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# Creating entrepreneurial sports management graduates

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## **Sporty spice? Creating entrepreneurial Sports Development and Sports Management graduates**

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### **Objectives**

Given the high unemployment rates being experienced by graduates, the importance of small business start-up has increased significantly, with greater priority being placed upon the development of entrepreneurial skills across the educational sector. However, there is a limited literature considering the student experience and issues involved with supporting non-Business discipline students attaining entrepreneurial competencies. This study explores the attitudes and experience of Sports Development and Sports Management students towards entrepreneurship education highlighting, best practice from a pedagogical perspective.

### **Prior Work**

There is limited literature discussing the impact and issues involved with the effective delivery of entrepreneurship education in non-Business related disciplines. The existing literature highlights the value and impact of this approach suggesting it should be offered as a core subject across all educational levels (e.g. secondary school, further and higher education). However, there is recognition within the literature that there is a requirement for an extended evidence base across different subject disciplines.

### **Approach**

One hundred and twenty two Sports Development and Sports Management students on an undergraduate degree were interviewed over a two year period using a semi-structured research instrument. The focus and content of the questionnaire was developed from prior studies undertaken in the field, measuring the impact and value of entrepreneurship education upon attitudes, knowledge and career choice.

### **Results**

The results found that Sports Development and Sports Management students were typically enterprising by nature due to their prior experience in coaching and training within their respective sports disciplines. The majority of students indicated that they were attracted to a future entrepreneurial career in a sports related discipline. This was driven by the potential of an entrepreneurial career option and the limited alternative choices. Sports Development and Sports Management students were characterised by their mature attitudes towards their career development and future inclination regarding an entrepreneurial career choice.

### **Implications**

The results will inform the teaching of entrepreneurship education to non-Business discipline specialist students in terms of the effective construction of entrepreneurship curriculum. Best practice in terms of customised subject informed teaching material, guest talks and interactive pedagogical practice are highlighted.

### **Value**

This study will be of interest to entrepreneurship education providers delivering content to non-Business disciplines at all levels and aid them in the construction of their curriculum to provide fit for purpose provision.

### **Introduction**

This study explores the attitudes and experience of Sports Development and Sports Management students towards entrepreneurship education highlighting best practice from a pedagogical perspective. Kothari and Handscombe (2007) suggest that the University sector should

provide their graduates with the business skills that will equip them for their future career. Indeed, the current on-going global economic recession has resulted in high graduate unemployment and has forced graduates to consider alternative career choices such as a business start-up (Roffe, 2010). Consequently, there has been an increase in the provision of entrepreneurship education globally owing to its potential social, economic and educational benefits (Charney and Libecap, 2000; Matlay and Carey, 2007). Indeed, entrepreneurship education has been mooted as an opportunity to combat the on-going unemployment and poverty problems (Acs, 2006). Rae et al. (2011) identify the need for all undergraduate students to develop an enterprising mindset, experience, creative thinking, confidence, social and communication skills as part of their degree programme. Given the current high unemployment rates being experienced by graduates in the UK, the need for small business start-up has increased significantly, with greater priority being placed upon the development of entrepreneurial skills across the educational sector (Jones et al, 2011).

Ball (2005) stated that the hospitality, leisure, sports and tourism industries are archetypal entrepreneurial businesses which contributed significantly to UK employment (10% plus). Significant employment was created from food service outlets, guest houses, health and fitness clubs, hotels and tourist attractions. The majority of such businesses being micro-sized and independently owned. Within the sports industry context, there has been significant growth in the coaching and fitness type businesses in recent years. Similarly, Southall et al., (2003) noted that the sports industry has grown exponentially in the last 20 years in comparison to generic business growth and represents the sixth largest global industry. Ball (2005) also recognised the importance of sports related businesses throughout Africa as a source of employment, wealth creation and innovation. The Owner/Managers involved in such enterprises require the skills and knowledge to initiate a business start-up with the requisite resources and thereafter the business acumen to survive and prosper. Effective support and training must be provided to nascent sport focused entrepreneurs to enable such businesses to prosper and grow.

