design.

This article reports on a research project based in University College Falmouth, a specialist art, design and media institution in Cornwall. The research was an opportunistic attempt to analyse what design undergraduates learned when engaged in a collaborative partnership project. Conducted as a case study, its focus was on the interaction between the 32 volunteer undergraduates studying BA Graphic Design and BA Spatial Design, the four schools which opted to take part in YDP: (Launceston Year 12; Penryn Year 10; Falmouth Year 12; Bosvigo Year 5), and four industry-based mentors. The findings offer a reflective account of that collaboration.

Literature

The influence of HE collaboration (Leitch 2006), which promotes the importance of a paradigm shift in HE towards work-based learning aimed at enhancing employability and entrepreneurship, is particularly prominent in HE courses associated with the creative industries. This is unsurprising given the long tradition of situated and project-based learning in art design and media in HE, in which a dominant pedagogy of learning through doing, taking risks and problem-solving thrives on evidence of learners' divergent thinking. There is of course an irony in discussing such 'new' notions in relation to art and design in HE, encapsulated in current political and educational discourse in the phrase 'creative entrepreneurship' (HEA/ADM & NESTA 2007). It has to be acknowledged that it is over 150 years ago that applied arts were first recognised by the state as contributing to the effectiveness of British industry (Romans 2004). What is different now is the claim that the most effective entrepreneurship learning is likely to be a result of collaborative provision, where HEIs and the creative industries take joint responsibility for the curriculum, although the widespread view in the creative industries is that forming collaboration with HE remains difficult (HEA/ADM & NESTA, 2007) and that employability can still be marginalized in the off-campus design curriculum (Ball 2002).

The Cox review (Cox 2005) which emphasised the importance of links between industry and HE in Design, advocated a broadening of creativity learning by changes in curricula. At a time when UK HEIs are being pushed to collaborate far more explicitly with industry, there is an interesting conjunction with the evidence that creative sector arts graduates are increasingly being seen as possessing the kind of creative, problem-solving and client-focussed skills necessary in post-industrial culturally innovative economies. This is manifest in the Hutton report (Work Foundation 2007) on the economic importance of the

creative industries, and the report on entrepreneurship for the creative industries (HEA/ADM & NESTA 2007). The findings from this research make a contribution to understanding how such employability skills can be learned through off-campus opportunities.

In terms of analysing collaboration and its impact on employability, the academic literature is becoming more developed in describing and theorizing partnerships between HE and industry, and the consequent benefits to undergraduate learning. For example Smith et al (2007) discuss employability/HE in terms of transferable skills, through which engaged learners can relate ('transfer') academic understanding to work-based experiences. They argue this depends upon reflection-on-action, in which tacit knowledge is made explicit as part of an experience encouraging deep learning. In addition, work-based learning is advocated as a distinctive element in HE development (HEA 2006), in which pedagogical approaches emphasize a student-centred process rather than content-driven curriculum, and which offer an experiential approach to learning in which knowledge and skills can be developed through practical experiences.

Such learning fits what Eraut (2000) theorizes as non-formal learning, crossing his typology of implicit (tacit) learning, which is acquired despite an absence of intentionality, and reactive on-the-spot (unplanned/spontaneous) learning which often requires the individual learner to take time to reflect. For Eraut, tacit knowledge may be acquired and/or used in the 'transferring of knowledge from one situation to another', most likely a non-formal setting. This relates to a typology devised in HEA/ADM & NESTA (2007) in which YDP could be perceived as an example of 'aligned learning', an optional enhancement to existing curricula of learning in practice.

However, the connection between collaboration, entrepreneurialism, and art and design education remains implicit rather than explicit. Even where universities have engaged in flagship business/entrepreneurial incubator units, there is little evidence of 'trickle down', of impact on individual students on individual courses (Wotjas 2007). Research suggests undergraduate students in the creative disciplines like learning by doing, they like linking directly with local creative industries. They favour social entrepreneurship, preferring notions of social benefit in which their work benefits society: is not just for profit and operates in areas capitalized through public subsidy. They often value cultural

achievement over commercial success, and they are suspicious of media caricatures of wealth creating entrepreneurs (HEA/ADM & NESTA 2007).

If existing art and design pedagogies privilege student-centred, experiential and situated learning, in which real world environments are simulated, YDP provides a clear model for a new form of collaboration, in which skills (creative problem solving); attributes (preference for learning through doing); behaviours (putting things together creatively) are acquired and practised in the context of a HE/schools/industry mentor collaboration. This mix takes it beyond the confines and limitations of work-based learning (which may highlight technical skills) and work experience, which, in the creative industries cannot be meaningfully delivered for all (Marsden & Luczkowski 2005). The innovation of YDP is in the engagement of undergraduate design students with school pupils in the role of clients, a context in which powerful situated learning can occur. This learning opportunity has not previously been reported in the literature.

