

Sports Equipment Project Initial Evaluation Report



Dr Iain Lindsey
Dr Jimmy O’Gorman
Edge Hill University
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Executive Summary



- The Sports Equipment Project was instigated to design innovative frameworks for the development of sports equipment in Ghana that could be sourced, created and made in-country in a sustainable way. The project was facilitated by International Development through Sport (IDS) and delivered in collaboration between staff and students from the University of Ghana (UG), University for Development Studies (UDS) and the MA programme in Innovation Management at Central Saint Martins (CSM), University of the Arts, London.
- IDS commissioned Edge Hill University to undertake an evaluation of the Sports Equipment Project which focused on the effectiveness of collaboration in the project and the empowerment outcomes generated through the project. Evaluation data was collected from staff and students in all three universities through interviews, video diaries, email and text message interviews and focus groups.
- The status of student participants differed in all three universities with Ghanaian students mainly contributing on a voluntary basis and CSM students involved in the project as part of their programme of study. Students' capacity to collaborate on an equal basis was affected by their different statuses as well as the short, and to an extent misaligned, timescales allocated to the project. Students from the different universities also came to the project with different skills which also subsequently influenced their involvement.
- There was a lack of shared understanding between staff and students in the three universities as to the overall aims of the project and, especially, how it was to operate. While 'uncertainty' was key to enabling the learning outcomes desired for CSM students, the lack of shared understanding impeded planning for the project in Ghana. Students and some staff also expressed concern that the level of uncertainty limited the potential of the project to contribute effectively to development in Ghana.
- Communication between students in the UK and Ghana was challenging particularly because of issues of internet access and cost for Ghanaian students. Forms of communication that Ghanaian students already used were more successful and visual methods were particularly valued. Where some students were able to overcome communication challenges, mutually beneficial relationships developed.

- The constraints of the project limited the extent to which students could engage in equitable and reciprocal collaboration. Processes of information gathering and equipment design were mainly led by CSM students with Ghanaian students input mainly limited to answering questions or providing comments. CSM and Ghanaian students especially expressed disappointment at the limited extent of reciprocal collaboration.
- Students from all three institutions exhibited a wide range of existing skills and experiences that were perceived as useful in the early stages of the project. However, some of the constraints on effective collaboration shaped the opportunities to put into practice these skills in a disproportionate way, particularly for Ghanaian students.
- Whilst the reasons for student involvement in the project differed between the three universities, sport was observed as a significant motivational factor in enthusing students due to the realisation of the contribution sport could make to in-country development. The idea that sport could be used in such a malleable way was new to CSM students and involvement in the project therefore broadened their knowledge base and outlook. Similarly, for UG and UDS students, sport was a prime motivating factor for volunteering for the project. This ranged from a desire to either improve the sporting infrastructure in local communities in Ghana or to use sport to empower others.
- Empowerment for CSM students was most noticeable regarding the development of new skills centring on the problem solving, uncertain and innovative aspects of the project. Indeed, students from all groups noted learning about different cultures to be particularly interesting and thought provoking. Students viewed these skills as important for use in the wider context of their career aspirations
- The instilling of leadership qualities and skills through group and community work were perceived as the highly significant personal learning experience. Students viewed these skills as important for use in the context of their career aspirations, but more strongly, as skills that could be utilised for the benefit of others, particularly the local communities with which students had close personal ties
- CSM students presented sports equipment proposals as part of their assessed work on the project. Further work to progress sports equipment proposals towards feasibility testing and implementation is planned. The final version of this evaluation report will encompass this further stage of the project.

Section One: Introduction



The Sports Equipment Project was instigated to design innovative frameworks for the development of sports equipment in Ghana that could be sourced, created and made in-country in a sustainable way. The project was to be delivered in collaboration between staff and students from the University of Ghana (UG), University for Development Studies (UDS) and the MA programme in Innovation Management at Central Saint Martins (CSM), University of the Arts, London.

Thirty two students from CSM participated in the project, four fifths of whom were female. In University of Ghana, eleven male and eleven female students were involved in the project. Thirty UDS students took part in the project, again split evenly by gender as this was a specific criteria in the selection of students to be involved. All students from the UK and Ghana undertaking the project were allocated to one of six groups (denoted by colours). Three groups included students from CSM and UG and three included students from CSM and UDS.

International Development through Sport (IDS) provided facilitative support and information throughout the project and encouraged the three Universities to take the lead in developing the project. IDS requested ongoing feedback throughout the process and took actions to ensure that learning from the project would be disseminated.