There is a limited literature considering the student experience and issues involved with supporting non-Business specialist discipline students attaining entrepreneurial competencies. This study will inform academia and the enterprise education community and assist the construction of effective programmes of study for Sports Development and Sports Management students. The paper is structured as follows: commencing with a review of the relevant literature and a description of the study locality and the enterprise education programme concerned. Thereafter, the methodology employed within the study is outlined. The subsequent section provides the results of the research alongside the key themes of the results. The study concludes by providing a discussion and conclusion on the significance of the study which are contrasted against the extant knowledge.

## Literature

The SME community in the UK remains an essential contributor to economic prosperity (Jones et al., 2008). Similarly, Baldassarri and Saavala (2006) have noted that Europe needs more entrepreneurs willing to undertake a business start-up in the current economic climate (Jones et al., 2008). Ratten and Ratten (2011) identify that sport companies need to be entrepreneurial to stay ahead of their competition. Moore (2008) suggests that women encounter barriers in their pursuit of careers in the management of sport and notes the importance of management education in overcoming this barrier.

Matlay and Carey (2007) support this, suggesting that enterprise education is being regarded as the panacea for stagnating economic activity. Carey and Matlay (2010) note that the university sectors have been encouraged to consider both self-employability and employability within their course construction. Enterprise education has emerged as one of UK Governments' key drivers to develop individuals with higher level general skills, effectively equipped to function in an enterprising manner and capable of recognising and exploiting emerging opportunities (Jones and Iredale, 2010). Previously, Gibb (1993) suggested that typically enterprise education is not focused directly at encouraging entrepreneurial activity its major objective is to assist in the development of enterprising individuals (Gibb, 1993; Packham et al., 2010). Enterprise education operates with the intention of modifying the way people are taught as well as what they learn (Iredale, 2002; Jones and Iredale, 2010). This result confirmed the findings of a prior study undertaken by the Higher Education Careers Service Unit (1999) which found that '*entrepreneurial and business skills had been least developed by university experiences*' (Sleap, 2005: 8). For the purposes of this study, entrepreneurship education is defined as the structured formal conveyance of entrepreneurial knowledge (Young 1997). Whilst, Anderson and Jack (2008) describe entrepreneurial knowledge as the concepts, skills and mentality required by owner/managers.

There is limited literature discussing the impact and issues involved with the effective delivery of entrepreneurship education in non-Business related disciplines. Hynes (1996) emphasised the need to teach entrepreneurship to non-business students, who have a business idea but did not have the business knowledge to develop it further. Shinnar et al. (2009) identify that student and faculty views on entrepreneurship differ significantly, particularly in terms of students' occupational aspirations. Furthermore, they noted interest among non-business students suggests a significant opportunity to expand provision of entrepreneurship education beyond business schools. For example, Sleep and Reed (2006) identify that there is minimal feedback from graduates about the value of university experiences towards their working life. Jones (2010) suggests that entrepreneurship education is becoming a ubiquitous form of education which naturally falls across faculty and subject discipline boundaries. Teixeira and Forte (2009) suggests that it is essential that entrepreneurship programmes are offered to all academic disciplines as it is essential to stimulate everybody to become entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the author argues that entrepreneurship education providers must understand the value that graduates can achieve from provision and the potential opportunities to be attained from an entrepreneurial career. Existing examples are limited but include Henry and Treanor (2010) who explored enhancing employable skills within the UK veterinary sector. O'Rourke (2010) discusses the use of cross institutional student pioneers to act as ambassadors and advocates for enterprise within a University. Their objectives were to share and generate ideas on how to motivate other students to develop enterprise skills, promotion of enterprise activities, networking, creation of enterprise resources and guides and feedback on enterprise in modules and courses. Brizek and Poorani (2005) suggest a need for entrepreneurship courses on hospitality and tourism programmes. The authors identified a lack of provision and a high demand from students. Carey and Naudin (2006) identified that entrepreneurship education was required in the creative industries occupations and that it should be embedded within their courses of study. They also promoted the need for close relationships with external organisations, industry and practitioners. Souitaris et al. (2007) evaluated the impact of entrepreneurship education on science and engineering students and found that the programme enhanced entrepreneurial attitudes and intention. Penaluna and Penaluna (2009) evaluated the impact of entrepreneurship education in art and design disciplines. The authors argue that curriculum development should incorporate 'business' acumen in all programmes outside business schools and should develop the fundamental skills for developing and exploiting 'creativity'.