Methodology

In order to conduct a bounded, small scale exploratory case study which focused on the learning gained (both planned and unplanned) by the 32 undergraduates, a series of qualitative methods of data collection were employed at different stages of the project.

Prior to actually starting on the YDP, undergraduate students who volunteered to take part were asked through an in-depth, semi-structured questionnaire whether they had any previous experience of educational projects away from the institution they were studying in, why they had volunteered to take part in YDP, what they expected to learn and what they were looking forward to. The questionnaire was issued at a briefing session in which anonymity was assured and completion was voluntary. Sixteen questionnaires (50 per cent of those issued) were completed and returned. After the off-campus learning had been completed, and following analysis and generation of tentative theory, two focus group interviews were carried out with samples of the main cohort (representing two of the teams, attached to two of the four schools). Semi-structured prompt questions were asked, in the same order, to both groups, ranging over whether they had received adequate advice during the project, whether they would recommend YDP to a friend, what they had

learned from doing YDP, whether it had changed their view of the discipline they were studying and if it influenced future career objectives.

The student data were supplemented by two semi-structured interviews with the two course leaders (for BA Graphic Design and BA Spatial Design) who had been responsible for managing the project in terms of its applicability to their curriculum learning outcomes. These were interviewed separately following the culmination of the engagement with the schools and their pupil clients. Question prompts were based on analysis of the original student questionnaire responses and the subsequent focus group data, and reflected shared and individual understandings about what had been learnt. The Course Leaders (reported as CL1, CL2) were asked the same questions in a 45 minute semi-structured face-to-face interview, and responses were transcribed simultaneously. Comments were used to inform the interpretation and discussion of the student data. The researcher also gathered field notes as a participant observer at a local and a national YDP briefing, and at a national celebration event which incorporated an evaluation by the Foundation.

All the questionnaires and interviews were analysed individually, with categories emerging from the analysis drawing on grounded theory approaches, rather than prematurely looking across data to establish commonalities. The researcher endeavoured to maintain openness to the data rather than impose preconceived meanings. In asking the undergraduates to reflect on what they had learned, the intention was to prompt broader thinking than the recitation of a list of new skills. The picture emerging reflects the experience of undertaking YDP as having a positive but complex and diverse impact on undergraduate learning.

Findings: initial thoughts and motivation

Questionnaire responses suggested that the undergraduates were excited by the possibility of working in schools, particularly the relatively unusual opportunity to work with pupils on a design project. This was partly because they wanted to build relationships with pupils over a period of time through a number of meetings, but also because they wanted to inspire young people about their own degree discipline, design. They bought into the innovative idea that the pupils were their clients, and as such viewed the live project process through which they expected to journey, as an intrinsically interesting one. It was, as they had been briefed and as they perceived it, an opportunity to work with a real (albeit

unusual) client on an authentic project. This seems to support the claim that design undergraduates are developing client-focused skills (Work Foundation 2007):

> I wanted to learn to be part of designing a space that would mean a lot to an institution, and affect pupils…I look forward to designing in 3D and look forward to learning new skills from the project, to working with an interesting/unusual client team and by working closely with other courses.
> (Graphic Design Student)

> I was looking forward to working with a project that could be taken forward…and working with a lot of people would be interesting.
> (Spatial Design student)

Such comments (shared across many of the responses) point to an important learning orientation around employability, encompassing a potentiality and openness towards problem-solving and working in, and for, teams in the context of off-campus learning. This suggests, in addition to the existing volunteering opportunities (such as those organised through Student Unions, or through tasters into teaching as a career), far greater potential for undergraduate students in HE to work alongside school pupils on authentic curriculum projects. All the students relished the idea of getting stuck-in, of working on a project of a significant scale which could be taken forward (for example, one of the schools was undergoing a multi-million pound rebuild, and as such offered an authentic design problem to solve). Questionnaire responses also confirmed students were keen to meet with and work alongside a professional mentor in a design team and wanted to work closely with another course (a relatively rare occurrence on the college's single honours specialist degree framework) in an authentic design team.

Perceived learning

The students, in their two focus groups, and the tutors, in their interviews, were asked what learning had occurred from the YDP, and to reflect on this they were provided with a series of prompts (ie gained new knowledge, new skills, new understanding?). Responses ranged across at least six categories, five of which are reported here as illustrative

examples: team work; problem solving; time management; relationship with clients; technical skills.