IDS commissioned Edge Hill University to undertake an evaluation of the Sports Equipment Project. This report presents interim findings from the evaluation subsequent to the main period of data collection. A further round of data collection will be undertaken after piloting of selected sports equipment proposals has been undertaken. It is important to note that the evaluation was not intended or designed to assess the quality or viability of specific sport equipment proposals generated through the project.

The evaluation was guided by two research questions that were developed through discussion with IDS:

- 1) How effectively has collaboration between CSM, UDS and University of Ghana contributed to an integrated process of project development?
- 2) What have been the outcomes of the project in terms of empowerment of all stakeholders involved?

Conceptual literature on collaboration and empowerment guided the evaluation in addressing both of these research questions. Existing literature on collaboration highlighted the importance of issues such as the compatibility of desired aims, communication, trust building, equity, leadership and requirements for specific

collaborative skills. Besides these aspects, the research project also examined the effect of contextual issues in both the UK and Ghana countries on collaboration.

Empowerment is a commonly used concept in development studies which draws attention to the available opportunities for groups and individuals to put skills and abilities into practice. The research project examined both of these aspects including the variety of informational, psychological, material and social assets that may be enhanced by the project. The research also examined the extent to which any empowerment impacts are context-specific.

Section Two: Evaluation Methods



Due to the limitations of the geographical distances involved, a variety of innovative data collection methods were used within the evaluation. These methods were explained at the outset in meetings with CSM staff and students and through creating and distributing video presentations within UG and UDS. Details of each of the methods are provided in turn.

- Interviews were undertaken in person and by telephone with staff from all three Universities at the start of the Sports Equipment Project and after the initial student involvement had ceased. In total nine interviews were undertaken involving eleven members of staff involved in the project.
- Students were offered the opportunity to record video diaries during their involvement in the Sports Equipment Project either individually or in their groups. Students were given suggested issues to speak about in these recordings in different periods of the project. Five groups from CSM chose to take this option and recorded a total of seven group videos and seven individual recordings. Video cameras were made available within UDS and UG although only one student from UDS chose to record a video diary.
- Alternatively students could choose to contribute their perspectives via email and text message interviews. These were undertaken on an ongoing basis with the evaluators communicating a series of questions for the students to respond to. Nine UG students communicated by email and ten did so by text message. Three UDS students were involved in text message interviews and one UDS student took part in an email interview. Eight CSM students contributed to the evaluation through email interviews.
- Initial evaluation findings were disseminated in focus groups of students at CSM and UG after their initial involvement had ceased. These focus groups allowed students to comment on the early evaluation findings, as presented, and raise other issues they felt were important in the project. Unfortunately, due to geographical distances and term dates, it has been unable as yet to undertake a similar process with UDS students.

Learning Points

The utilisation of innovative data collection methods allowed learning to be gained regarding their potential effectiveness in evaluations such as this one:

- Data collection methods enacted 'at a distance' from research participants need to be aligned with existing communication channels and ways of working. Text messages with Ghanaian students worked well in this regard. Alternatively, students at UG indicated that they struggled to find additional time as a group to record video diaries.
- Individually, the methods used did not necessarily provide data of significant depth. However, using a variety of data collection methods with a range of participants may allow a more holistic perspective to be gained, as was the case in this evaluation.
- Students indicated that they welcomed the feedback sessions which demonstrated that their perspectives had been valued and had contributed to the evaluation.

Section Three: Contexts for Collaboration and Empowerment



Relative starting positions of empowerment within SEP

- Many staff involved in the project from all three institutions had limited experience in collaborative international project work. As one member of CSM staff noted:

In general for the college and university...I'm not aware of any experience of collaborations with Africa, so it's quite a challenge and is really worthwhile. So we have got a lot to learn and to gain from this.

- Students from all three institutions embarked on the project having diverse previous experiences from different geographical and cultural contexts. Students' range of existing skills, experiences and abilities shaped the capacity of individuals and groups to engage with the project and determined their relative starting positions and status within the project.
- CSM students particularly exhibited a wide range of international and cultural backgrounds, academic and life skills in different groups which both hindered and facilitated work within the groups at CSM.
- For one group within CSM, a range of different cultural experiences assisted work within the group and their capacity to engage with their Ghanaian counterparts, as indicated by one student:

The types of people that come into the project is the bottom line. If our group wasn't consisting of those people that were in our group the project would be completely different, the sheer fact that there was no tensions [sic] or any negative emotion, I think that helped.