In 2005, Parkhouse and Pitts identified that there had been a significant growth of Sports Development and Sports Management programmes within the USA and globally. However, despite this, Moore (2008) suggests that sport management education has not been particularly effective in assisting efforts to expand managerial opportunities for women within the sports industry. Ball (2005) identifies that the sport discipline seems to have less provision for entrepreneurship related study. The author found only 11 universities as offering entrepreneurship related modules in 19 programmes. Where available the entrepreneurship modules were typically optional rather than compulsory, and were generally offered in the latter stages of programmes of study where their value and impact were lessened as career choices might already have been made. In the USA, Borgese (2007) study of business graduate students considered whether sports entrepreneurs were born or could be made via teaching instruction. His study although not statistically significant found that sports entrepreneurs could indeed be successfully tutored to create viable sports based enterprises. Borgese identified that the following knowledge was essential to learn in order to become successful sports entrepreneurs: entrepreneurial processes, traits and behaviours, business foundations, communications and interpersonal skills, digital skills, economics, information management, and operations management. In a later study, Borgese (2010) explored suggested course content for an entrepreneurship programme from a teacher's perspective. Borgese found that content related to communication and interpersonal skills, financial management, marketing management, and business foundations were considered the most significant. Whilst Martin et al. (2008) recommends that use of problem based learning activities to enable sports students to develop employability skills in addition to the application of content knowledge. Such activities were found to effectively encourage the development of lifelong learning skills. Ball in 2005 suggested that minimal direct research has been undertaken in the subject areas of hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism regarding student perceptions of their need for entrepreneurship teaching. Thereafter, Sleep (2005) undertook research on sport science students regarding their skills set provided by their university experience. The students surveyed felt that their course had assisted them to develop work skills such as personal and communication skills but there was a lack of exposure to relevant business related skills (e.g. commercial awareness, networking, entrepreneurship, financial skills and awareness of a work culture' (2005: 8). Sleep and Reed (2006) reported that the majority of sport graduates (over 70%)

believed that they lacked development in several business skills including commercial awareness; networking; entrepreneurship; financial skills and awareness of work culture.

The review of the literature has revealed a limited consideration of entrepreneurship education within sports related programmes. This study explores the attitudes and experience of Sports Development and Sports Management students towards entrepreneurship education. The key research question posed within this study is therefore:

Does entrepreneurship education have a beneficial impact on Sports Development and Sports Management students in their attitudes towards an entrepreneurial career?

### **Methodology**

One hundred and twenty sports first year Sports Development and Sports Management students on an undergraduate degree were interviewed over a two year period using a semi-structured research instrument. The focus and content of the questionnaire was developed from prior studies undertaken in the field measuring the impact and value of entrepreneurship education upon attitudes, knowledge and career choice.

### **Design/methodology/approach**

Overall, 122 students from the University of Glamorgan who had undertaken a Sports Development and Sports Management degree were involved in semi-structured interviews between the years 2011-2013. Participating students were drawn from cohorts of undergraduate programmes on a random sample basis, although allowing for an equal gender-specific distribution. All students undertook an Entrepreneurial Skills module as a core module on their programme. Each student was interviewed individually on a face-to-face basis for around 30 minutes by a member of the research team following their first year course of study. An equal gender split was achieved, with 60 male and 62 female students interviewed, all between the ages of 18 and 32.

### **Research Procedure**

A semi-structured data collection method was selected to enable the study to explore the themes identified in Jones et al. (2008) namely entrepreneurial attitudes, future career motivations for study and reflections on best practice. The authors decided to focus on a qualitative perspective to reveal the "rich" data underpinning these themes (King, 1994). Within each interview, an element of flexibility was retained via open-ended questions of inquiry whereby the interviewer controlled the timing of the individual discussion to enable a full exploration of the emergent themes (Jones et al., 2011). The interview questions were grouped into themes that followed a sequence that was controlled by the interviewer. This method enabled flexibility so that the interviewer could elaborate or clarify any answers provided around the key areas of perceived impact of the course. The evaluation of entrepreneurial attitude remains very topical (Packham et al., 2010) and recognised as a valid form of academic enquiry towards future entrepreneurial activity (Krueger et al., 2000).