Learning through team work

In focus groups, students confirmed they liked working across different courses, and as such enjoyed bouncing ideas around in what, for them, was a unique collaboration. They perceived it valuable to operate outside their normal 'learning team' (the traditional mode on their course), and felt the groups emphasized individual strengths in a negotiable setting:

> First time working as a group from start to finish…learned from the organisation of working in a large team.
> (Spatial Design student)

However, some expressed frustration that others appeared not to pull their weight, a situation compounded by difficulties in communication (the two courses are based on two different campuses):

> Not everyone puts in the same amount of energy or workload.
> (Graphic Design student)

CL1 emphasized the learning on the YDP as being about team work, evidenced through student reflection upon how they dealt with the frustration and disappointment of peers not turning up for meetings, and how they dealt with different personalities and egos across a team, especially in the negative case of the 'mavericks' who often required a highly political negotiation to include them. He felt this was an important learning experience as students were released to undertake these project meetings, which were authentic rather than simulated experiences of working towards a client brief. This fitted in with the undergraduate course's level two focus on 'live briefs', meaning the project could be integrated rather than being 'added-on' to an already hectic load.

CL2 commented it was this tension that enabled learning to take place, with the egos of 'creative industry types' clashing, with those confident Graphics students who acquired

new skills faster, and the Spatial students who took longer to reflect. He agreed that team processes were an important factor in the learning that had gone on, allowing ideas to be contextualized. Key here is the shift (sometimes reported as being achieved with an element of frustration in relation to the learning experience) to a new professional identity and related set of behaviours. The students were no longer 'design students pursuing an individualized path', their attitudes had changed and they had become designers, working together to solve the problems brought by real clients. This is an important learning development, contributing to the employability agenda for these design students.

Learning through problem solving

Each team worked with pupils in one school to provide solutions to design issues brought by those pupils. Undergraduate learning was prompted experientially, arising from the need to overcome the vagaries of team disagreements, inability to access pupil clients when needed, and the uneven progress made. The course leaders agreed that students were offered the important learning experience of a designer needing to 'bounce back' from feeling themselves under-valued, particularly as the launch of the project had presented a somewhat 'rosy picture' of the problem-free journey of working together on a client-focused project to a deadline. It was particularly insightful that, when the four teams came together, they were able to see how others were (or were not) working:

> I understand that the design process is different for different design courses, and how their thinking varies from ours…I've learned that I'm not narrow minded – it has taught me to think 'outside the box'.
> (Graphic Design student)

The cross-disciplinary teams (each group linked with one of the schools deliberately included students from both Graphics and Spatial Design) did learn from one another, and had to come up with parameters which addressed particular team-related problems by adapting their existing skills. This enabled and encouraged the sharing of work and what CL1 referred to as a 'raising of the bar' effect. The most effective teams were able to see a problem as a whole, encouraged to knock down boundaries rather than staying within their disciplinary safety zone. However, some focus group responses indicated a different sort of problem solving:

I learned from the realization how to get things done off my own back…you have to constantly bug people to get what you want.
(Spatial Design student)

Employability is addressed implicitly here by students learning the skills of sustaining a project by themselves, of chasing team members to achieve a shared outcome, and of taking responsibility when things go wrong. This is the kind of tacit and reactive learning theorized by Eraut (2000), and is acquired, as he suggested, in a non-formal (in this case, off-campus) setting.

Learning through time management
Student focus groups expressed a tension in relation to time management. For some students, the timetable was simply too condensed, adding to the stress and pressure. For others, the relatively short time scale was not perceived as a problem if/when the project had been well-organised and students had been able to communicate easily with their clients. CL1 also commented on the valuable opportunity afforded to the students to learn the right and wrong way to approach time management, particularly when some groups ended with only three weeks of college time and had to explore ways of tempering the design process.

However, the real clash came between undergraduate and school timetables, which resulted in students confronted with (and having to find ways of dealing with) a different time frame to the one in which they were used to working. This was partly explained by the legislative dimension restricting the flexibility with which schools could engage, and the sense that schools were too stretched. YDP thus, albeit inadvertently, offered undergraduate students a kind of 'critical vocationalism' (Usher et al 1997) in which learning took place in a climate of social responsibility as opposed to instrumental models of vocational learning. This unpredicted critical vocationalism included insight into dissonances between workplace cultures and the university, and represented an unintended learning outcome.