- Alternatively, a student from another CSM group commented:

Sometimes I don't know and I can't articulate my feelings, it is just like I can't fully understand others ideas and I don't think that others can fully understand my idea, so in this way we can't work together very efficiently.

- Generally, CSM students reported existing skills gained academically through the MA at CSM and through past experience to be useful within the project. It was not uncommon for each group to have members with prior experience of group project management, although not in an international context. Students from both UDS and UG tended to have less experience on project work than their CSM

counterparts, creating different starting points of empowerment regarding the skill sets available within all groups.

- The majority of UG students identified that they had transferable skills they found useful in the early stages of the project. UG students noted connections between their current and past experiences and the perceived nature of the SEP. An indicative view from one student noted:

A course I took last semester named “Nutrition, sustainable livelihoods and extension”, which looked at some aspects of community development and behaviour change. Physical activity is an important part of nutrition hence I will say that the project relates partly to what I studied in the past.

- Although particularly problematic to all Ghanaian groups, UG students had greater potential to empower themselves by having access to, and utilising a wider range of technological and communication resources. As such, they were able put into practice their existing skills and experiences to effectively link with CSM counterparts to a greater extent than groups from UDS.
- UDS students tended to perceive local knowledge and cultural understandings, largely within rural communities they were familiar with, as key skills and assets important to the project. As one individual indicated:

I have also lived with...have studied the way of life of rural people, which is one of the most important tools when we talk about sports equipment project as it involves rural people. I also know common games rural people do play, e.g. football and some other local games.

- UDS and UG did begin the project in a relatively more empowered position than CSM in terms of the contextual local knowledge required for the success of the project. That is, CSM were largely dependent on the contribution of their Ghanaian counterparts to achieve the requirements of the project.

Learning Point

- It is important to take account of the different starting points of all stakeholders in relation to the requirements of a project such as this one. Prior to commencement of such a project, each stakeholder needs to be clear on what they and other stakeholders can contribute through the different skills and experiences that are available.

Different status of project for students in each of three universities

- The Sports Equipment Project was included as a specific component of the MA in Innovation Management at CSM that was designed to allow students to encounter and respond to 'uncertainty'. As a formal part of their programme of study, the CSM students were able to, and had to, devote significant time to the project leading up to a final assessment.
- Students at UG had volunteered for the project with the majority of them involved in it at the same time as undertaking their own separate programmes of study. The consequences of this for a number of UG students was captured by one who indicated:

My major hindrance has been academic work and time constraints, which pose challenges to my full involvement in the project.

- UDS students volunteered to be selected for involvement in the SEP programme. Their involvement was expected to be concentrated during and linked to the period of their Third Trimester Field Practical Programme (TTFPP) which is compulsory for all UDS students. These community-based placements began in May 2011 and prior to this there was an expectation that UDS students would communicate with CSM students in order to contribute to the project.
- One student from CSM in particular captured the consequences of the different ways the project involved students from the three universities:

The fact is that we have got a structured project which is deliverable and they are volunteering so I think the balance has tilted a little bit now ... but it is never going to be an equal relationship.

- Students from all three universities were, however, largely unaware of their different types of involvement in the project at the outset. That this understanding only developed as the project progressed is an important point given the timescales associated with student's involvement.
- From the formation of their groups, CSM students had what was considered to be a short period of approximately six weeks until they were required to present their assessed work in March 2011. One UG student recognised the difficulty caused by short timescales: 'they had deadlines we could not meet because of our extra busy schedules'.
- The problematic issue of timescales was magnified for groups comprising CSM and UDS students due to the misalignment of timescales for their academic involvement in the project. CSM students had completed their assessed work and their formal involvement in the programme prior to students at UDS beginning their TTFPP during which they were expected to undertake fieldwork for the SEP.

Learning Point

- As projects such as SEP are initially developed, consideration needs to be given to aligning the types and timescales of involvement amongst the different stakeholders. In circumstances where there is not parity in the involvement of different stakeholders, this fact and the likely resultant constraints should be communicated fully to all involved.