Previously, entrepreneurial attitude was recognised as an accurate predictor of planned behaviour (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Souitaris et al., 2007). The objective of this research was to explore these issues in greater depth in the particular context of Sports Development and Sports Management students. Three types of questions were utilised namely i.e. introductory, follow-up and probing. The introductory questions enabled both the interviewer and interviewee to familiarise themselves with the research process and key questions. These questions also allowed the development of further avenues of conversation around the key research areas. Thereafter, follow up and probing questions allowed the researcher to explore additional data and elaborate and confirm relevant issues (Aaker et al., 1998). All interviews were undertaken on a face-to-face basis at the University of Glamorgan following the Entrepreneurial Skills module. Two cohort groups were involved in the process between 2011-2013. Individual students were asked their consent to participate in the research, and 120 out of 136 consented (88%). Each interview was digitally recorded with permission being sought on initial contact with the respondent. This process of data analysis involved a process of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification in the analysis of the qualitative data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The content of these interviews was transcribed, contrasted and compared to identify key emergent themes (Packham et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2011). Student anonymity is preserved through an anonymous coding system within which each student is identified by a number (e.g. Student 01).

## Results

The section presents the key findings of the study. Some basic cohort demographics are provided to provide background regarding the student surveyed. An equal gender split was achieved, with 60 male (49.2%) and 62 female (50.8%) students interviewed, all between the ages of 18 and 32. In total, 118 or 96% of the students surveyed were from the UK, the others were classified as international students from a range of countries. All the students surveyed were full time students. Respondents were asked to identify any part time employment roles they undertook to support their degree studies. Overall, 58 of the students were employed in a part time job. Just over half of these were working in generic employment roles such as bar work or supermarkets. The remaining 23 (19%) students were undertaking employment in sports related occupations including sports coaching in a variety of sports, fitness gym, dance instructor, life guard and personal trainer. Several students stressed the importance of such employment. Representative comments included:

*"Working in the gym has giving me a great experience of working in a busy sports business. I have been able to use many of the skills from my degree...."*

(Student 5)

*"I work as a self-employed fitness coach and it's been a really positive experience and will be my career direction following my degree."*

(Student 27)

*"I think my degree coursework grades have been better as a result of my work experience as a football coach."*

(Student 43)

These quotes reinforce the importance that relevant work experience can bring towards the students programme of study. This is especially true of students working in a self-employed capacity and its relevance towards an entrepreneurial career choice.

## Prior Entrepreneurial Experience

Table 1 confirms the levels of prior entrepreneurial experience undertaken by Sports Development and Sports Management students. Table 1 display results firstly by frequency of response and thereafter as a percentage of total survey. Representative qualitative comments are thereafter provided to illustrate the key themes apparent within the data.

Category	No impact 1	Strongly Dis- benefited 2	Dis- Benefited 3	Benefited 4	Strongly Benefited 5
Enterprise training in school	4, 3.3	0	4, 3.3	36, 29.5	54, 44.3
Enterprise training in university	4, 3.3	0	8, 6.6	45, 36.9	55, 45.1
Work experience in a small business	0	0	4, 3.3	36, 29.5	36, 29.5
Work experience in a large business (>250)	0	0	0	20, 16.4	5, 4.1
Government enterprise training	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 1: Prior Entrepreneurial Experience**

Overall, it was satisfying to note that the majority of students had undertaken some form of enterprise education at school. The value of enterprise related training in school can be seen with 74% of all respondents identifying it's benefit/strong benefit. The following comments support this:

*"I enjoyed doing Entrepreneurship in School through the Young Enterprise Scheme. I think I had a natural aptitude for it."*

Student 72

*"We did quite a lot of entrepreneurship in school and it was good. We set up a business and I learned a lot of skills especially in team working."*

Student 39

The provision of enterprise training in university was also seen to be beneficial with 82% of respondents claiming it had a benefit/strong benefit. Typical comments included:

*"I have learned a lot in the Enterprise Skills module the teacher has provided a lot of sports related examples of successful entrepreneurs."*

Student 33

*"We had a lot of sports related entrepreneurs as guest speakers and it was great to hear about their experiences and life stories."*

Student 89

*"The Enterprise skills module has convinced me that I can be a personal trainer running my own business."*