This linked to learning around issues of personal responsibility, of putting one's 'personal weight' on the line to chase things, to think on one's feet, to be doggedly determined, again, key elements of an employability skills package. The learning that ensued as a

result of the need to manage time creatively, can be viewed as a significant example of the attributes of divergent thinking present in creative industries graduates.

Learning from the relationship with clients

In addition, the learning reported by a number of student responses was about experiencing different forms of client relationship. In the case of the partnership with the primary school, students had to draw out of their clients the particular problem they had with their school, and this had to be disseminated in their own language. Given the young age of the primary school clients, undergraduates came up with a creative 'monsters and super-heroes' approach, in which positive ideas for their school were represented through drawings of super-heroes, in contrast to the problems with their school which were presented through representations of monsters. Each project involved extensive negotiation, as pupils wanted to see every stage of the development and to understand what the design was about, as well as political negotiation to ensure design ideas retained a focus. Students had to learn to rephrase design jargon, to mediate their use of technical language without appearing patronising, and to learn to let go when the pupils were enthused by particular ideas.

Unfortunately, it emerged from the focus groups that students found it hard to get to see their primary clients as often as they wanted. They reported being sometimes fobbed off by teachers, who were perceived as unhelpful at sharing information. The presence of a Head teacher committed to the YDP was reported as making liaison far easier:

> I was disappointed at the lack of involvement… especially when we had been briefed about the 'continual conversation between the designers and the client team'.
> (Graphic Design student)

However, a striking aspect of the YDP, which would not have occurred in more traditional briefs, was that the clients (pupils) were less inhibited than traditional business clients, had no preconceptions, and generally were receptive to a dialogue in an open and exploratory way. This enabled the students to be engaged in pushing the pupils, and to some extent radicalizing them about design. The pupil voice came through in a way which challenged

(as one CL suggested) the cliché of design practice, in which architects do not listen to their clients. This was a surprise learning outcome, for a number of students expressed initial misgivings about meeting their clients:

> I felt anxiety about presenting to the schools.
> (Graphic Design student)

In terms of employability, this is an important contribution to undergraduate design learning, in which listening skills, empathy and responsiveness to needs can be demonstrated in an authentic setting. This application of deep learning utilizes reflection-on-action in an off-campus, extra-curricular context, and can be equated to 'transfer' of academic understanding (Smith et al 2007).

Learning technical skills

Technically, Graphics students reported learning first-hand about model making, about moving beyond 2D and looking at a 3D space, about new software skills and about research skills (for primary pupils, this was expressed as 'what do you like about…?'). Spatial students reported finding it helpful to learn technical skills from their peers (for example, use of graphics in board presentations), and from the media students who were filming and photographing the work in progress:

> Doing the YDP opened up the 'identity' of design, as opposed to my specialism…I have taken a much more overall view.
> (Spatial Design student)

Ironically, the focus groups revealed the team working with the primary school had to learn not to use technical language, an example of engaged thinking relating to a non-campus setting: something they agreed was useful (and unusual). For CL2, the YDP mirrored design practice, in that students were learning and utilizing a complex set of skills in a cyclical experience as a group, and in relation to their clients. They were able to reflect upon the ways their own design skills had been enhanced, and they had to negotiate with other design students. This fulfilled the working practices of collaborative interdisciplinary

design, and highlighted individual strengths and weaknesses: although the latter was an unnerving experience for some students and needed to be supported:

> I appreciate the process that we as a course use in order to tackle design problems a lot more…the real world of design is often confusing and poorly organised. I'm learning how to deal with this.
> (Graphic Design student)

Ironically, some of the comments merely confirmed the status quo:

> I learned I don't want to be a spatial designer.
> (Graphic Design student)

Student engagement with school settings (for the first time since they had left themselves) highlighted for them the differences from their undergraduate experiences, with issues reported as ignorance about design and a lack of inclusion of the pupil voice (despite pupils acting as clients). Although the industry-based mentors did not contribute to technical learning quite as much as the tutors had envisaged, with logistics precluding more than minimal contact, undergraduates acknowledged their tutors had acted as de facto mentors:

> We met our design mentor once for two hours, which didn't really help technically.
> (Graphic Design student)

Conclusion

The undergraduate design students who took part in YDP learned a great deal from working with pupils as clients in the context of a school-based off-campus experience. Unlike some other initiatives under the banner of Widening Participation, YDP is not about a simplistic approach to 'selling HE to kids'. The collaborative partnership between HE students (as ambassador designers), schools (as authentic clients) and industry mentors (as experts at a distance) is primarily about enhancing pupil experiences of design through a social justice agenda. This research established that, at the same time, YDP enabled

undergraduate design students to learn off-campus, partly as apprentices and partly as designers, in an authentic context, thus contributing to a range of skills, attributes and behaviours aligned in current discourse with employability:

> I thought it's great to link secondary – tertiary – professional levels.
> (Graphic Design student)

Although the tensions inherent in the kind of team relationships were difficult (see similar issues described in Rowley 2003) they did represent an authentic experience. In fact, tutors reported that although other types of campus-based briefs (more polished, more controlled) may have offered greater opportunities for learning occupational design skills, the YDP offered the challenges of mastering the softer interdisciplinary skills at the core of the employability agenda in HE. As such, the YDP encapsulated aspects of deep learning through its situated, project focus, an interesting complement to the traditional undergraduate experience. This deep learning came partly from undergraduate students coping with a higher level of uncertainty through a more exposed self-direction than previous learning situations, and partly through the necessity to 'transfer' (Smith et al 2007) the academic to an authentic design setting:

> YDP enhanced the view that working with and for people was important to me.
> (Spatial Design student)

> YDP opened up something else career-wise to consider.
> (Spatial Design student)

Given the recommendations by the HEA (2006) emphasising the need for learning outcomes to be identified, and agreed as a contract, it is possible students would have benefited from clearer guidelines, preparation and orientation on the learning processes they were going through, making explicit the enhancement of skills through practical experiences. This simply requires a more overt acknowledgement of the skills, behaviours and attributes associated with employability. Because the undergraduates were relatively autonomous, (they had to manage their own time), and because they were dependent on

others (unlike the example reported in Smith et al 2004) they experienced moments of uncertainty, anxiety, disorientation and being, as some put it, 'thrown in at the deep end'. This might have been considered a risk by the HEI, but the opportunity to personalize their learning in the context of such a creative work-based project outweighed other concerns.

In the current policy climate, with employability high on the agenda, a key question for the HE sector generally would seem to be what sort of non-formal learning works best in practice, and what sorts of partnerships are likely to improve the undergraduate learning experience. The lesson from YDP is that authentic partnerships, brokered by a neutral but well resourced and high profile Foundation, can deliver new learning opportunities in design which align with existing employability discourses, but which simultaneously challenge them:

I now realise the area I am going to work in will be different but exciting.
(Spatial Design student)

By being put in an innovative off-campus learning environment and transferring knowledge from one situation to another (Eraut 2000) these design students learned a range of employability skills in a tacit and reactive way.

Recommendations
In the context of researching the YDP as it impacted on the learning of design undergraduates in one HEI, four recommendations can be made which can be applied across the sector. First, both tutors felt a small amount of pump-priming resource needed to be provided as a 'set-up' fee, to avoid teams 'scrabbling around'. Thus, a key recommendation is that to work effectively as experiences in which employability skills can be acquired, such collaborative projects require sufficient resourcing from the start. Second, HEIs are currently searching for partners with whom to deliver employability skills. A range of soft interdisciplinary skills relevant to employability have been identified and reported on. Using school pupils as clients in the YDP enables an authentic undergraduate learning experience to occur, outside of formal settings. As an implicit by-product, pupils and teachers gain enhanced understanding about HE, thus contributing to the Widening Participation agenda. This is relevant beyond the design discipline. Third, in the context of engaging industry partners to underpin employability learning, rather than being a

figurehead, tutors agreed industry mentors need to act more as project managers, 'caretaking' the project in the context of an authentic design consultancy, and possibly offering a careers talk in schools on what it means to be a designer. The mentor role needed to be to act as a more intense catalyst, and thus a more important part of the process and dialogue. Fourth, questionnaire data suggested students were worried that they would be doing activities which did not contribute to their degree, so the YDP needed to be explicitly integrated into assessment points. This was important, as the normal live project is much more controlled, with a tutor selecting what one CL termed a 'lovely' creative brief and mediating or 'caretaking' the project.

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Until recently, Dr John Butcher was Director of Learning and Teaching at University College Falmouth, where this research was undertaken. At Falmouth he was responsible for the strategic direction of the college's Learning and Teaching Research Centre, their specialist PGCHE, and engagement with Widening Participation initiatives. Previously he was Staff Tutor in Education at the Open University. He has published many articles on teacher development in Education journals. His book *Developing Effective 16-19 Teaching Skills* (2005) was based on his professional doctorate. His current research interests include enhancing professional development in HE, formative assessment in HE and school/HE partnerships.

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