Section Four: Collaboration Findings



Developing Shared Aims and Understandings for the SEP

- At the outset of their involvement, staff and students from the three universities identified a diversity of aims that they hoped would be achieved through the Sports Equipment Project.
- A number of students in both Ghana and the UK spoke of their aspiration that the project could have a positive impact on sport in Ghana, as the following indicative comments attest to:

Initially, I thought of [the] great possibilities this project could bring to not only to children but also to local communities in Ghana. (CSM Student)

[SEP] is most welcoming as it seeks to transform our approach to sport and the way we obtain our sporting equipments. (UG Student)

- Some Ghanaian students also indicated a personal motivation for their voluntary involvement stating that they saw the project as an opportunity for learning about sport and the development of other skills, such as information gathering.
- Staff from the different universities more commonly identified potential benefits for students as an aim of the project. Such an aim is reflected in the following quotes from representatives of UG and CSM who saw the potential benefits of collaboration and uncertainty respectively:

Just the fact that [the students] are going to share knowledge, they're going to share ideas, they're going to build relationships which will help them in their future careers.

Dealing with failure and dealing with uncertainty and all those things are to happen. As long as my students learn from it then whatever happens will be useful.

- Staff from all three universities also hoped that the project would help to build international links that could continue to be beneficial to their institutions in the future.

- While these diverse aims of different stakeholders were not necessarily a barrier to effective collaboration, both students and staff from the UK and Ghana indicated their strong concerns about the lack of clarity as to the overall purpose of the project, as the following exemplar comments indicate:

It could have been further developed if [institutional stakeholders] were clearer about what was their main interest from this. If that had been the case to begin with I think that ... it could have helped the students to come up with even more defined ideas. (CSM Member of Staff)

Initially I was very confused and could not figure out the usefulness of the program and how it was going to effect the said development in the school children involved. (UG Student)

- Students and some staff from both the UK and Ghana were also unclear as to how the project was to operate and what different stakeholders were expected to contribute through their involvement. Many CSM students spoke of the lack of clarity in the brief that they had been provided for the project. In Ghana especially, staff indicated that this lack of clarity meant they could not plan effectively for the project. There were some indications that, in the absence of shared understanding, some Ghanaian students inadvertently gained unrealistic perceptions of the potential personal benefits of involvement in the project.

Positive Case Study

- The need to develop collective understandings of the project was an unexpected task that students found that they had to undertake. Some groups of students from the UK and Ghana successfully managed to address this challenge as the following quotes indicate:

I was under the impression that the University [of Ghana] had more information and we were really surprised that they knew nothing about the project at all, so the first time we spoke, it was mainly explaining the programme and letting them know what was going on and what we needed to do. (CSM Student)

Initial interactions with the CSM students gave a clearer understanding of their expectations of our participation in the project. (UG Student)

- Despite the efforts of CSM students, some aspects of the project remained unclear for some Ghanaian staff and students. Some Ghanaian students in the final evaluation focus group indicated that they were still unsure about the purpose of the project, what was understood as 'equipment' by UK stakeholders and what was intended as their precise role in the project. Even where this was not the case, the process of developing shared understanding of project aims and processes took up a considerable period of the short timescale available for the project, as one UG student commented:

The time wasn't too good for the whole uncertainty [with the project] and if the whole thing is uncertain then you need a lot of time to figure out what you have to do.

- This quote also links the issue of shared understandings regarding the project with its conception as one of 'uncertainty'. Working in an uncertain context was central to achieving the learning objectives desired by CSM staff for their own students. Some Ghanaian students were also motivated by overcoming 'uncertainty' as the following comment by a UG student exemplifies: 'Initially the concept was not so clear to me but I wanted to know what it was all about'.
- However, a number of other staff and students recognised a contradiction between the extent of uncertainty in the project and its potential to contribute effectively to development in Ghana. Some CSM students, in particular, expressed significant unease regarding their involvement in a project in which they felt that their ability to contribute to positive developmental outcomes was constrained by their institutional requirements.

Learning Points

- The project demonstrates the importance of explicitly clarifying the aims of different stakeholders and making sure these aims are sufficiently aligned.
- Given the complexities and inherent uncertainties of international development work, all efforts must be made by institutional stakeholders to be clear on project processes. Allowing additional uncertainty or not making efforts to alleviate uncertainty can limit the potential of projects to contribute to in-country development in Ghana or elsewhere.