Student 12

It is gratifying to note that University level enterprise education was typically well received. Students appreciated the value of the learning experience and its potential relevance to a future career. Work experience in a small business was well received with 82% of students stating that the experience was a benefit/strong benefit. Representative comments included:

*"I did a work experience in a local gym which was great as I got to do loads of different jobs."*

Student 23

*"I have tried for a lot of jobs in gyms and Leisure Centres but due to a lack of experience I did not get the job. The work experience was great in that it gave me experience and has resulted in me getting paid employment in the Leisure Centre."*

Student 90

Work Experience in a large business was less prevalent with only 20% of respondents gaining this experience but again it was well received with all students describing it as a benefit/strong benefit. The prevalence of experience in smaller business could be explained by the majority of sports related businesses being small or micro sized enterprises with fewer opportunities to work in larger sports related businesses. No respondents identified undertaking any form of Government enterprise training.

### Attitudes towards Entrepreneurship

Respondents were asked to identify their attitudes and understanding of an entrepreneurial career choice. Table 2 provides a summary of responses which are discussed in depth hereafter:

Category	No Impact 1	Strongly Dis- benefited 2	Dis- Benefited 3	Benefited 4	Strongly Benefited 5
Well known entrepreneurs with high media profiles have provided inspiration for you to consider a similar career.	24, 19.7	0	4, 3.3	2, 1.6	32, 26.2
You know someone personally who started a business in the past 2 years.	28, 23.0	0	16, 13.1	32, 26.2	36, 29.5
	No Opinion	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
You are aware of a good business opportunity	16, 13.1	0	8, 6.6	68, 55.7	20, 16.4
You possess the skills to start up a business	4, 3.3	4, 3.3	36, 29.5	36, 29.5	32, 26.2

You possess the knowledge to start up a business	4, 3.3	0	40, 32.8	48, 39.3	20, 16.4
You possess the experience to start up a business	28, 23.0	16, 13.1	40, 32.8	25, 20.5	5, 4.1
You would consider starting a new business a desirable career choice.	0	23, 18.9	47, 38.5	33, 27.0	8, 6.6
You would consider an entrepreneurial career option due to the lack of career alternatives.	20, 16.4	0	28, 23.0	44, 36.1	22, 18.0
The fear of failure would prevent you from considering setting up your own business	24, 19.7	25, 20.5	13, 10.7	28, 23.0	25, 20.5

**Table 2: Attitudes to Entrepreneurial Experience**

Students were asked whether they knew well known high profile entrepreneurs who had inspired them. Well known entrepreneurs with have provided inspiration for you to consider a similar career. This question provided a mooted response with only just over half of students responding. Of these 26.2% were supportive of the notation. A typical comment included:

*"Our tutor gave us examples of successful sporting entrepreneurs like Les Mills, Dave Whelan, Zef Eisenberg, Pierre André Senizergues, Tony Hawk and Kevin Plank which were inspiring examples. It made me think about how I could use my sporting skills in a business."*

Student 108

*"Knowing why sports entrepreneurs are successful is important to understand that I could also be an entrepreneur!"*

Student 14

This evidence suggests that the use of contextualised stories of entrepreneurs can be an effective method in influencing students regarding the potential of an entrepreneurial career choice. However, this is particularly relevant for students with an existing interest in an entrepreneurial career choice. Thereafter, students were asked whether they personally know someone who had started a business in the past two years that had acted as a positive role model. In total, 55.7% of respondents identified that they had been positively influenced by an entrepreneurial role model. Representative comments included:

*"My dad runs his own financial services business. So I have seen both the pluses and minuses of running a business."*

Student 35

*"I have worked for company X (a football coaching business). The founding entrepreneur (Mr X) has inspired me to consider setting up my own sports company."*

Student 12

These comments suggest that students do receive adequate exposure to entrepreneurial role models through family, media, life experiences and education and that they can have a beneficial impact. Thereafter, several questions were related to the student's entrepreneurial capability and intentions. The initial question queried whether they were aware of a good business idea. Overall, approximately two-thirds of respondents provided a positive response (72%) in comparison to 29.5% of students who answered negatively. The following comments illustrate meaning:

*"I have an idea for a business based on providing outside fitness classes for working people. There are very little costs involved and it's a brilliant concept."*