Collaborative Communication

- Institutional stakeholders valued the face-to-face communication that was enabled by CSM staff travelling to UG and UDS to develop the project initially. However, the lack of face-to-face meetings with the member of UDS staff who subsequently managed student involvement in the project hindered the development of shared understanding of the project.
- It was recognised that the timescale for development of a MoU between all institutional stakeholders was tight. While a member of UDS staff positively indicated that the MoU demonstrated the commitment of all parties, it did not appear to be a document that provided clarity on aims or one that influenced the operation of the project once it was underway.
- Once students had begun their involvement in the project, communication between staff from the universities involved was minimal and was orientated towards reactive actions to address problems rather than the proactive development of the project. Interviewees also lamented the lack of contact between UG and UDS that would have allowed them to share and learn from their experiences of the project.
- As was anticipated by staff in all three universities, communication between the students in UK and Ghana was an ongoing challenge. In some groups, there was very limited contact between UK students and their Ghanaian counterparts and this appeared to be a particular issue for groups from and working with UDS.

Learning Points

- Sufficient time needs to be built into projects to allow development of shared understandings and MoUs that are meaningful to the ongoing operation of the project.
 - Creating processes of ongoing communication inclusive of all institutional stakeholders in the project can support the development of shared understanding as well as potentially support the identification of ways in which projects can be proactively improved as they progress.
- Limited communication presented, therefore, a significant problem within the project and the lack of contact with UK students was a source of personal disappointment for some of their Ghanaian counterparts. Students from both Ghana and the UK felt that identifying suitable methods of communication was an issue that could have been addressed by University staff prior to student involvement in the project.

- The following two quotes from UG students indicate the problems of access and cost that impeded communication between the UK and Ghanaian students:

The unreliable nature of the internet hampered our efforts. We hardly have access to the internet hence communication between us here and [UK] students was quite difficult.

The fact that we communicate through the net is kind of a problem. ... I pay for the cost of the time I use but ... the cost involved is not covered by the programme. As a result, commitment becomes a problem. I understand the project is voluntary on our part but everything costs money in Ghana.

- A new social media platform (NING) was developed by CSM staff to aid communication in the project. However, many Ghanaian students struggled to access this platform and, overall, it proved to be of limited use to the students involved. Other existing social media, in particular, Facebook, were used in the project by CSM students and for some this was a reasonably effective communication channel with Ghanaian counterparts.
- Emails were used by some groups as a means of correspondence. One Ghanaian student highlighted that email communication was challenging as it was not a 'common tradition with most Ghanaians'. CSM students also highlighted the limitation of email in not allowing immediate communication and the resultant shallowness of interaction between UK and Ghanaian students through this medium.
- At least two groups had visual communication between the UK and Ghana through Skype or by sending video recordings. UG students also sent pictures of sporting activities in schools and communities to their CSM colleagues. Where it was possible, such visual modes of communication were valued highly by both UK and Ghanaian students. One UG student described 'getting to hear their voices' as 'making it less formal'. Another UG student described using Skype for the first time as a learning experience.
- Some Ghanaian students recommended text messages as a preferred, accessible and immediate communication channel and one CSM student suggested that their group had considered this option. Text messages also proved to be a successful medium of communication within the evaluation. However, no use was actually made of text messages within the project itself.
- The implications of communication challenges were increased by the timescale within which CSM students had to complete their project. A number of groups struggled to establish contact until well into the time the CSM students were allocated for the project and even then communication was often infrequent and unreliable. These challenges were captured effectively by one CSM student:

We kind of put the flag down for two [equipment proposals] last week and then more information started coming, and then ... it takes time for people to get back to us and we're actually so pressed for time [given] we have to deliver next week.

Positive Case Study

- A few groups were able to develop good channels of communication between the UK and Ghana. It is possible to attribute this success to the personal circumstances and characteristics of the students in these groups.
- The need to develop collective understandings of the project was an unexpected task that students found that they had to undertake. Some groups of students from the UK and Ghana successfully managed to address this challenge as the following quotes indicate:

I was under the impression that the University [of Ghana] had more information and we were really surprised that they knew nothing about the project at all, so the first time we spoke, it was mainly explaining the programme and letting them know what was going on and what we needed to do. (CSM Student)

Initial interactions with the CSM students gave a clearer understanding of their expectations of our participation in the project. (UG Student)

What impressed me was [CSM students] zeal to know everything we knew! They asked lots of questions. I also liked the way they sent us articles to read. That was so thoughtful of them to have shared such good information with us.

Learning Points

The project points to the importance of the following issues:

- enabling interactive communication to develop trusting and mutually beneficial relationships.
- identifying forms of communication that in-country participants already have access to, use and are familiar with. Text messages and Facebook may be particularly useful in future projects involving Ghanaian participants.
- the need to fully consider and resolve issues of access and cost to volunteers at the outset of the project.