Student 31

*"My business idea is based on something I have seen in the USA. It's about providing dedicated fitness classes (like Zumba) in business hotels. I have done some market research and I found a real demand for it."*



Student 25

*"My business idea involves offering yoga for pregnant women at their home, the set up costs are quite low and my research has shown there is a demand for this service".*

Student 13

*I don't have an original idea at the moment. I don't have that sort of mind*

Student 4

The results suggest that undergraduate students are capable of identifying original sport orientated business start-up ideas in surprising quantities which can be inspired by exposure to the industry or an original idea. Thereafter, the students were asked three questions regarding their entrepreneurial capabilities in terms of skills, knowledge and experience. In terms of Entrepreneurial skills, 55.7% of students strongly agreed/agreed that they felt they possessed appropriate business skills with 32.8% disagreeing. Entrepreneurial knowledge competencies revealed a virtually identical result with 55.7% in agreement and 32.8% in disagreement. Overall, these results could be judged disappointing in that there was a lack of student confidence in their entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. The following comments are representative:

*"I know I have the sports coaching skills to be successful. I also think I can be successful as a business person. I think I have a lot still to learn about accounts, laws and insurance but I think I know the basics and it's about giving it a go and learning as you go...."*

Student 78

*"I believe it's a combination of things. I teach fitness classes (e.g. Body Pump, body Attack, Kettle Works) and I know how to do that as I have been trained to do it. Acting as a small business person is within my abilities and I am determined and motivated to give it a go."*

Student 49

These supportive comments provide evidence that students have been able to acquire suitable entrepreneurial knowledge and skills to supplement their existing skills in Sports Development and Sports Management. However, it was apparent that there was a need to convince some Sports Development and Sports Management undergraduates regarding the attainability of an entrepreneurial career due to a lack of confidence and self-belief:

*"I don't think I am ready to be a self-employed I would rather learn the ropes by working for someone else."*

Student 29

*I have learned a lot about being an entrepreneur but I don't have the confidence to run my own business at the moment."*

Student 33

When queried regarding their entrepreneurial experience, only 24.6% of students felt that they possessed sufficient experience and 32.8% responded negatively. This suggests that there is a need to provide enhanced entrepreneurial experience and confidence and potentially additional entrepreneurial training. When questioned regarding whether they would consider starting a new business as a desirable career choice only 33.6% of students answered positively and 57.4% negatively.

*"I would like to have more support all the way through my degree. One Entrepreneurship module is not enough. I would like more support to allow me to set up a business as soon as I graduate"*

Student 31

*"I do not feel ready to start a business at this time in my life. I want to get some work experience first."*

Student 2

The above comments suggest that there is a need to provide more exposure to entrepreneurship education to enhance students' business knowledge and skills. Moreover, some of the comments indicate that there is a need to provide some form of early stage incubation support to enable Sports Development and Sports Management students to pre-test their idea with lots of support. Two further questions were asked exploring entrepreneurial motivations in different circumstances. Firstly, respondents were asked whether they would consider an entrepreneurial career option due to the lack of career alternatives. In response, 54.1% identified that they would consider such an option and 23% responded negatively. This suggests that undergraduate students are realistic in their aspirations within the current economic environment and the need to consider self-employment as a real alternative. Students were asked to consider whether the fear of failure would prevent them from setting up their own business. Overall, 43.5% of respondents confirmed that this was the case and only 31.2% disagreed with this notion. This suggests that there remain individual perception barriers in place to convince undergraduate students regarding the value of a business start-up career.

*"If on graduation I can't get a job then I will probably try being a self-employed fitness trainer. I do not want to end up working in a call centre or Tesco's in a job that I would hate. I want to work in the sporting industry and it's about making that happen."*

Student 85

*"I worry about running my own business. I will have a lot of debt when I finish my degree and I can only see more costs involved in setting up a business."*

Student 39

These contrasting comments suggest that some Sports Development and Sports Management students will be pushed into an entrepreneurial career through necessity due to the lack of job opportunities in the current economic environment. The second comment provides a contrasting view suggesting students already burdened by student debt feel daunted by the potential financial risk they face with a business start-up. The next section of the research instrument evaluated the students' future entrepreneurial intention (see Table 3). When questioned whether students would look to run their own business with 12 months of completion of their undergraduate studies only a minority of 37.5% of students agreed and 50.8% disagree. When asked whether they would take action towards running their own business within 1-3 years of completion of their studies the result was more positive with 52.5% responding positively and 26.2%. Finally, respondents were asked whether they would take positive action towards running their own business three years after completion of their studies. Overall 62.3% agreed with this option and 19.7% disagreed. The following quotes are again illustrative of this behaviour:

*"Because of the lack of jobs I am going to try being a self-employed tennis coach on graduation."*

Student 33

*"On graduation I am going to find a job with one of the big fitness gyms and get as much experience as I can. After that who knows maybe my own company in 3-5 years."*

Student 92

*"Maybe in 3 years I will look to start my own my business offering football skills to people with disabilities, there is a lack of offerings in the UK for people who have some form of disability. However, I need to get some money together first."*

Student 13

The comments confirm the diversity of opinion which these questions provided. There was a reluctance to commit to an immediate entrepreneurial career but this decreased with a greater commitment to the proposal after three years. This result verifies that Sports Development and Sports Management students have reservations about the combination of high levels of student debt and potential further investment in a business start-up.

Category	Not Relevant 1	Strongly Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
I will take positive action towards running my own business within 12 months of completion of my studies.	8, 6.7	25, 20.8	36, 30.0	45, 37.5	0
I will take positive action towards running my own business within 1-3 years of completion of my studies.	12, 9.8	20, 16.4	16, 13.1	60, 49.2	4, 3.3
I will take positive action towards running my own business 3 years plus.	12, 9.8	20, 16.4	4, 3.3	40, 32.8	36, 29.5

**Table 3: Future Entrepreneurial Intention**

The final question asked the students to consider their entrepreneurial personality (see Table 4). Overall, 69.7% of students identified agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestion. Only, 16.4% disagreed that they had an entrepreneurial personality. The following comments illustrate this trend:

*"I do think I am entrepreneurial by personality. I think I have lots of entrepreneurial traits and have been working as a self-employed tennis coach as well!"*

Student 33

*"The entrepreneurial tests we did with the lecturer demonstrated that I had an entrepreneurial personality. I agree with this I have always been good at seeing opportunities and making money out of them."*

Student 91

Not Relevant 1	Strongly Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
10, 8.2	20, 16.4		65, 53.3	20, 16.4

**Table 4: Entrepreneurial Personality**

The results and qualitative comments collected suggest that the student group typically possessed an entrepreneurial personality. This had been corroborated by the student's assessment of their own entrepreneurial personality within the Entrepreneurial Skills module. This provided a useful exercise as it gave the individual students more confidence in the recognition of their own entrepreneurial skills set. The entrepreneurial personality exercise led the students to appreciate their own competencies in facets such as opportunity recognition, leadership, self-management, team working, risk taking and communication. This exercise also enabled the students to understand their suitability for an entrepreneurial career and its relative attainability which previously had not been considered. The evidence collected in this study suggests that Sports Development and Sports Management students are entrepreneurial by nature. Indeed, many of them work within a self-employed capacity to support their undergraduate studies.

## Conclusions

This study has provided a novel study evaluating the experience of sports students towards entrepreneurship education. The literature review revealed a limited literature exploring the experience towards entrepreneurship education in non-business disciplines. The key research impact explored within this study was to investigate whether entrepreneurship education provided a beneficial impact towards Sports Development and Sports Management students and to assess the attitudes, perceptions and motivations. The evidence was drawn from a semi-structured interview method with 122 first year undergraduate students using a largely qualitative methodology to explore student's experiences towards entrepreneurship education.

Initial results confirmed the importance of employment experience towards their Sports Development and Sports Management degree which confirms Matlay and Carey's (2007) earlier study. Sports Development and Sports Management students are typically entrepreneurial in nature