Collaborative Actions

- As identified previously, initial collaboration between some groups of UK and Ghanaian students was orientated towards developing understanding of the project and respective roles within it.
- In order to undertake the project, CSM students initially needed to gather information on various aspects of the Ghanaian context in which sports equipment could be used. This requirement inevitably led to a largely one-way flow of information provided by Ghanaian students in response to questions posed by CSM students. One CSM student expressed their disappointment that the initial uncertainty about the project had led to a situation where 'we just felt that the students we were working with were just information sources for us'. Similarly, at least two UG students expressed frustration with the inherent lack of reciprocity in the information gathering stage:

We felt we were those on the actual site of the problem so we had to fish information for [CSM students] just because they couldn't be here.

We were not doing anything new but rather responding to questions from students at St Martins.

- In contrast, the example of the Green Team presented earlier represents one where good communication and relationships allowed a greater degree of reciprocity in information sharing.
- UG students also conducted further investigations into sport in local schools in addition to providing specific information in response to questions from CSM students. Comments from UG students indicated that visiting schools was a valued activity in itself, commenting that it was 'a wonderful experience' which provided an opportunity to 'learn about local sports I initially was not aware of'. However, the limitations of collaborative planning between CSM and UG meant that the information gathering in schools was not always aligned with the collaborative objectives of the project as the following quote demonstrates:

Together with my group, we went to a local school to inquire about the kind of games they do and how to help improve upon them as well as to develop new sports for them. Then we also realised later that we had to respond to questions from St Martins to assist them in their project too.

- Similarly, because of the difficulties of communication, a number of CSM groups sought further information from other sources besides the Ghanaian students. Groups identified and contacted UK-based Ghanaians to elicit their perspectives on the contexts in which sports equipment could be used in Ghana as well as gaining textual and visual information from a variety of internet sources.

Learning Point

- The project demonstrates the importance of aligning project planning in different institutions if collaboration rather than independent action is to be central to project processes.

- For most groups, the process of developing equipment proposals followed from initial information gathering. Both UK and Ghanaian students indicated a preference for working in collaboration to create these proposals. One UG student, for example, spoke of the benefit that could be derived from full involvement of Ghanaians in proposal development:

Since we are actually in the country, we are in a better position to know the games and sporting activities most preferred and played by the students. We also can tell which ideas are culturally and socially feasible as well as the use of local material that would be appropriate for the proposed sports equipment.

- In practice, the process of proposal development was undertaken to a greater extent by CSM students, with the input of Ghanaian students limited to commenting on suggestions that were put to them. One UG student describes a process that appeared common among a number of groups:

The interaction was more skewed to seeking answers on the situation here in Ghana rather than a collaborative effort of both groups to develop a framework. In my perspective, it seemed the frameworks were already designed but needed a local (Ghanaian) input to tailor it a bit more to the project's aim and expectations.

- The CSM-led process of proposal development was identified to be the result of both the short timescale given to their assessments as part of the project as well as the communication difficulties that have been previously identified. While some CSM students recognised the potential limitations of their proposals given a lack of Ghanaian input, the following quote from another CSM student also indicates a lack of initial guidance as to the desirability of reciprocal collaboration in international development projects:

I feel like the aspect of co-design [with Ghanaian students] could have happened if we had known from the beginning that the whole project is actually about that. But ... we only found out about it a week ago.

- Some UG students expressed disappointment with the extent that project processes were CSM-led. The following quotes respectively indicate disappointment both in terms reciprocal involvement in the project and with the potential quality of the equipment proposals:

We had no involvement telling how the project could go or what should be done and, personally, I think this could have been avoided if we had shared ideas a bit more with the other students or at least if we had been asked our thoughts on how the project could work.

I'm positive that the project will show more progress in the future if we are involved in putting up the framework, making suggestions and coming up with equipment ideas.

- One consequence of the limitations of Ghanaian input into equipment proposals was a disappointment, expressed in at least two UG groups, with the ultimate outcomes of the project either in terms of the suggested equipment proposals or the potential for these proposals to be implemented.

Learning Points

The limited extent of reciprocal collaboration in processes of proposal design indicates:

- the important of ensuring that institutions developing similar projects provide contexts in which there is sufficient time and opportunities for communication to allow reciprocal collaboration to occur.
- the need for clear advice and guidance that emphasises principles of reciprocal collaboration especially where projects involve individuals who are inexperienced in international development work.

Section Five: Empowerment Findings



Discovering and understanding new contexts

- The combination of existing skills, developing skills and the opportunities to put into practice those skills varied to differing degrees across all groups. CSM groups who had established greater communication with their Ghanaian counterparts appeared to develop new intangible skills such as cultural understanding and knowledge of the environment in which the equipment would be used to a greater extent than those groups that were less successful in terms of communication.
- A shared sense of empowerment amongst all CSM groups was evident regarding the intangible skills of communicating with, learning about, and understanding different cultures that contributed to identifying and presenting solutions to problems. In addition, the forms of collaboration identified above empowered individuals in this regard, as one CSM student indicated:

It has been really interesting to learn about their culture and their country and traditions and way of working which is interesting and [you] understand what you actually do with the scarce resources and tight budget and you have to deal with the problems somehow.

- Likewise, Ghanaian students were equally appreciative of understanding other cultures and their own context to a deeper level through the medium of sport. An indicative comment from one UG student is insightful in this regard:

I learnt a lot of indigenous games and sports through this project, I didn't grow up here in Ghana so it was also a very good experience for me because I didn't know of these indigenous sports and didn't know they went on here.

- UG students also suggested that the use of social media for the purpose of problem solving in an international collaborative project developed intangible skills useful for wider aspects of life.

Enthusiasm Generated by Sport

- Common to all institutions, students perceived sport as a malleable development tool which had not been previously considered by most in potentially contributing to project and development work. One CSM student noted:

I think sport for development is such a new concept, for me anyway. I have never come across it, I have never read so much about it. So I think that the whole idea that sport can channel certain emotions and help kids develop leadership skills and other skills on top of that, I find it amazing.

- Similarly, students from both UDS and UG reported being enthused by the notion of the use of sport to assist in community development in different localities across Ghana.

Though the project does not have any direct benefits for me, I believe that helping to do a good job will help in policy formulation and development of sports in Ghana. (UG Student)

- Indeed, given the voluntary nature of the project for Ghanaian students, the use of sport as a tool which could achieve development outcomes was noted as the prime motivational factor for becoming involved in the project. UG staff also commented that some students had expressed an interest in further sport-based volunteering as a result of their involvement in the project.
- UDS students tended to perceive an opportunity to assist in developing rural based local communities, as per UDS institutional aims, through sport as the major incentive to their involvement:

Children in the rural areas are creative and love sporting activities. It's my prayer with the help of one or two persons we will invest in rural sport and make it attractive. (UDS Student)

Learning Points

- The use of sport in a project based on development was clearly a key motivational factor for the Ghanaians in volunteering to become involved in the project.
- The common perception that significant individual, group and community development could be gained through sport actually contributes to its potential use in international development projects.

Developing New Skills

- A wide range of tangible and intangible skills were reported as being developed through the operation of the project. CSM students particularly drew attention to research, innovation and ideation as intangible skills that could be utilised for a tangible outcome, for example, the design of a piece of sports equipment for practical use in Ghana.
- CSM students largely reported developing on personal skill sets that had commonly not been used in the academic environment of their course to this point, as the following quote explains:

Those are reflection skills, those are the skills that you tend to think are not valuable in the professional level but when you are talking about creativity and innovation these are like some of the most important aspects to be able to develop an interesting project which really changes the perception of how things could be.

- Challenging and changing conventional wisdom through the interaction of tangible and intangible skills was also a large part of the learning and empowering process for CSM students. One CSM student indicated:

I'm not sure about new skills but what we have experienced is that making a prototype is very important and going through the process of it, you also learn how right and how wrong your assumptions are and therefore can learn new things and new results so I think it is really important.

- CSM students acknowledged, in line with the aims of the academic work, that dealing with and accepting uncertainty and failing with ideas were particularly strong intangible skills developed throughout the process, which would be beneficial in a wider range of life and work settings in the future.
- Whilst the above were largely empowering for CSM students, both UDS and UG students felt disempowered in that the ideas and information they developed neither received attention nor were able to be put into practice given the perception that CSM students must provide the prototype of equipment to be implemented. That is, they were potentially empowered by learning new skills but did not always have the opportunity to enact them.
- The commonly perceived lack of clarity and high levels of uncertainty across all groups regarding the aims and mechanics of the project, whilst disproportionately disempowering particularly for the Ghanaian institutions, did in fact provide largely unintended outcomes of empowerment.
- CSM students who had less communication with Ghanaian counterparts innovated to gain knowledge and information regarding the Ghanaian local context in a number of ways through alternative sources.