with many operating as self-employed sports trainers. Therefore, it is natural and extremely beneficial for such students to undergo work placement training as it will enhance their skill set for their future careers. The respondents were asked to consider the value of prior entrepreneurial education they had received. It was pleasing to note that approximately 80% of students had been exposed to enterprise training in school and to the vast majority it had been well received. The respondent students commented favourably on the entrepreneurial skills module and knowledge that they had previously learned and the enthusiasm the learning has engendered within them. It can be tentatively stated that generic enterprise education at school level has long term value for graduate students especially in disciplines where self-employment is prevalent such as Sports Development and Sports Management. The University experience of enterprise education was recognised as a positive and beneficial experience with acclaim awarded to the use of sports entrepreneurs guest speakers and applied case study examples throughout the module (Hynes, 1996; Souitaris et al., 2007; Cheng et al., 2009). The use of work placements in small businesses was also identified as beneficial due to the wide range of experiences undertaken. This study would recommend that any placement policy associated with a Sports Development and Sports Management programme seek to utilise sports related SMEs whenever possible due to the diverse range of experiences available to the individual student (Bates, 2008). In terms of antecedent influences, knowledge of well-known entrepreneurs was not considered of particular importance. Greater significance was awarded to knowing an entrepreneur and the fact this had inspired several respondents to consider an entrepreneurial career choice. Overall, the evidence collated here suggests that Sports Development and Sports Management students prefer relevant examples within their course work although they may have been inspired by knowledge of an entrepreneur. Thus best pedagogical practice would be identified as use of relevant case studies.

The next series of questions explored student's suitability for an entrepreneurial career in terms of their awareness of a business opportunity and skills and knowledge to becoming an entrepreneur. The results were extremely positive suggesting that Sports Development and Sports Management students are capable of identifying a potential business idea and had great enthusiasm towards such a venture. The response regarding entrepreneurial skills and knowledge were less mixed with only half of students responding favourably. Some students exhibited enthusiasm based on their existing entrepreneurial experiences. However, others felt less confident and noted the need to acquire employment and business experience before considering such a venture. This evidence suggests the requirement for further applied entrepreneurial education to enhance knowledge and skills. A further question enquired whether students would consider an entrepreneurial career owing to the current economic environment. This question achieved approximately 2/1 majority in favour of the proposal which suggests that Sports Development and Sports Management students are savvy of the economic environment. Fear of business failure was identified as a real concern by the majority of students. There is a need to provide additional support and training (e.g. specialist incubation support) to enhance confidence and belief in an entrepreneurial career. Perhaps unsurprisingly given this lack of confidence was a reluctance to commit to an entrepreneurial career on graduation. However, the attitudes towards the option of an entrepreneurial career become significantly more favourable based on a business start-up three years after graduation. Student debt and the costs involved in a business start-up were identified as the key deterrents to an immediate business start-up. The final question confirmed that approximately 70% of Sports Development and Sports Management students felt that they had an entrepreneurial personality.

In conclusion, the results reinforce the importance of entrepreneurship education to non-Business disciplines. Indeed, in certain disciplines such as art and design, sport maintenance (e.g. sports physiotherapists) and certain medical disciplines (e.g. Chiropractic) a business start-up entrepreneurial career is highly complementary to the student's core subject skills, in that such disciplines often require a high proportion of self-employment (Penaluna and Penaluna, 2009). The findings support the positive impact of generic entrepreneurship education provided with the secondary school curriculum even if this is more enterprise and awareness raising exercise (Gibb, 1993; Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Henry et al., 2005). Such provision must continue and become embedded within secondary school curriculums. Thereafter, it must be the role of the University to provide context specific entrepreneurship education with the curriculum and student experience focused towards that discipline. In the case of Sports Development and Sports Management that would include relevant work experience, guest lecturers from sports entrepreneurs, and use of sporting businesses as case histories. Furthermore, graduate start-up could be encouraged by the provision of in-house incubators with expert advisors and support facilities. Reservations towards a Sports Development and Sports Management career were noted with regard to the impact of student debt plus the perceived threat of further personal expenditure from a business start-up. If the impact

of costs of a business start-up could be supported or reduced by a University then this might alleviate individual fears and encourage a start-up. Indeed, in the Sports Development and Sports Management discipline there is a clear opportunity for students to undertake paid activity on a basis of their expertise (e.g. sports coaching, running fitness classes). If this could be enabled via a specialist incubator it could represent a real driver for future entrepreneurial start-up. This study contributes to the limited extant knowledge on entrepreneurship education to Sports Development and Sports Management students. Best practice is identified in terms of curriculum and student support. The authors recognise that the results of this study are restricted to one university case study and further comparative research is required to validate and extend these findings.

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