- Undertaking fieldwork without being in the locality was identified as a skill in high demand given the global economy. Research in one group included:

Blogs by experts who live in Ghana, looking at pictures on Flickr from Ghanaians, searching on Google and YouTube for local games to get a feel of what kids play. Seeing what it feels like, we found a really interesting blog about space planning in Ghana by this architect who writes about [how] concepts and public spaces in Ghana are very different to those around Europe.

- Although to a lesser extent, UG and UDS students concurred with such observations in developing intangible analytical and problem solving skills as well as tangible skills such as the use of technology and social media whilst not being in the same physical locality as their CSM counterparts.
- Likewise, through undertaking visits to schools suggested by university staff, UG students gathered primary research and developed analytical skills regarding the use of raw materials to produce equipment suitable for local games. It was not always expressed, but going through this process developed skills and potentially empowered students when encountering similar situations in the future. One UG student spoke of this aspect of their experience in the project:

It was about sports in Ghana and how we are helping to develop sports in and vice-versa and sometimes about ourselves. We also talked about the types of game we play here local and foreign ones. We both learnt a lot and it was good times to me.

- Students from all Universities reported that working with their university group had impacted positively on the development of existing skills such as teamwork. However, it was the realisation that such group work assisted in the development of new skills or the mobilisation of latent skills through the medium of sport as the focus of the project that was most evident in students' responses.

Positive Case Study

- Ghanaian students especially indicated the development of their own leadership and teamwork skills through the project, which were highly valued and perceived as being of use in wider contexts following the cessation of the project:

My leadership skills will be nurtured and moreover if the project succeeds not only will the participants (me included) be of help to their people, but also provide sustainable development to the people.

One important skill I have learnt is the act of followership. On many occasions I have been the leader in similar endeavours, but to allow the leadership of another and harbour strong confidence in him to be effective and deliver, is a worthwhile character I have strengthened in my life.

- There was evidence from both the UK and Ghana that student involvement in the evaluation had the possibly unintended consequence of empowerment, given that the questioning and continual reflection for groups and individuals encouraged more self awareness of the skills learnt and experiences gained. For example, one CSM student commented:

I think you forced us to do those reflections is also amazing because we get to pin point what we have actually learned and what we feel after it.

Learning Point

- Where possible, evaluations should be built into project processes and structures to allow significant periods of reflection for all stakeholders in order to understand and realise learning and development through involvement with the project.

Section Six: Conclusions



- The Sports Equipment Project was an innovative and novel initiative in the field of international sports development work. Moreover, for many of the stakeholders involved in the project, this was their first involvement in any such international sport project. As a result, a clear set of desired outcomes were not set for the project at the outset. While this allowed the aspirations of different stakeholders to be encompassed in the project, it also contributed to some stakeholders being unclear as to the project's overall purpose.
- The three universities involved had responsibility for determining the overall operation of the project. There were some weaknesses in the alignment of the operation of the project across the three universities, especially in relation to the timescales of student involvement in the project. As the project progressed, the three universities supported their own students' involvement in the project in different ways. However, greater collaboration between the universities themselves as the project progressed would have been beneficial.
- Ghanaian students were subject to a number of constraints with regard to their involvement in the project. Alongside the factors noted above, difficulties of cost and access to internet communication and the different voluntary status of Ghanaian students contributed to this constrained involvement.
- As the project represented a specific and assessed component of their programme of study, CSM students were in the position of having to drive the development of the project. Where it was possible, the CSM students worked effectively with their Ghanaian counterparts and, in some examples, excellent relationships were developed between UK and Ghana-based students.
- Despite, and to an extent because of, the challenges recognised in the project, students from both Ghana and the UK identified benefits that they had drawn from their involvement. Commonly identified skills that were developed included team working, leadership and research competencies which could be utilised in a variety of contexts in the future. In the main, the skills most frequently identified were primarily developed through in-country involvement in the project rather than through interaction between UK and Ghana-based students.
- For many students, the centrality of sport to the project was a key influence. A strong motivation for students in both countries was the potential of the project contribute to development in Ghana through sport. Through their involvement in the project, students learned more about specific aspects of sport in Ghana as well as the developmental potential of sport in general.
- CSM students presented sports equipment proposals as part of their assessed work on the project. Further work to progress sports equipment proposals towards feasibility testing and implementation is planned. The final version of this evaluation report will encompass this further stage of the project.